



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

QUARTERLY REPORT—OCTOBER 2020

Reporting Fiscal Year 2021 | 1st Quarter | July–September 2020

The summer of 2020 will leave a mark on history beyond COVID-19 with social unrest seen locally and across the nation. Alongside actions at the Federal level that heavily impact the immigrant community in the greater Champaign County area, the Visit Champaign County team discussed how to use our resources to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as we strive to carry out our mission.

Numerous initiatives presented to our Board of Directors include:

- Form a Diversity and Inclusion Marketing Council
- Host a panel for hotel and hospitality partners to increase cultural awareness and knowledge centered around diversity and sensitivity, ensuring all who interact with our hospitality industry, both employees and guests, feel welcome
- Facilitate committee efforts to respond to community requests for creating a Black history mural in or near downtown Champaign
- Include more diversity and inclusion discussions in our VCC board committees: Human Resources and Bylaws, Board Development, Finance & Operations, and Advocacy & Community Relations
- Invite Champaign County Black Chamber of Commerce and Buy Black Chambana to our September board meeting to learn more about how our organizations can further support Black-owned businesses
- Promote Black tourism in attending trade shows specific to Black meeting planners, as well as work to bring in multi-cultural events

In response to specific community requests for a mural celebrating black history in downtown Champaign, VCC facilitated a conversation with 40 North, Champaign Park District, city officials, Black Chamber of Commerce, Buy Black Chambana, UI Krannert Center, and local activists. Initial conversations centered around one mural; however, as discussions progressed, it became clear that the story of our black history is too big to be told in one mural and needs to expand to incorporate the entire Champaign County area.

With these collaborative partners, VCC is fervently working on a long-term goal to create an African American Culture & Heritage Trail, complete with multiple murals across the county alongside wayfinding signage, and walking, biking and driving tours. The ultimate goal is to create an educational tool to be incorporated into area schools, teaching the rich history for generations to come, and to invite visitors for immersive experiences.

Efforts are also underway to better serve our immigrant and international communities. The New American Welcome Center at the University YMCA hosted a virtual Welcome Week from September 12–20. The event is a global celebration that brings together immigrants and U.S.-born community members to get to know one another and build community. VCC hosted a guest blog from Gloria Yen, Director of the New American Welcome Center, to outline the weeklong events for community engagement from the Night of Tai Chi to a Middle Eastern Cooking demo. We continued to support these events and discounts at immigrant-owned businesses through our social media channels.

The VCC team immediately took action on several of these initiatives.

The Diversity & Inclusion Marketing Council met this summer with representatives invited from the Champaign County Black Chamber of Commerce, Buy Black Chambana, Uniting Pride of Champaign County, and the following University of Illinois units: Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Center, the Native American House, the New American Welcome Center, and the International Student & Scholar Services Program.

During the first meeting, VCC provided a general organizational overview and our goal to be further diverse and inclusive in our marketing efforts, asking these partners to take a critical eye to our website and promotional pieces so we can learn how to do better. Additional conversations centered on how VCC can be a better partner for their efforts, assisting with events, promotions, and beyond. Meetings will happen quarterly and we look to add more representation to the council. If interested, contact [Terri Reifsteck](#).

Finally, VCC continued our long-standing collaboration with the International Student & Scholar Services Program with a new series: CU in the Kitchen. Due to the pandemic, it is difficult for University of Illinois students to engage with local restaurants and specifically for international students to have a taste of local food. To help support area establishments, and introduce this population to local cuisine, ISSS and VCC are creating videos with area chefs that introduce a dish from their menu that can be made at home. The first video released showcased Chef Zach Schweig at Hamilton Walker's creating a seafood penne pasta. Upcoming videos will feature Stango Cuisine, Neil St. Blues, Everyday Kitchen, as well as a few others.

Future plans to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in our sales and marketing efforts, as well as through our staff and Board of Directors are ongoing conversations. We continue to have dialogue with leaders in our various communities so we can continue on our mission to promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.





FROM OUR CEO

This past quarter involved a lot of self-reflection for our VCC team. Similar to other Destination Management Organizations (DMO's) across the country, our roles changed when travel stopped and the hospitality industry was decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also wanted to join the ongoing conversation about intentional inclusivity in the hospitality industry.

We reviewed our positions as we shifted our marketing focus to community safety messaging, exploring our destination, and providing resources for our local businesses. We shifted our sales and events focus to working with planners to reschedule canceled larger events, conferences and meetings for the future and worked alongside them to host smaller events safely.

We will also take this framework to "reimagine" our DMO moving into the future to meet the needs of the community and lead economic recovery efforts within the hospitality industry.

To challenge our internal thinking, the VCC team completed the University of Illinois free Coursera course on Race and Cultural Diversity in American Life and History. Each week, we discussed the different topics as a team and opened up about our collective goal to make the community more welcoming and inclusive.

In place of our annual Board "FAM" (familiarization) Tour where we usually tour area attractions to better understand our hospitality industry, we hosted a one-stop tour at Riggs Beer Company. We invited guest speakers, Matt Riggs, to present "Pivoting during a Pandemic" and both Will Kyles, Champaign County Black Chamber of Commerce, and Mariah Madison, Buy Black Champaign, to present "Supporting Black-owned Businesses." We then wrapped up with a quick, fun video "Prost" toast to support a virtual CU Oktoberfest.

Thank you to our partners and work force who support our mission to promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents. Everything starts from that point.

Jayne DeLuca



visit **champaign** county FOUNDATION

The VCC Foundation Board has been busy in the last quarter reviewing and discussing goals for FY21:

- Expand project scope to include destination development projects, including African-American Heritage Trail and black history mural.
- Support sport tournaments, including: AJGA All-Star Tournament on August 3-6, 2020, along with IHSA-sponsored events, Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon, Hot Rod Power Tour, etc.
- Review and revise board membership structure to reflect diversity of our community.
- Create Foundation investment levels, benefits and recognition.
- Kick off partner recruitment campaign this fall. [Watch our video](#) that is key piece to campaign.



COVID Updates

This quarter, we saw our community grow by 35,000 people as we welcomed back University of Illinois students. This transition brought on preemptive mitigation efforts that kept our community safe. The innovative saliva-based testing utilized on campus has been key to containing the virus while the Safer Illinois app, with over 40,000 users, allows for quick contact tracing to prevent outbreaks.

To aid in education and mitigation efforts, VCC continued to create and distribute safety content in the community. A dining etiquette video was filmed—featuring Mayor Deb Feinen, Mayor Diane Marlin, Mayor Charles Smith, Village President Joan Dykstra, and Chancellor Robert Jones—to highlight the rules for mask wearing in addition to safe practices when dining out. The video can be found on ChampaignCountySafe.org. In conjunction with the video, we created signage outlining the rules for dining, as well as a Mask Required poster that were printed and distributed to nearly 500 businesses in Champaign County.

Additionally, VCC worked with the Champaign Center Partnership and the Economic Development Corporation to create a fall resident readiness survey to compare how residents feel about engaging with local businesses this fall and winter and were shared with businesses to aid in preparing for staffing and adjustments in their operations. VCC also shared a survey created by the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce to restaurants to gauge their needs this winter.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

I Hotel Expansion

The I Hotel and Conference Center expansion is complete, adding an additional 32,500 total square feet of versatile event space to their existing space giving them a total of 70,500 sq. ft. for events of all sizes. The 12,200 sq. ft. exhibit hall is able to accommodate up to 750 guests for a reception, endless floorplan options for large conferences and expos, and seating for up 1,200 guests theater-style. With the current CDC guidelines, the expansion now allows them to host 6 meetings of 50 people or less simultaneously while safely keeping groups and attendees social distanced. With this expansion, our community can now attract larger meetings and conferences to increase economic impact to our region.



AJGA Tournament

The American Junior Golf Association held a successful, first Urbana Junior All-Star tournament at the Urbana Country Club from August 4–6. The event consisted of 78 players, aged 12-15 from 28 states. A 78-player qualifier for the final seven spots was held on prior on August 2 with Visit Champaign County as a presenting sponsor. The AJGA and Urbana Country Club consulted with local and state health officials to enact safety protocols due to COVID-19, reducing the field from 96 to 78 players, allowing just one spectator per player on the course, limiting players to just one hour of practice time prior to their tee time, and asking all players to leave the course after their round. The official event hotel, the Hampton Inn in Urbana, exceeded its anticipated room block for the tournament. This year's winners were Colin Li of San Diego, CA (boys) and Elyssa Abdullah of Hinsdale, IL. (girls).



Rantoul Sports Complex Update

The Rantoul Family Sports Complex construction continues to progress toward a March 2021 opening. The complex will feature eight baseball/softball turf fields; two T-Ball/Challenger baseball turf fields; eight soccer/football/rugby/lacrosse multi-purpose fields.



Rantoul and VCC collectively hosted an in-person presentation for area hotel partners at the Holiday-Inn Express Rantoul on August 25. Dates are fairly full on for softball/baseball for 2021 and beyond with Game Day USA and Rock Tournaments holding events nearly every weekend from early April to mid-October, with the focus now being on filling the football/soccer fields.

To that end, with support from the Illini Futbol Club (IFC), T2 Sporting is finalizing plans with VCC and the Rantoul Family Sports Complex to bring a premier soccer tournament to the new facility in early June.

Sports Bix Xchange

After the Sports ETA Symposium was postponed and then cancelled due to COVID-19, the organization conducted a virtual trade show (SportsBIZ XCHANGE) over 9 afternoons in August. Mike attended the event, which included keynote speakers Seth Davis of CBS and former NFL player Andrew Hawkins. The platform featured virtual tables, which was conducive for networking, a number of table topics and group discussions, and one-on-one appointments with event organizers. Mike had 15 one-on-one appointments, many of which promise to lead to new events in Champaign County as early as 2021. Mike also laid the groundwork for relationships, which promise to reap benefits with the future addition of the Yards Development.



Top Spots in CU

In collaboration with You're Welcome CU, we launched a new design on ChambanaProud.com—Top Spots in CU from local artist, David Michael Moore. The design is a quasi-map from downtown Champaign to downtown Urbana with illustrations of top attractions and destinations throughout CU and the University of Illinois campus. The design features the University's trademarked Block I that encloses the campus area of the map. The design is available on both tee shirts and tote bags, and during the months of July & August, \$5 from each sale went to the Champaign County COVID-19 Relief Fund. On September 11, a check presentation of \$430 was given to the United Way and the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois.

SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

Illinois Road Trip Round-Up

Over the course of the spring and summer, Visit Champaign County and 18 other DMOs across the state of Illinois worked together to cultivate road trips highlighting top attractions and safe travel. Managed by Terri and Taylor, the collaboration was the first of its kind for DMOs in the state and helped all organizations reach more residents and visitors than individually possible. An Illinois Road Trip Round-Up was released weekly for four months with themes like "Best Pizza," "Best Hiking/Biking Trails," and "Best Public Gardens." The campaign reached approximately 294,570 unique users reached on social media. This collaboration proved that the State is stronger together and our industry is going to help lead the way in economic recovery.



Let's CU Shop Small

VCC partnered with the Urbana Business Administration, Buy Black Champaign, the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce, and Champaign Center Partnership to assist local retailers in a difficult business climate. Each organization contributed to the creation of the campaign and hashtag, "LetsCUShopSmall," encouraging residents to get out every other Saturday and shop sidewalk sales, store specials, and more. Buy Black Champaign also launched its first-ever Urban Market Pop-Up Shop to help promote and increase the reach of businesses that do not have a traditional storefront. Terri and Taylor also worked with the partner organizations also created a Retail Recovery Toolkit to assist local businesses in social media usage and effectiveness.

Public Art Directory

In order to help residents and visitors alike find public art in our community, VCC launched a Public Art directory on their website. With over 160 sculptures, murals, and works of art across the greater Champaign County area, the online database will help to increase foot traffic and awareness of how many incredible pieces of public art we have in our community. From busts and plaques on the campus of the University of Illinois to public art walks in Champaign Park District and Urbana Park District grounds, the directory will help further promote our community's effort to enrich the community through art.



Occupancy Rate

Reporting July & August 2020

Champaign	51.0%
Bloomington	40.1%
Peoria	38.1%
Springfield/Decatur	35.1%

Down
17.9% from
Q1 FY20

Average Daily Rate

Reporting July & August 2020

Champaign	\$66.41
Bloomington	\$68.93
Peoria	\$84.96
Springfield/Decatur	\$75.31

Down
\$20.40 from
Q1 FY20

This data is collected and reported by STR®.

SPORTS, EVENTS, & FILM

3 leads	2 tentative	1 definite
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4,040
estimated room nights

CONFERENCES

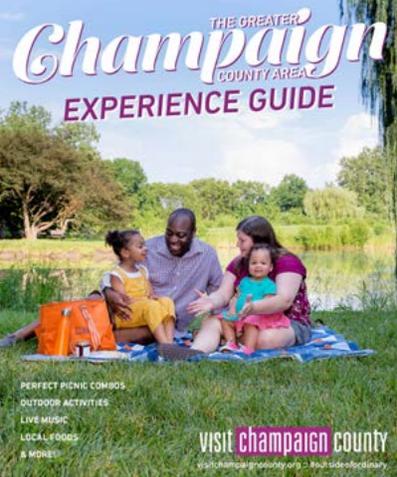
4 leads	4 tentative	0 definite
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740
estimated room nights

GROUP TOUR

0 leads	0 tentative	0 definite
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LEAD: Potential business distributed to hotels
TENTATIVE LEAD: Potential business, no commitment yet
DEFINITE LEAD: Business secured



Digital Experience Guide

Each August, Visit Champaign County releases a new Experience Guide as we welcome many new residents. Due to budget constraints that eliminated printing, the new guide was released on a digital platform that provides an interactive experience for the reader. As our community continues to shift during the pandemic, the guide contains evergreen content focusing on the Outside of Ordinary experiences available during and post-pandemic. New this year, the guide highlights local expert tips—Agriculture: Taidghin O'Brien, The Land Connection; Food & Drink: Jess Hammie, Smile Politely; Arts & Culture: Kelly White, 40 North; History: TJ Blakeman, Champaign County History Museum; Outdoors: Pam Leiter, Champaign County Forest Preserve District; Family Activities: Laura Bleill, ChambanaMoms.

Through the digital distribution, we are able to embed videos and music, as well as hyperlink to businesses featured. The platform contains robust analytics allowing us to understand what content connects with our audience.

Virtual Event Videos

Two major events in September had to pivot to virtual offerings. To discuss this change and how the alteration affected planning and programming, Taylor spoke with the planners behind the CU Black & African Arts Festival and CU PrideFest in video interviews for social media. The CU Black & African Arts Festival switched to a full preview week of content and programming ahead of the weekend festival after a successful inaugural year at Lincoln Square Mall. Inversely, CU Pridefest is a long-awaited event each year for our area that used virtual offerings to enhance what they could offer. Both interviews had a great response from social media audiences as well as provide great promotion for two area-favorite events in a year unlike any other.



Website Report

24,274 Visits
42,003 Page Views
19,223 New Visits
1.22 Pages/Session
01:17 Avg. Length of Visit

Top Visited Pages

Events
COVID-19 Updates
Food & Drink
Outdoors
Our Stories

70.75%

of website traffic is from outside the greater Champaign County area

27%

are from outside of Illinois

27

events submitted on our website

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Facebook
Great Pumpkin Patch Preview
25 Shares
9,195 Reach



7,934
Followers



Twitter
Top Spots in CU
4 Retweets
2,550 Reach



6,245
Followers



Instagram
Sunflower Field
637 Likes
7,093 impressions



5,547
Followers

Our Mission

We promote a welcoming destination experience for visitors to strengthen economic opportunity and enhance the lives of residents.

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
Village of Rantoul

Silver Partners

Illinois American Water :: Parkland College

Bronze Partners

Village of Mahomet :: Village of St. Joseph
Urbana Park District

Regional Partners

Amish Country of Illinois
Monticello Chamber of Commerce

Hotel Partners

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

BLUE PARTNERS: Best Western Plus :: 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

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

visitchampaigncounty.org/partners



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Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center
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Visit Champaign County Team

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Visit Champaign County Foundation Charter Partners

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District :: Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District* :: ciLiving from WCIA* :: Clifton Larson Allen* :: Cozad Asset Management* :: Jayne & Joe DeLuce*
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