The New Visitors Center

2011 Visit Champaign County relocated to downtown Champaign with the goal of providing easy access to area information. That fiscal year, the Welcome Center saw just over 1,100 people stop in to talk with staff or pick up a Visitors Guide. Also that year, nearly 5,500 Visitors Guides were distributed to state Tourist Information Centers (TICs) and a handful of locations throughout the community.

2016 The downtown Welcome Center had 437 walk-in visitors, while nearly 4,000 Visitors Guides were distributed to statewide TICs and over 50,000 throughout the community for easy access. During FY17, Visit Champaign County will distribute over 10,000 guides through Union Station in Chicago.

In the same time frame, visits to our website have jumped from 82,000 to as high as 197,000 and the percentage of visitors accessing our site via mobile have increased from 14% to 48%. So far in fiscal year FY17, 54% of our website traffic is coming from a mobile device and will likely continue to increase every quarter.

This data speaks loud and clear—visitors want their information conveniently. They want it without effort, whether it’s through social media or sitting in their hotel room when they arrive. As foot traffic to the Welcome Center continues to decline, Visit Champaign County is striving to increase outreach through more convenient visitor options.

This winter, we opened a new Welcome Center in Willard Airport. The custom branded space welcomes visitors and residents to our Outside of Ordinary Community and provides easy access to Champaign County Area Visitors Guides as well as Travel Illinois magazines and other area attraction brochures. The airport will soon be adding a video screen to further enhance the space and allow visitors to easily access information.

This space complements the Welcome Center at Market Place Mall found in the food court. This space is so popular, it is refilled by Visit Champaign County twice a week. The Market Place TIC will be upgraded this spring with new signage featuring our updated branding.

Additionally, Visit Champaign County is working with the Illinois Terminal to add a similar space in the Amtrak waiting area. Like Willard Airport and Market Place Mall, it will capture visitors as they are entering town and provide easy access to area information.

In our biggest move yet, Visit Champaign County unveiled “Vic”, our mobile Visitor Information Center. Our newly branded vehicle gives us a visual presence as we cross the community day to day. Not only does it heighten awareness of our organization, it will be the backdrop for us at key area events such as the Christie Clinic Illinois Marathon and the upcoming Hot Rod Power Tour.

Beyond the physical locations, Visit Champaign County strives to provide information in a convenient manner. Trends show more visitors are looking to Facebook Messenger to get questions answered, so our response time is key. Currently we have a less than one-hour response time, but will look to add auto-responders to ensure we are engaging at all hours.

Whether it’s digitally, in person or through crafted content, the new Visitor Center is one that is convenient and accessible at all hours. With our new initiatives, Visit Champaign County continues to evolve to meet the needs of travelers in our community.
Change is inevitable. Embracing change in the travel and tourism industry keeps DMOs (destination management organizations) relevant to ensure visitors have the best experience possible. Technology continues to revolutionize how visitors access information for an enhanced experience, so embracing user-generated content provides fresh perspective. Beyond the visitor, DMO’s are about the vitality of the community, how to build and protect the destination brand and drive business here.

Moving toward Destination 2020, we are changing how we meet visitor and resident needs as the primary source of information and recommendations. Meet “Victoria” (Vic for short), our new mobile visitor information center, or look for information in the new Airport Welcome Center and future Illinois Terminal Welcome Center, along with the ever-popular TIC at Market Place Mall. It’s exciting to watch our Planes, Trains & Automobiles concept coming together!

Our VCC Board continues to guide our strategic direction, along with our still fairly new VCC Foundation Board, who met last month to discuss connectivity with the private sector in supporting destination development projects. Major event bids (IHSA, Hot Rod, ACO), our regional film office, and project-based visioning sessions are the focus of where this private support will further the economic growth of our outside of ordinary community.

We have to continue to work toward powerful solutions that allow destinations to maintain a reliable growing source of revenue, especially as attractions and businesses experience potential funding cuts and a more competitive tourism marketplace. Our job is to tell their story and continue building effective brand partnerships to make our community successful in these efforts.

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

Toast to Tourism
Save the Date

Join Visit Champaign County on Wednesday, May 10 from 4:00–6:00 p.m. as we celebrate the impact of travel and honor local tourism ambassadors at Memorial Stadium. This year’s Toast to Tourism will feature Cory Jobe, Director, Illinois Office of Tourism, as the keynote speaker. The event will be held in the 77 Club at Memorial Stadium, with hors d’oeuvres and cocktails to start the evening!

40 North Update

40 North went punk on Friday, February 24 for their annual fundraiser, Untitled. This year's punk themed event featured a wine & whiskey wall, silent auction, art sale, escape room, guest DJs and a spray paint mural. The event was a great success, bringing in thousands to support 40 North’s mission to foster creativity in Champaign County.

Visitors Inquiries

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome Center</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>TICs &amp; Local Bus.*</td>
<td>16,087</td>
<td>12,746</td>
<td>11,112</td>
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<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>16,674</td>
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We collect data on how many information requests we receive via our various methods of communication: web, mail, email, phone and Welcome Center walk-ins.

*TICs (Illinois Interstates, Market Place Mall, Willard Airport, Illinois Terminal) are off-site locations where we distribute Visitors Guides. Additionally, Visit Champaign County weekly supplies local businesses with guides. This number reflects the combined amount of Visitors Guides distributed.

Hi Terri! I just got a message from one of our Commissioners about what a great job you did on CiLiving promoting CCFPD! Thank you so much, Visit Champaign County’s support is awesome!—Lisa Sprinkle, Champaign County Forest Preserve District
ILLINOIS STATE WOMEN’S BOWLING
The Illinois Women’s Bowling Association Annual Tournament returned to Champaign County for the first time in 50 years, and kicked off their nine-week run on February 4. Over the course of the tournament, Champaign County hosted approximately 3,000 competitors. During opening ceremonies, Mayors from Champaign and Urbana joined the VCC staff in welcoming the bowlers for their first weekend of competition with speeches from local dignitaries, the singing of the national anthem, and presentation of the colors by a local Girl Scout troop. Several members of the Illinois USBC spoke and both Mayor Feinen and Mayor Prussing threw the honorary “first ball” to kick off the competition.

IHSA WRESTLING TOURNAMENT
Visit Champaign County worked with the Illinois High School Association and State Farm Center staff to pull off another successful year of activities at the IHSA Individual Wrestling Championships, February 16–18. Our welcome booth was well attended by competitors and fans, particularly the prize wheel giving visitors a chance to win promo items from Visit Champaign County, Order-Up and Meatheads. Competitors from the Champaign County area represented a few of our local programs, helping to create local buzz surrounding the State Finals. To show our appreciation for the continued interest in Champaign County, VCC put together welcome bags for IHSA board members, staff, and officials and hosted a social event for officials to relax after the first two days of competition.

GOVERNOR’S CONFERENCE ON TRAVEL & TOURISM
The Visit Champaign County team, along with board members Dennis Robertson, Max Mitchell and Rob Kowalski, headed to Springfield for the annual Illinois Governor’s Conference on Travel & Tourism. This year’s conference hosted a variety of keynote speakers discussing marketing to millennials, the mystery of museums, creativity in branding, international marketing among numerous other topics. Governor Rauner addressed attendees during the opening night awards ceremony and stressed the importance of travel on the local economy. Additionally, Illinois Office of Tourism Director, Cory Jobe, unveiled the new ad campaigns rolling out to promote Illinois as a destination.

TOURISM LOBBY DAY
Tourism Lobby Day on March 7, co-sponsored by ICCVB, IL Hotel Lodging Association and IL Restaurant Association, was a good success. Morning speakers included IL Senate President John Cullerton and Rep Ann Williams, newly named Chair of the revitalized Illinois House Tourism, Hospitality & Crafts Industries Committee. She spoke passionately about being a tourist in your own community and the economic engine it provides for Illinois. Jayne spent the afternoon meeting with our area legislators about continued state tourism funding and presented each with an Art Mart brownie/cookie!

The Black and Latino Male Summit went really well! Our participants really had some good feedback in their evaluations and it was one of the most diverse and most attended thus far. Everyone really appreciated the giveaways that we received from your office. It made a huge difference to be able to hand them the Champaign information and pens. We also recognized Visit Champaign County in our booklet and on stage. —Jorge Robles, University of Illinois
### HOTEL/MOTEL INFORMATION

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<td>Occupancy Rate</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
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This data is collected and reported by STR®.

### SALES & MARKETING EFFORTS

#### ISAE Annual Convention
Leah highlighted Champaign County’s unique character with a “Champaign County is Outside of this World” themed booth at the Illinois Society of Association Executives Annual Convention held January 26. With the theme “Navigating Your Course,” the Visit Champaign County booth was decked out with outer space memorabilia, borrowed from the William M. Staerkel Planetarium. The booth even hosted a rocket ship (built by Ryan!) where attendees could get their Polaroid picture taken. Leah—joined by Tonia and Dana, Eastland Suites; and Jordan and Frayar, Allerton Park and Retreat Center—met with several meeting planners and enjoyed the show!

#### National Tour Association
Leah traveled to St. Louis for the NTA Travel Exchange, February 27–March 3, where she met with 17 group tour operators from both international and domestic markets. Leah introduced VCC’s new packaged itineraries, highlighting agriculture experiences, Amish Country in Arthur, technology and major events in the greater Champaign County area.

#### National Association of Sports Commissions
The NASC Annual Conference was held in Sacramento, CA, March 27–30. Ryan met with over 20 rights holders and governing organizations, including The Paralympic and Olympic Associations, Cherry Bomb Lacrosse, the National Gay Basketball Association, US Speedskating, the Pan Taekwondo Union, American Cornhole Organization, and many more. Bringing adaptive sport competitions to Champaign County continues to be a focus as well as small niche sports. While attending, Ryan took part in a pay-to-play event with Sports Illinois, hosting 19 rights holders for dinner and a Sacramento Kings vs. the Utah Jazz basketball game. The Illinois Office of Tourism also partnered with Sports Illinois to host an activation during meeting times allowing more opportunities to meet with rights holders.

#### Springfield Sales Blitz
Leah joined Amanda Mansur from the I Hotel and Conference Center on a one-day sales blitz to Springfield. Leah and Amanda met with planners from 18 state associations, all of which have either brought or have the potential to bring business to Champaign County. Because the blitz took place on Valentine’s Day, Leah and Amanda passed out chocolate bars that said “We would LOVE to have you in Champaign County!”

#### Meeting of the Minds
Visit Champaign County, the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce and the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation enjoyed a networking event at the Esquire Lounge. This was a great idea for new staff to meet and understand our individual roles in generating impact in Champaign County!

### SALES NUMBERS

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<td>18</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meetings, Conventions, Sports LEADS</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inbound Motorcoach &amp; Other Leisure Groups BOOKED</td>
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<td>Total Sales Contacts (Sports, Meetings, Group)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events, Groups &amp; Leisure Serviced</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trade Shows/Meetings Attended</td>
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Important note: These sales numbers reflect business generated by Visit Champaign County and are not representative of the entire Champaign County community.

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“We heard a lot of great reviews and some parents were extremely surprised at our downtown district area. I am so thankful that you all offer this great opportunity to us every year. Thank you for the work that you put into it beforehand to make it run so smoothly – it takes so much pressure off of us and makes us all look good!”

—Heather Ball, College of Law regarding a Savor the Flavor for potential students on March 31.
Champaign County Area Restaurant Week

The first annual Champaign County Area Restaurant Week was held January 29–February 5, featuring 18 local restaurants throughout Champaign County and Arthur. In an effort to showcase the Champaign County Area as a culinary destination, Terri worked with local restaurants to showcase special menus throughout the week. Each participating restaurant received a dedicated boosted post on Facebook and a paid pin on Pinterest showcasing their special menu items. Restaurants also had the opportunity to participate in co-op advertising with WCIA, of which several took advantage. A broad marketing campaign was launched to promote the event including bus boards, online advertising with ChambanaMoms.com and SmilePolitely.com, television advertising with WCIA, cooking segments on ciLiving, and Facebook promotions. Restaurants also received custom posters and tent cards to display prior to the event to alert customers to the event. The marketing helped drive website traffic with the Restaurant Week page being the second most viewed page this quarter. Feedback from participants as well as restaurants has been tremendous. Yoder’s Kitchen in Arthur gave out over 1,000 slices of free pie during the promotion, while Nando Milano Trattoria extended their promotion by a week due to high demand. The event will return January 26–February 3, 2018.

Champaign Kiosks

In collaboration with the City of Champaign and the Champaign Center Partnership, Visit Champaign County will now maintain one side of the kiosks located in Downtown, Midtown and Campustown. The kiosks will feature events quarterly that draw significant foot traffic to the area. The first set of posters are up and will be updated in June. Check them out the next time you’re walking through the area!

Updated Newsletter

As Visit Champaign County continues to strive to creating and distributing relevant content, our bi-weekly “What’s Happening” newsletter received an overhaul. In addition to focusing on the Outside of Ordinary brand, the newsletter will continue to feature a major event, business or attraction, as well as a specific blog post or social media campaign. Additionally, the newsletter aims to direct readers to our website for a complete list of events while we will select the “Top Ten” events to check out during that period. These events will showcase a diversity of options, from live music, to sports to family-friendly activities.

Top Social Media Posts

Twitter—Illini Basketball, 14,000 impressions, 72 likes, 16 RT’s
Facebook—Garth Brooks, 3,900 Reach, 11 shares
Instagram—Ariel view of campus, 111 likes

READER RESPONSE FROM ADVERTISING

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<tr>
<td>Placements</td>
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<td>531</td>
<td>766</td>
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Visit Champaign County advertises in various publications with lead generation campaigns that result in direct requests for information on Champaign County.

STORY COVERAGE

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MEDIA CONTACTS

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WEBSITE REPORT

45,875 Visits
24,558 Visits from Mobile Device
119,468 Page Views (a 59% Increase)
72.39% New Visits
02:27 Avg. Length of Visit

TOP VISITED PAGES

Calendar of Events
Restaurant Week
Things to Do
Hotels & Motels
Food & Drink

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: 4,039 Followers
Twitter: 4,952 Followers
Instagram: 2,569 Followers

VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOUNDATION

Charter Partners

Adams Outdoor Advertising :: Don and Suzi Armstrong of Northwestern Mutual :: BankChampaign :: Baretoof Lizard, Inc. :: BPC :: Carter’s Furniture Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District :: Living from WCIA :: CliftonLarson Allen :: Cozad Asset Management :: Jayne & Joe DeLuce :: Marci Dodds The Downey Group Farnsworth Group :: First State Bank :: FRASCA International :: Gordyville USA :: Hickory Point Bank & Trust :: Illini Fire Service LLC Martin, Hood, Friese & Associates :: Martin One Source :: McDonald’s :: Midland States Bank :: The News-Gazette, Inc. :: 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 :: Urbana’s Market at the Square :: V. Picasso/Willow Creek Farm

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.

2016—2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike DeLorenzo, Chair, University of Illinois
Shayla Maatuka, Vice Chair, Dodd & Maatuka
Rob Kowalski, Treasurer, City of Champaign
Jayne DeLuce, Secretary (ex-officio), Visit Champaign County
Laura Weisskopf Bleill, University of Illinois Research Park
Rachel Coventry, Curtis Orchard
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Natalie Kenny-Marquez, City of Urbana
Max Mitchell, Champaign County Board
Annie Murray, Pear Tree Estate
Tracey Pettigrew, CU Mass Transit District
Jody Quiram, Gordyville USA
Dennis Robertson, Market Place Shopping Center
Bryan Snodgrass, Busey
Greg Stock, Champaign County Council

VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY TEAM

217.351.4133 | 108 S. Neil St., Champaign, IL 61820

Jayne DeLuce, President & CEO
Terri Reifsteck, Vice President of Marketing
Leah Longueville, Director of Sales
Ryan Reid, Sales Manager
Cody Dees, Community Relations Manager
Jen Peddycoart, Office Manager
Leslie Lundy, Finance Manager

VISIT CHAMPAIGN COUNTY PARTNERS

FOUNDING PARTNERS
City of Champaign

PLATINUM PARTNERS
University of Illinois

GOLD PARTNERS
Busey | Champaign County
City of Urbana | Village of Savoy

SILVER PARTNERS
Illinois American Water | Parkland College
Village of Rantoul

BRONZE PARTNERS
Carle | Village of Mahomet | Village of St. Joseph
Urbana Park District

REGIONAL PARTNERS
Allerton Park & Retreat Center
Monticello Chamber of Commerce | Arthur Tourism Council

HOTEL PARTNERS

ORANGE PARTNERS: Best Western Monticello Gateway Inn | Eastland Suites & Conference Center | Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham | Hilton Garden Inn | Hyatt Place | Hotel & Conference Center | Illini Union Hotel | Wyndham Garden Urbana Champaign

BLUE PARTNERS: Best Western Paradise Inn | Candlewood Suites | Comfort Suites Courtyard by Marriott | Drury Inn & Suites | Econolodge Fairfield Inn & Suites | Hampton Inn | Holiday Inn Express | Home2 Suites by Hilton | Homewood Suites | LaQuinta Ramada Inn | 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:
www.visitchampaigncounty.org/partners