



Illinois Tourism News from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

highlights

- ▶ The next Tourism Coordinating Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 18 at 10:00 a.m. in the Capitol Building, Springfield, Room 114.
- ▶ International Supplier informational meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 19.
- ▶ Western Illinois call center training will be held on Wednesday, March 26, from 2-4:30 p.m.
- ▶ Southern Illinois call center training will be held on Wednesday, April 23, from 1-3:30 p.m.
- ▶ International Pow Wow 2003 will be held May 19-21 in St. Louis, Mo. The Illinois welcome event in Collinsville is scheduled for Monday, May 19.

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR



Cathy Ritter

One of the most powerful ways of promoting attractions in our state – highway signs – historically also has been one of the most problematic. But, following a year of discussion with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), we are just months away from seeing new tourist attraction signs at interstate interchanges across the state.

These new signs will be patterned after the big blue signs that now promote hotels, gas stations, restaurants and campgrounds along our freeways. With the launch of the pilot program this summer, we'll be seeing these new "fifth logo" signs go up at 12 interchanges – two in each of the six IBOT regions.

This change is coming about due to a wonderful spirit of cooperation at IDOT, particularly from Dick Smith, deputy director of planning and programming. I approached Dick last spring with news about a neighboring state's plans to implement tourist attraction signage. He embraced the idea,

and a series of meetings between our two teams began shortly thereafter.

Unlike the other few states implementing this signage since its authorization in December 2000, we are developing the Illinois program as a cooperative venture. Along with our IDOT partners, we spent long months collaborating on our policy. While the other blue highway signs are filled on a "first-come, first-served" basis, we wanted to make certain that our most compelling attractions were among the six to be featured on each of the tourism signs.

To that end, the IBOT team – including Cindi Fleischli, Jan Kemmerling and Greg Mihalich – developed evaluation criteria to ensure selection of the most worthy attractions. Highest points will be given for attractions that draw high attendance, manage comprehensive marketing programs, are open year-round and are within five miles of an interchange.

Attractions up to 20 miles from an interchange still may score high enough to be included on the signs. However, all attractions selected for the signs will be responsible for providing "trailblazer" signs guiding visitors along locally maintained roads and streets.

(Continued on page 2)

STATEWIDE NEWS

Illinois Tourism University graduates Class of 2003

Thank you to everyone who attended the 2003 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism in Springfield from March 3-5. Nearly 600 industry professionals enrolled in "Illinois Tourism University" and participated in educational sessions and social events. Attendees heard keynote sessions by industry experts Arthur Frommer and TIA National Chairman John Marks, as well as earned accreditation from the American Bus Association and the International Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus.

In keeping with tradition, the conference ended with the Governor's Tourism Awards for outstanding marketing programs. Awards were presented in three categories:

- General advertising and promotion
- Hospitality organizations
- Community leaders

The general advertising and promotion category is split into two divisions – Division 1A accounts for organizations with operating budgets under \$350,000 and Division 1B for groups with budgets over \$350,000.

The winner of each award in the three categories is found on page three. Congratulations to all participants and winners of the 2003 Governor's Tourism Awards.

MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR *(Continued)*

The cost of participating in the program makes it a very cheap marketing effort. Final pricing is subject to the formal rule-making process, but we anticipate that the fees will be the same as IDOT's current fees for the existing blue signs. This will include a \$100 application fee, plus the following yearly fees:

- \$185 for each freeway sign (one each direction)
- \$125 for each ramp sign
- \$25 for each trailblazer sign installed by IDOT

Attractions also will be responsible for procuring and furnishing the individual logo panels to be placed on the large blue signs installed by IDOT. Unique to this program is a policy allowing government-owned attractions, including historic sites and natural areas, to be exempt from all fees.

Under our partnership, IDOT is developing the rules for the program and will be seeking their approval before the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules. While that process is under way, IDOT will launch the pilot signage effort this summer to gain further insight into how well our proposed policies will function in the real world.

IDOT also has the role of fabricating and erecting the signs along the state right-of-way and collecting all fees, while IBOT's main ongoing responsibility will be the selection of attractions for the signs.

We will be evaluating applications for signage with representatives

from the six Regional Tourism Development Offices, interchange by interchange. The speed at which the signs are installed will be largely dependent upon the amount of resources that IDOT can provide each year to erect them.

A simple lesson in the drawing power of interstate signage was offered by Galesburg CVB Director Diane Bruening in a presentation last fall to the Tourism Coordinating Committee. Diane reported that a sign along I-74 saying "Tourist Information Center at Exit 48" generated a nearly fourfold increase in traffic – from 260 visitors signing the registration book in May 2001 to 931 such visitors last May when the sign went up.

They stopped in, not just to ask for information about Galesburg, but for the whole state. Downtown merchants noticed their presence, too.

This new effort addresses one of the weaknesses that was most frequently mentioned during discussion sessions that Nichols Gilstrap Inc. coordinated with tourism industry leaders statewide during our strategic planning process. We're on our way to a far more effective system of highway signage to direct our travelers to key Illinois sites.

Regards,



GENERAL ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:**Newspaper Advertising**

Division 1.A
City of East Peoria

Magazine Advertising

Division 1.A
City of East Peoria

Division 1.B

Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau

Posters

Division 1.A
Galena Cellars Vineyard & Winery

Division 1.B

Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau

General Brochures

Division 1.A
Quincy Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Division 1.B

Chicago's North Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau

Booklets or Area, Media and Meeting Planner Guides

Division 1.B
The Lake County, Illinois Convention & Visitors Bureau

Newsletters

Division 1.B
Tourism Bureau of Southwestern Illinois

Visitors Guides Including Advertising

Division 1.A
Quincy Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Division 1.B

Chicago Plus

Visitors Guides Without Advertising

Division 1.A
Ottawa Visitors Center

Division 1.B

Aurora Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Premium Items

Division 1.A
Williamson County Tourism Bureau

Division 1.B

Chicago Office of Tourism

Web site

Division 1.B
Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau

Advertising/PR Campaign, Single Media

Division 1.A
Blackhawk Waterways Convention & Visitors Bureau

Division 1.B

Chicago Office of Tourism

Advertising/PR Campaign, Multi Media

Division 1.A
City of East Peoria

Division 1.B

Wildlife Prairie State Park

Citywide Promotional Campaigns

Division 1.A
Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition

Division 1.B

Galena/Jo Daviess County, Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau

HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATIONS:

Best Promotional Package with Overnight Stay
Holiday Inn-Alton

Bed and Breakfast with Best Promotional Package with Overnight Stay
Goldmoor Inn

Best Restaurant Marketing Promotion

Aurora Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

COMMUNITY LEADERS:

Individual Friend of Tourism
Bill Thomas (Atlanta, Illinois)

Corporate Friend of Tourism
MultiAd (Peoria, Illinois)

Media Friend of Tourism
Max Armstrong – WGN-AM

Legislative Friend of Tourism
Representative Tom Holbrook (D-Belleville)

Peer's Choice
Aurora Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Best of Show
Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Special thanks to the many partners who helped organize the conference, particularly, Visit Illinois, Edelman, the Crowne Plaza Springfield and the Executive Mansion.

We would also like to thank Marge Heissinger for organizing the silent auction, and Bonnie Heimbach and Becky Genoways for coordinating the Governor's Tourism Awards along with their team of Char Scamihorn, Judy Hallin, Carol Wright, Nellie Berger, Wendy Schultz, Stacy Hubble, Bob Lukens and Keith Arnold.

You all deserve an A+ for extraordinary efforts!

International media

In February, the Illinois Trade Office welcomed Mike Treen, a producer with the UK's Yorkshire Television, on a scouting mission for an exciting television program focused on Route 66. Treen took notes and conducted interviews as he experienced the best of the "Mother Road," from Lou Mitchell's to Bill Shea's, and will be returning in the late summer to produce a television documentary hosted by popular British actor David Jason.

Also in February, the Chicago/Illinois International Partnership held its first International Supplier informational meeting, an event that explained how this alliance works on a day-to-day basis. Discussions involved the workings of city and state initiatives and promotions, trade and media fam trips, as well as a presentation by Stephen Fountaine of *Canadian Traveller*. The next meeting will be held on March 19, 2003, and will feature Marco Aguilar, the Chicago/Illinois International Representative in Mexico.

For more information on the Chicago International Partnership, please contact Tiffany Polydor of the Illinois Trade Office at tpolydor@commerce.state.il.us.

Call center training

Call center training for the Southern Illinois region (including SITDO and CVBs) will be held on Wednesday, April 23, from 1-3:30 p.m. at USA800 (60 W. Randolph Street, Chicago). The training is designed to provide counselors with up-to-date, quick reference information on each area's top attractions, hotels, dining facilities and events.

Industry Insider: DCEO Director Jack Lavin



To help you get to know who's who in Illinois tourism, ITN profiles an industry leader each month. This month we introduce DCEO Director Jack Lavin.

Director Lavin has 17 years of experience and a record of job creation and financial management in the Chicago business world and in Illinois state government. Lavin's experience is being put into action as leader of the newly renamed Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (prior name: Department of Commerce and Community Affairs) – the department in which the Bureau of Tourism resides.

Lavin grew up in Elmhurst in the Chicago suburbs. He graduated from York High School and holds an MBA from the University of Chicago with a specialization in finance, along with a master's degree in international relations from the University of Chicago. He also completed a semester of graduate studies at Yonsei University in South Korea. He is a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Prior to being named DCEO director, Lavin was chief financial officer for Rezko Enterprises, where he was directly responsible for the financial operations, accounting, budgeting, capital planning, banking, new site development and construction for

the \$100 million company. Rezko Enterprises operates more than 150 Panda Express and Papa John's Pizza stores primarily in the Midwestern United States. In his seven years with Rezko Enterprises, Lavin helped lead the company's growth from eight restaurants in 1995.

Previously, he served in key financial positions at Abbott Laboratories in Puerto Rico and North Chicago, including jobs as a financial analyst and cost analyst.

Lavin served from 1993-1995 as deputy state treasurer for Illinois, where he was directly responsible for all investment strategies and programs in the treasurer's \$5 billion annual investment portfolio. Prior to that, he was director of development finance for the state treasurer from 1991-1993.

Among his major accomplishments, Lavin more than tripled the amount of money the state treasurer invested in economic development from \$221 million in 1990 to more than \$830 million in 1994.

The economic development programs he oversaw helped more than 25,000 Illinois families and businesses gain access to credit by investing more than \$2 billion in the Illinois economy. These programs helped the office win awards from the National Association of Women Business Owners, the Illinois Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities and the African-American Contractors Association.

As deputy treasurer, the office won the Government Finance Officers Association 1994 Award for

(Continued on page 5)

Each CVB will be allotted approximately 10-12 minutes of presentation time and regional development representatives will be given the remainder of the time.

Training will be based on forms completed by CVBs and provided to the counselors for future reference.

If you have any additional questions, please call Jennifer Houston at (312) 814-1159 or jhouston@commerce.state.il.us.

Welcome spring with *Illinois Now!*

It's time to spring into action with the latest issue of *Illinois Now!* This free publication highlights the new *Wild Reef* exhibit at the Shedd Aquarium, adventure sports, cultural cuisine, outdoor art and Illinois' railroad-themed attractions. Also included in every issue is a complete statewide events section that features not-to-be-missed seasonal happenings.

The spring issue "Illinois Icon" is Fulton's "De Immigrant," an authentic Dutch windmill shipped from Holland and re-constructed in 1999. Today the mill offers tours and serves as a tourist information center. Be sure to visit on a windy day!

To obtain a free copy of *Illinois Now!* or for more information about traveling throughout Illinois this spring, call an Illinois Travel Counselor at 800-2CONNECT or visit www.enjoyillinois.com.

Copies of the seasonal magazine are also available at tourism information centers, convention and visitors bureaus, regional tourism development offices and state park lodges throughout Illinois.

INDUSTRY INSIDER PROFILE (Continued)

Excellence for the "Small Business Means Big Business for Illinois" program, which he developed and oversaw.

Lavin also played a key role in the development and passage of several major bills in the General Assembly to help economic development. Lavin wrote, developed and testified on legislation to expand childcare, recycling and worker retraining, as well as created a Capital Access Program in Illinois.

In addition, Lavin served on the Board of the Prairie State 2000 Authority from 1991-1995. This authority was the premier job-training agency for the state of Illinois for retraining already employed workers in the new global economy.

Lavin also oversaw the treasurer's Bank-at-School program, an effort to teach financial skills to children. He helped increase the number of participating schools from 41 in 1991 to 354 in 1994, and the 45,000 students enrolled saved more than \$300,000.

Lavin is active as a volunteer in public education and in support for children with Down syndrome. He and his wife, Kathy, have served for four years as co-coordinators for the city of Chicago's parent support group for the National Association for Down syndrome.

Lavin is currently chair of the Chicago Public Schools' Special Education Task Force. The task force was formed to give recommendations to the CEO of Chicago Public Schools and the

mayor of Chicago on improving special education for children.

He also has served for six years on the Alexander Graham Bell Local School Council, where he has chaired the budget committee and played a major role in raising money for libraries, computers, teachers and the first ever Citywide Deaf Olympics.

He has also been treasurer for the last four years for the Friends of Bell School, a parents' support group that helps raise money for school projects. In addition, he led the effort by the Bell Neighborhood Association to raise money to build a play lot at Bell School, the only play lot within a four-square-block area. He met his wife while working on that committee.

Lavin is also treasurer and a member of the Board of Jobs for Youth, the premier job-training and placement social services agency for the city of Chicago. The group places more than 1,500 people per year in jobs. Lavin has also been a longtime volunteer for Misericordia and was a former president of the largest student YMCA in the United States.

The Lavins have two children, Emily and Michael, and they reside on Chicago's Northwest side.

To add Director Lavin to your mailing list, his address is:

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NATIONAL NEWS

Hotel rebound is a no-show

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, hotel chains and industry experts have repeatedly predicted a recovery, arguing that travel cutbacks were a temporary phenomenon due to economic and security worries. But that recovery hasn't happened. In particular, business travelers aren't taking many trips, and when they do travel they aren't spending the way they used to. So far this year, the industry profit benchmark of revenue per available room has dropped nearly 2 percent from the already miserable performance seen a year ago, according to new research from Bear Stearns Cos. The hospitality practice of PricewaterhouseCoopers says it believes there has been a permanent restructuring of demand at a new, lower level.
Source: Travel Advance

Consumer confidence drops to nine year low

Consumer confidence plunged in February to its lowest level in more than nine years, The Conference Board recently reported, as concerns about a possible war with Iraq, rising energy prices and jobs took a toll on attitudes.

The consumer confidence index, a monthly measure, fell to 64 in February, from 78.8 in January – the drop is the second biggest ever. After the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, the index fell 17 points. February's reading was the third

consecutive month in which consumers expressed waning optimism about their immediate and medium-term prospects.
Source: Travel Advance

More road warriors are skipping a night on the town

Travel industry executives say a growing number of business travelers are skipping a night on the town, once an inviolable perk, in favor of spending their evenings in their hotel room to work or relax. Several of them are also converting their room into an office where they work during the day. Many major hotel chains are responding to the shift with new services that cater to and even encourage it.
Source: Travel Advance

Safety concerns having major impact on lodging industry

Ongoing security alerts, travel concerns involving safety and convenience, and lower consumer confidence and personal wealth due to stock market declines and volatility have caused lodging demand to trail the long-run trendline by approximately 5 percent, or 130,000 room nights per night in 2002, according to a new study from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). PwC said the combination of those factors, some of which will continue well into the future, will result in a permanent structural resetting of demand that has not occurred since the Great Depression. PwC's analysis of occupancy data reported by Smith Travel Research against the timeline of security alerts reveals that U.S. hotel occupancies declined an average of 3.5 percent

in the week following each of seven federal alerts that occurred between Oct. 2001 and Nov. 2002.
Source: Travel Advance



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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality of life benefits for Illinois residents.