

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Register now for the 2003 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism by calling 1-866-GOV-2003 or visit [www.illinoistourism.org](http://www.illinoistourism.org)
- ▶ To get your free copy of our award-winning, seasonal magazine, *Illinois Now!*, call 1-800-2CONNECT or visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com)
- ▶ Upcoming dates to remember:
  - 1/8 - Illinois General Assembly inauguration (Springfield)
  - 1/13 – Illinois Governor/Constitutional Officer inauguration (Springfield)
  - 1/20 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Government offices closed)
  - 3/3-5 - Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism (Springfield)

### MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR



Cathy Ritter

Nearly three-quarters of all guests at Illinois hotels say they have little to no familiarity with the local community. So how do these travelers find out where to go and what to see during their stay? Nearly 80 percent say they ask hotel staff, while 35 percent also get local travel tips from waiters at area restaurants.

These findings and dozens more – which emerged in a comprehensive study of the role of Illinois' convention and visitors bureaus – underscore the key role convention and visitors bureaus can play in influencing travelers. With the proper strategies in place, CVBs can persuade travelers to spend more time and money in Illinois destinations and, ultimately, convert them into "higher-value," long-term, repeat visitors.

This study, to be released this month, is the culmination of a nearly 2 1/2-year effort to measure the effectiveness of the \$12.6 million Local Tourism and Convention Bureau (LTCB) grant program. It was conducted by the highly respected national consulting team of Nichols Gilstrap Inc. in

conjunction with the National Laboratory for Tourism and e-Commerce, University of Illinois.

Initiated by IBOT through a grant to the Peoria Area CVB, the study was an attempt to bring the same kind of scrutiny to the LTCB program that we traditionally have brought to spending for the statewide marketing campaign. One key result of this project was development of the IN-SITE system, which our consultants call the "most comprehensive benchmarking system in the nation to measure the effectiveness of our state investment in convention and visitor bureaus."

These new findings and tools could hardly be timelier. Illinois' CVBs are the most generously funded in the nation. But as much as we appreciate our state's financial commitment to tourism, it would be foolhardy to take that support for granted. Especially in tough budgetary times such as these, we know that every expenditure is being closely scrutinized. The findings of this study help strengthen the case that state tourism dollars are yielding a strong return on investment.

Here's what we found in a portion of the study that included a year-long survey of visitors to hotels across Illinois:

- *Illinois' visitors hold strong potential to be repeat visitors.*

*(Continued on page 2)*

# STATEWIDE NEWS

## Be at the top of the class at Illinois Tourism University

It's time to enroll and be a part of Illinois Tourism University's Class of 2003!

The 2003 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism is the place to sharpen your marketing skills, grow your awareness of industry trends and get an outlook for the future of tourism. As a graduate of Illinois Tourism University, you will be armed with the tools necessary to successfully lead your organization through the upcoming year and beyond.

Our educational program focuses on the core competencies of tourism with a stellar lineup of nationally renowned speakers. Keynote speakers will include Arthur Frommer of Frommer's Publications speaking from the media perspective; Delos Smith from The Conference Board providing a research and industry analysis; and John Marks, incoming chair of the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), will speak on destination marketing.

Early bird rates are still available by calling 1-866-GOV-2003 or by visiting [www.illinoistourism.org](http://www.illinoistourism.org).

If you are interested in becoming a conference sponsor, please contact Patrick Snyder of Visit Illinois at (312)658-1047 or [psnyder@visitillinois.net](mailto:psnyder@visitillinois.net). To participate in the Governor's Awards program, contact Bonnie Heimbach at (815)547-3740 or [nittdo@att.net](mailto:nittdo@att.net).

### MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR *(Continued)*

Even though most had only limited familiarity with their destination in Illinois, hotel guests often were very pleased with their experience. Clearly, there was strong potential to convert these travelers into repeat visitors. More than half said they were "*likely*" or "*extremely likely*" to return to their visited destination.

- *Illinois CVBs are a key resource in speaking to these visitors.*

More than one-third of all lodging visitors – about 37 percent – told us they saw or heard tourism advertising or they obtained tourism information before traveling to their destination. CVBs were a key source of this information, whether from their Web sites, brochures, 800 numbers or print advertising.

- *During a trip, it was clear that visitor centers, both within our communities and along the highways, are integral resources in educating Illinois visitors.*

Visitors rely heavily on state or locally run visitor centers to assist them as they travel through Illinois. About 45 percent of these lodging-oriented travelers utilized visitor centers to assist them while visiting Illinois destinations.

- *CVBs' messages truly motivate Illinois visitors as to where and how long they travel.*

CVBs are not only speaking to Illinois visitors, they are motivating them. Of those visitors receiving information, approximately one-fourth decided where they would travel after seeing or receiving travel materials, *and* approximately

10 percent extended their Illinois stay by an average of another 1.6 days.

- *CVBs also manage visitors once they arrive at an Illinois destination.*

CVBs influence where and how a visitor experiences his/her destination upon arrival. Between 40 to 50 percent of visitors who received travel information decided where to stay, what to do and where to eat as a result of the travel information they received. For communities that need visitor spending to support or protect the viability of important local attractions or businesses, this represents a significant opportunity.

This 2 1/2-year effort clearly demonstrates that our local CVBs are critically important to the health of Illinois' visitor industry, and that Illinois is taking some of the most innovative steps in the nation to improve CVB performance.

Just as importantly, these findings provide further evidence that tourism promotion truly is a profit center for Illinois, and that tourism doesn't "just happen." In a challenging economy, it's more critical than ever to manage the flow of visitors to our destinations and to attract the 'right' kind of visitor – the "high-value" traveler, who is most likely to leave a high economic impact when they come to Illinois.

Best Regards,



## Great group getaways

From Broadway musicals and culinary adventures to farm tours and historical journeys, Illinois is ringing in the New Year with exciting new group tour offerings. To get the word out, IBOT just released its annual overview of group tour opportunities to the media. Thanks to the many industry partners who shared their tour ideas and to Team Illinois for its continued effort to raise awareness of group tour opportunities in Illinois. To take a look at the highlighted tour opportunities, visit the "Press Releases" section of [www.illinoistourism.org](http://www.illinoistourism.org).

## Winter radio media tour

IBOT warmed up the airwaves in December as State Tourism Director Cathy Ritter participated in a series of radio interviews highlighting Illinois' best sports, spas and holiday events. During 12 interviews on stations around the state - including WGN-AM in Chicago - Cathy shared her top picks for both warm and cold winter activities in Illinois and discussed the latest issue of *Illinois Now!* To order your free copy of *Illinois Now!*, call 1-800-2CONNECT or visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

## New year, new staff

IBOT starts the New Year with new staff members.

**Jennifer Houston** has assumed the position of call center/tourism information center (TIC) coordinator. Jennifer, previously the administrative assistant to the Chicago marketing team, will be the liaison between USA800 and

TICs and IBOT. She is responsible for coordinating call center counselors' training and ensuring they are up-to-date on all tourism products. Jennifer can be reached at (312)814-1159 or [jhouston@commerce.state.il.us](mailto:jhouston@commerce.state.il.us).

**Marie Bolling** recently joined IBOT and will provide administrative assistance to the Chicago marketing team. Born and raised in Park Ridge, Marie graduated from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign with a degree in finance and a minor in French. After graduation, she participated in a fellowship in the Governor's Office and then was hired full time in the scheduling office. Marie is active on the newly formed Junior Board for the Swedish American Museum. Marie can be reached at (312)814-3748 or via email at [mbolling@commerce.state.il.us](mailto:mbolling@commerce.state.il.us).

**Jan Kemmerling** will be rejoining the IBOT/Springfield office as the

manager for planning, performance and research. In her new position, Jan will oversee the evaluation efforts of the tourism programs. In addition, she will assist program managers in establishing policy in order to implement the long-term strategic plan, and she will help industry partners utilize research to make effective marketing decisions. Jan brings 14 years of tourism experience to this position from both inside and outside state government. Jan can be reached at (217)785-6399 or via email at [jkemmerl@commerce.state.il.us](mailto:jkemmerl@commerce.state.il.us).

**Carol Neill** recently returned to the IBOT/Springfield office from a temporary assignment as assistant to DCCA's COO. Carol can be reached at (217)785-6334 or [cneill@commerce.state.il.us](mailto:cneill@commerce.state.il.us).

Also, IBOT welcomes back **Gemma D'Anca** to the Chicago office. Gemma has been on medical leave and is now back feeling great!

## INDUSTRY INSIDER: TOM RIVERA



*To help you get to know who's who in Illinois tourism, ITN profiles industry leaders. This month we introduce Tom Rivera, president of the Greater Woodfield Convention & Visitors Bureau.*

Tom Rivera has been the president of the Greater Woodfield Convention & Visitors Bureau since its founding 19 years ago. He has seen the organization grow from four to 13 members and from \$6 million a year in sales to \$55 million in sales in 2002.

Tom has long been involved in statewide tourism activities, serving first as president of the Illinois Council of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (ICCVB) in 1989 and then as an officer, including terms as president and chairman of the board of Visit Illinois.

Currently, Tom is the vice chair of Visit Illinois and chairman of the organization's Government Relations Committee where he led development of the industry "White Paper" being used to educate the new administration and the legislature on the strength and potential of tourism in Illinois. He also is a member of a special Visit Illinois team working on tourism issues with the Governor's Transition Team.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Illinois Now! summer survey highlights

In every issue of our free, seasonal magazine, *Illinois Now!*, we offer readers the chance to win a sweepstakes by filling out a brief survey. Our summer survey effort garnered responses from more than 3,700 readers. Highlights from the responses include:

- Almost half (45%) indicated that the primary purpose of a typical overnight pleasure trip was for a getaway weekend. 90 percent indicated they typically stay in a hotel/motel.
- The four most popular months for travel are June (54%), July (53%), August (50%) and September (47%).
- The most popular resources respondents used to plan overnight pleasure trips to or within Illinois include tourism brochures (60%), news/magazine articles (54%) and friends/family (47%).
- The majority of respondents indicated they traveled with a spouse/partner (60%), and more than one-third traveled with children.
- The most popular sources for learning about *Illinois Now!* were advertising (44%), TIC (31%) and the Web site (18%).
- Most respondents were female (69%), 45+ years of age (67%), college graduates (45%) with an annual household income of \$50,000+.

### INDUSTRY INSIDER PROFILE (Continued)

Tom is also executive vice president and an Emmy award-winning producer for KRT Productions, a full-service broadcast television production house, which includes among its on-air shows: the five-part "Pride In Illinois" PBS series, and the three-part PBS series that includes: "Route 66," "The Lincoln Highway" and "Lewis & Clark in Illinois."

Outside of the tourism and television industries, Tom is an officer and owner of electronic education companies Virtual Learning Systems and The Electronic Long Distance Learning Network (ELDLN), which offer Internet education programs for junior high school children in classrooms across the country.

Prior to his tenure in tourism, Tom was a sportswriter and columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, leaving that position to become director of marketing and television of the Madison Square Garden race-tracks in Illinois-Arlington and Washington Parks. In that position, Tom also supervised a broadcast television production facility and an in-house advertising agency, Sports Ad, for which he was executive vice president.

Tom and his wife Kathy – in Tom's words "the real star of the family" and president of KRT Productions after 15 years as a CBS and NBC award-winning producer – have a son John, who is a sophomore at DePaul. Tom has four other children, including two doctors, a television producer and a computer guru.

An avid reader of history and science fiction, Tom enjoys the couple's new second home in the Galena Territories, where he plays golf and hikes with his big, yellow lab, Will.

To find out more about the Greater Woodfield Convention & Visitors Bureau, contact Tom at [tsr@chicagonorthwest.com](mailto:tsr@chicagonorthwest.com) or (847)490-1010.

To add Tom to your mailing list, his address is:

Greater Woodfield Convention & Visitors Bureau  
1430 North Meacham Road,  
Ste. 1400  
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173-4808

### Did you know?

- Charleston, Ill., is home to the world's largest Abe Lincoln statue – the statue is six stories tall.
- Niles features its own leaning tower of Pisa - a replication by Illinois-based architect Albert Farr.

### Happy New Year!

Our very best wishes to you for 2003! We raise our glasses and toast you for your continued effort to make Illinois a world-class travel destination. Cheers!

# NATIONAL NEWS

## Looking forward

All bets are off when it comes to crystal balling travel trends for 2003. Americans will travel in 2003, but most won't be throwing caution to the wind. For trends, think shorter, close-to-home auto trips; fewer fare wars; continued cruise and hotel discounts.

"I think travel is going to be slow. If things continue to proceed as they have, and if we don't have other negative situations...we'll continue to see a gradual recovery in the industry," said Suzanne Cook, senior vice president for research for TIA. "All our numbers suggest we won't be back to 2001 levels until 2004."

Smith Travel Research (STR) is forecasting the hotel room occupancy for the U.S. to be 60.5 percent in 2003, up about one percent from this year. The U.S. room rate average for the last 12 months ending in October was \$82.89, down 2.9 percent from the previous period, according to STR. *Source: chicagotribune.com*

## Americans will travel in 2003

A new survey from AAA finds that 71 percent of Americans plan to travel at least as much or more in 2003 as they did in 2002 and 60 percent believe the struggling U.S. economy will be stronger next year than it is today. Seventy-eight percent of survey respondents said they would spend as much or more on their longest vacation in 2003 as they did the previous year, while 7 percent stated they would spend somewhat less and

only 7 percent planned to spend a lot less. Another 8 percent weren't sure. More than half of those surveyed (52%) said they would travel the same in 2003 as they did this year if the U.S. goes to war with Iraq. The survey was conducted for AAA from Dec. 5-8 by Opinion Research Corporation. *Source: Travel Advance*

## Older and better?

Mature travelers – usually described as 50 or 55 and over – are the fastest-growing group of consumers in the travel industry. Dozens of tour companies now cater exclusively to older travelers, promising greater attention to health and mobility concerns, as well as emphasizing stress-free travel and comfortable accommodations. For many older travelers, the companionship is as important as the destination. *Source: Travel Advance*

## On the road again

Americans tiptoed back onto the road during 2002, a year marked by significant travel industry successes and failures and by dramatically changed consumer travel patterns. Among the major developments: instability among airlines, continuing concern about terrorism, slow growth of leisure travel, with cruising and RV vacations notable exceptions, a continuing decline in business travel and a sharp decline in international visitation to the U.S. *Source: Travel Advance*

## Change on the horizon

The coming year promises to bring dramatic changes in the way airline tickets, hotel rooms, packages and cruises can be purchased on the Internet. Some of these shifts should benefit

consumers. For example, more hotel rooms will be sold online. Others are less consumer friendly, including fees for booking travel at leading travel sites. More online travel purchases will be packages because sites will offer deeper discounts on these combos. *Source: Travel Advance*

# ILLINOIS

## RIGHT HERE. RIGHT NOW.™

George H. Ryan  
*Governor*

Corinne Wood  
*Lieutenant Governor*

Joseph P. Hannon  
*Acting Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs*

Cathy Ritter  
*Deputy Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism*

Lisa Link  
*Public Relations Manager*

Published monthly by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism  
100 West Randolph Street  
Suite 3-400  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Phone: 312/814-4733  
FAX: 312/814-6175  
TTY: 800/419-0667

Where no TTY number is listed in this or other DCCA, Bureau of Tourism publications, the hearing impaired may use the state TTY relay: 800/526-0844

If you would like to be added or removed from our distribution list, please contact Lisa Link at the numbers listed above.



*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality of life benefits for Illinois residents.*