

THE IMPACT OF SPORTS TOURISM

Raise your hand if sports tourism played a role in your life. Did you travel for sports as a child? Are you a parent spending your weekends on the sidelines, cheering on your children? Did you enjoy a professional or college athletic event recently?

More than likely, everyone reading these words answered yes to one of those questions. According to the National Association of Sports Commissions, sports tourism brought an estimated \$11.4 billion in visitor spending in 2017. It's an easy number to comprehend when we factor in the required travel, hotel overnights, meals, gas, merchandise and all of the other ways in which money is spent for these experiences.

Sports tourism is more than direct spending from participants and fans. There are facility rentals, special event staffing, public works, transportation, signage and more that impact a community. When events happen in your town, they support jobs and bring business to a wide array of industries.

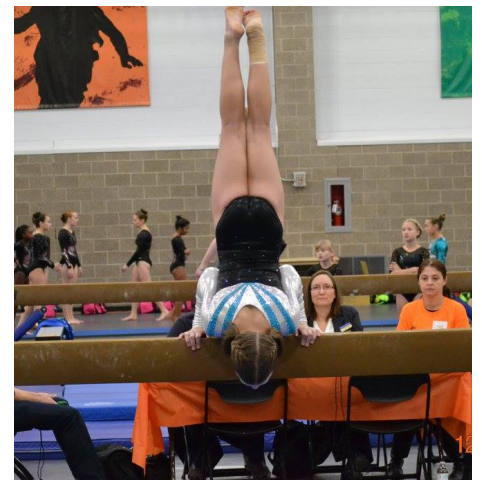
In the greater Champaign County area, sports tourism is wide-spread from major events like the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon to smaller tournaments like the Justin Spring Gymnastics Meet. Most recently, the State Farm Center welcomed the National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball Association Championships with athletes from 14 colleges and 9 states. Thousands of supporters came out to cheer on these impressive athletes in a truly Outside of Ordinary competition.

The Visit Champaign County team works side-by-side with sports rights holders and planners to not only bring their business to the community, but also to facilitate logistics with local vendors. Coordinating hotel rooms, group dining options, printing of signage and media promotion are often ways we are able to expand the impact of events in the community.

In mid-April, Visit Champaign County will host to the annual Sports Illinois Huddle, a conference connecting rights holders with Illinois destination management organizations to find the right fit for their event. This opportunity will allow our community to shine with our impressive facilities, diverse entertainment options, and our renowned Midwest Hospitality.

When large-scale event planners look to our community to host their event, it is important to show a united community front. With that in mind, the VCC team, Board of Directors, Foundation Board and community stakeholders hosted a reception with the IHSA Board of Directors and staff during the IHSA Wrestling Tournament at State Farm Center. Our dedication to IHSA events alongside the University of Illinois assists in maintaining and growing the tournaments held in Champaign County.

As the greater Champaign County area continues to develop and grow, sports tourism will continue to be a foundation in attracting visitors to our area. The visitors all have the potential to come back, to be a student in our community, and even future residents when we provide an Outside of Ordinary experience.





FROM OUR CEO

Every day, we advocate for our community. We tell the stories of our local artisans and business owners, we engage with our residents as brand ambassadors, and we work with our local, state and national officials on sustainable funding for tourism and community infrastructure projects.

I enjoyed participating in our Hospitality Lobby Day on March 12–13, co-sponsored by IL Council of CVB's, IL Hotel Lodging Association, and IL Restaurant Association (see write up on page 3.)

On March 27, Champaign County First hosted our annual lobby trip to Springfield. Delegates first met with Senator Chapin Rose and Representative Mike Marron on the Senate Chamber floor. Meetings continued with Representative Dan Caulkins outside of House Committee and Representative Brad Halbrook in the Capitol Rotunda. Senator Scott Bennett then met with community leaders in his Senate office.

During our meetings with area legislators, we advocated for economic development and infrastructure. Priority projects include: The Yards Illinois Terminal Building Expansion, Mahomet Aquifer 3D mapping, Kirby Avenue Bridge, Champaign University District Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project, I-57/74 Interchange, Curtis Road Underpass, Kickapoo Rail Trail, passenger rail, high speed rail, South Mahomet Connection Project, Mahomet River Trail, Rantoul's Illinois Autonomous and Connected Tack and Royal Downtown Contained Waste/Sewer System.

After lunch at the Illinois Chamber of Commerce with a legislative update, the group met with state agencies including Illinois Departments of Transportation, Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Natural Resources.

What a great day with fantastic representation from public and private organizations (see pic!) and we are stronger in building community as one unified voice. We will travel again on June 10–13 to DC for advocacy efforts on a federal level.

Thank you to our destination management partners and hospitality industry job force who support VCC efforts and we look forward to your continued involvement. It takes a unified effort to invest in a destination's economic growth and community well-being. We are making good progress!

Jayne DeLuce



Save the Date—Toast to Tourism

The Visit Champaign County Foundation will host the annual Toast to Tourism on Wednesday, May 15 from 4:00–6:00 p.m. at the I Hotel & Conference Center. In conjunction with National Travel & Tourism Week, the event's theme will explore Travel Matters. Nominations are currently being accepted for the Tourism Impact Awards for individuals and organizations that have significantly contributed to travel & tourism in the greater Champaign County area. Information and award nominations can be found at:

visitchampaigncounty.org/toasttotourism.

Connecting with Visitors

Tracking our direct communication with visitors through Welcome Center walk-ins, calls, email, leading to Visitors Guides distributed.

34

walk-ins

127

emails

393

calls

8,338

Visitors Guides distributed



40 North Update—Untitled

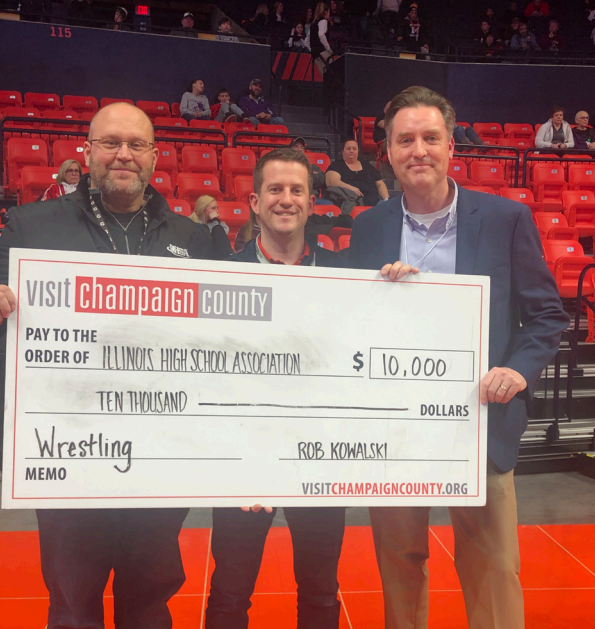
40 North held their annual fundraiser, Untitled, at the Orpheum Theatre on February 22. Over 200 people attended, raising money for the arts & culture of Champaign County. The John Hughes themed event brought out costumes, and treated guests to an interactive mural of Molly Ringwald.

Through various stations including a wine & whiskey pull, silent auction, art sale and screen-printed shirts from Weiskamp, the organization raised nearly \$20,000.

OUT & ABOUT

IHSA Wrestling State Tournament

Over 40 years of hosting the IHSA State Wrestling Tournament continued in 2019. Nearly 30,000 people passed through the doors of the State Farm Center, February 14–16, to watch the singles competition. VCC supported the event by managing hotel blocks, assisting IHSA with various logistics, and setting up a welcome booth to promote area restaurants and businesses. In addition to the competition, we hosted a Community Welcome Reception for the IHSA Board of Directors and staff, with the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, our Board of Directors, and community stakeholders to learn more about IHSA while showcasing our efforts to promote sports tourism. The reception was well attended and included a check presentation to IHSA by VCC Board Chair, Rob Kowalski, and a statement by University of Illinois Athletic Director, Josh Whitman.



Illinois High School Theatre Festival

The Illinois High School Theatre Festival is hosted biannually at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts during winter break for University of Illinois. From January 10–12, campustown saw a burst of activity when over 2,500 theatre students from across the state traveled to Champaign County for performances, education, and college auditions. VCC sponsored the hospitality room for teachers/guardians, set-up a welcome booth for the visiting colleges and chaperones to learn more about the community and assisted with hotel blocks. After returning to Illinois State University in 2020, Theatre Festival will be back on our campus in 2021.



Governor's Conference

Jayne, Terri, Ryan, and Caitlyn traveled to Chicago, February 4–6, for the annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism. Networking and learning from peers in the niche committee meetings, and throughout the keynote and breakout sessions, the team brought back numerous ideas to incorporate into the sales & marketing strategy. Newly elected Governor Pritzker opened the conference with a keynote at the annual awards dinner.



National Wheelchair Basketball

The Disability Resources and Education Services hosted fourteen college wheelchair basketball teams to State Farm Center, March 14–16 for the National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball Championships. The free event welcomed hundreds of families and supporters from 9 states, including a strong showing from U of I wheelchair basketball alumni. Visit Champaign County sponsored the competition and provided support by organizing hotels, assisting with t-shirts, and marketing the event to visitors and community members.



Lobby Day

Hospitality Lobby Day was March 12–13 in Springfield, co-sponsored by IL Council of CVB's, IL Hotel Lodging Association, and IL Restaurant Association. Jayne and VCC board member, Bob Flider, participated in the first day with national speakers, and Caitlyn helped out Jayne the second day, as VCC and our hotel partners met with Senators Bennett and Rose, and Representatives Ammons, Caultkins, Halbrog and Marron. We advocated for community infrastructure projects, hotel legislation, and support for upcoming state and national event bids.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS



North American Journeys RTO Summit West

Caitlyn attended RTO Summit West in Marina del Rey, February 13–15, with twelve one-on-one appointments. She also spoke briefly about our area to the entire audience during a luncheon

sponsored by Enjoy Illinois. NAJ was founded to help suppliers and destinations meet L.A.-based receptive tour operators (RTOs) specializing in International travel. It is now NAJ’s largest RTO event attracting over 100 receptive operators, 40% of which were Chinese.



Connect Diversity

Connect Diversity, held in Birmingham, Alabama, March 18–20, is an intimate event that focuses on multicultural and LGBTQ business in the meetings, sports and events industry. Caitlyn had 27 appointments over the three-day event that featured training workshops, education

opportunities, and one-on-one appointments with planners. Many of the planners she met with were already familiar with Champaign County and our welcoming and inclusive community.



Connect Chicago

Caitlyn attended Connect Marketplace in Itasca, February 25–26, meeting with 21 associations and planners from across Illinois who are looking to book meetings and events in our region. The event is for planners and suppliers who are focused on national association, corporate

and international meetings and events in Chicago and surrounding areas.



Active America China

Active America China, held in Anchorage, Alaska, March 24–29, is the only show in North America that is 100% dedicated to building inbound Chinese tourism. Tour operators who attend the show are responsible for over 40% of all tourism to North America. Caitlyn had 19 appointments and was able

to build on relationships made from the 2018 show in Atlanta, as well as connect with receptives who have offices in Chicago’s Chinatown.

Occupancy Rate

Reporting December–February 2019

Champaign	45.8%
Bloomington	40.4%
Peoria	44.1%
Springfield/Decatur	43.9%

Average Daily Rate

Reporting December–February 2019

Champaign	\$80.47
Bloomington	\$75.76
Peoria	\$98.83
Springfield/Decatur	\$85.55

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS & EVENTS

11 leads	4 tentative	3 definite
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1,400
estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

15 leads	9 tentative	6 definite
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9,487
estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

3 leads	1 tentative	2 definite
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LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels
TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet
DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



Restaurant Week Wrap Up

The 3rd Annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week was the biggest event yet, with 30 participating restaurants offering special menus from January 25–February 2. Patrons enjoyed breakfast, lunch and dinner throughout the week. On the first day of the event, the Restaurant Week website had over 11,000 unique pageviews. Advertising through Pandora Radio, ChambanaMoms.com, WCIA, SmilePolitely and more helped attract a large audience. Restaurant feedback continues to be positive, with many seeing increased foot traffic during a slower period of the year. The Champaign County Area Restaurant Week will return January 24–February 1, 2020.

40%
went to 3+ restaurants

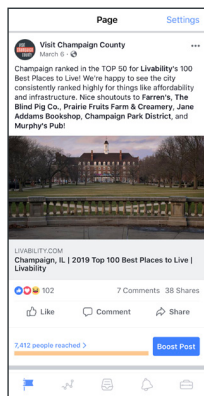
50%
tried someplace new

92%
would go back again

Aikman Social Media Takeover

Aikman Wildlife Adventure is an Outside of Ordinary opportunity to get up close and personal with some amazing animals, so we gave our social media followers a behind-the-scenes look at the experience. The Aikman Instagram takeover on February 21 highlighted facts about the animals on site, in addition to the unique experience available in our area. The takeover took place on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, reaching over 8,000 people on Facebook alone, and another 3,500 on Twitter and Instagram, with a look at Cissy the Bear playing in her new habitat and featured images of close-up zebras, kangaroos, and more.

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook

Livability Top 50
102 Likes
38 Shares
7,412 Reach



5,916
Followers

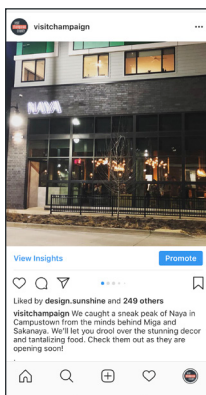


Twitter

Illini Baseball
2 Retweets
28 likes
8,559 impressions



5,846
Followers



Instagram

Naya Opening
250 likes
2,319 impressions



4,063
Followers



Ads Placed in Q3

LEISURE

WCIA | ChambanaMoms.com | SmilePolitely.com | Pandora | AAA Living | Midwest Living | IHSA Wrestling | Champaign Park District

GROUP

Illinois Group Travel Planning Guide

MEETINGS

Small Market Meetings | Illinois Meetings + Events

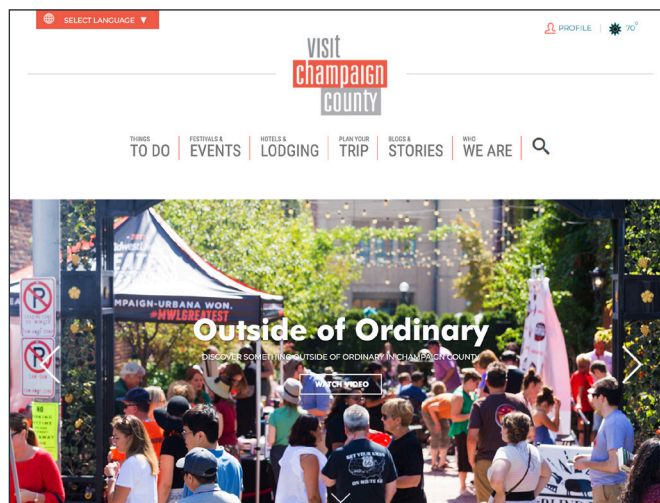
Sports

SportsEvents Magazine

377

reader responses

4 press releases resulting in **63** media placements.



Website Report

66,403 Visits
185,286 Page Views
46,302 New Visits
2.79 Pages/Session
02:13 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Restaurant Week
Calendar of Events
Engineering Open House
Tasty Treats Blog
The Bread Company

62.75%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

21.35%

is from Chicago

Our Mission

Advance the overall visitor destination experience for the greater Champaign County area, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to strengthen the local economy and quality of life.

VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY PARTNERS

Founding Partners

City of Champaign

Platinum Partners

University of Illinois

Gold Partners

Busey :: Carle :: Champaign County

City of Urbana :: Village of Savoy

Silver Partners

Illinois American Water :: Parkland College

Village of Rantoul

Bronze Partners

Village of Mahomet :: Village of St. Joseph

Urbana Park District

Regional Partners

Allerton Park & Retreat Center :: Arthur Area Tourism

Council :: City of Tuscola :: Monticello Chamber of

Commerce

Hotel Partners

ORANGE PARTNERS: Eastland Suites & Conference Center :: Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham :: Hilton Garden Inn Hyatt Place :: I Hotel & Conference Center :: Illini Union Hotel

BLUE PARTNERS: Candlewood Suites :: Comfort Suites Country Inn & Suites :: Courtyard by Marriott :: Drury Inn & Suites :: Fairfield Inn & Suites :: Hampton Inn Urbana Hampton Inn Champaign Southwest :: Holiday Inn Express Holiday Inn Express Rantoul :: Home2 Suites by Hilton Homewood Suites :: LaQuinta :: Residence Inn by Marriott TownePlace Suites by Marriott :: Wingate by Wyndham

For information on our Tourism Industry Partner Program and how you can support our mission visit:

visitchampaigncounty.org/partners



2018–2019 Board of Directors

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Laura Weisskopf Bleill, Vice Chair, University of Illinois Research Park

Bryan Snodgrass, Treasurer, Busey

Jayne DeLuce, Secretary (ex-officio), Visit Champaign County

Lynne Barnes, Carle

Angie Brix, Champaign City Council

Mac Condill, The Great Pumpkin Patch

Bob Flider, University of Illinois

Richard Helton, Village of Savoy

Jesse Hines, Hiltons of Champaign

Mike Ingram, Champaign County Board

Shayla Maatuka, Dodd & Maatuka

Annie Murray Easterday, Pear Tree Estate

Derek Peterson, Allerton Park & Retreat Center

Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center

Rachel Storm, City of Urbana

Visit Champaign County Team

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Jayne DeLuce, President & CEO

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Caitlyn Floyd, Director of Sales

Ryan Reid, Director of Sports & Special Events

Taylor Bauer, Communications Manager

Jen Peddycoart, Office Manager

Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager

Brooke Mayer, Visitor Experience Coordinator

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Creek Farm :: Rich Thomas, Retired, Rantoul Recreation :: Dan Waldinger, Mahomet Recreation :: Rachel Coventry, Curtis Orchard &

Pumpkin Patch :: Natalie Kenny-Marquez, Grow Marketing & Communications LLC :: Jody Quiram, Gordyville USA

Visit Champaign County Foundation Charter Partners

Adams Outdoor Advertising :: Don & Suzi Armstrong of Northwestern Mutual* :: BankChampaign* :: BPC :: Carter's Furniture* :: Champaign Park District :: Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District* :: ciLiving from WCIA* :: Clifton Larson Allen* :: Cozad Asset Management* :: Jayne & Joe DeLuce* :: Farnsworth Group* :: First State Bank* :: FRASCA International* :: Gordyville USA* :: Grow Marketing & Communications :: Hickory Point Bank & Trust* :: Rob & Jennifer Kowalski :: Market Place Shopping Center :: Martin, Hood, Friese & Associates* :: Martin One Source* :: Midland States Bank* :: The News-Gazette, Inc.* :: Pear Tree Estate :: RE/MAX Realty Associates* :: Robeson Family Benefit Fund* :: David B. Sholem of Meyer Capel Law Offices* :: University of Illinois Community Credit Union* :: UpClose Marketing & Printing* :: V. Picasso/Willow Creek Farm*

*2016 Charter Partner