

ILLINOIS TOURISM NEWS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, BUREAU OF TOURISM

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Save the date! The 2004 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism will be held at the Chicago Hilton, March 29-31. Visit [www.illinois-tourism.org](http://www.illinois-tourism.org) or [www.visitillinois.net](http://www.visitillinois.net) for more information.
- ▶ Entries for the Governor's Awards program are due March 15. For more information or for an entry form, call the Northern Illinois Tourism Development Office at (815) 547-3740.
- ▶ Upcoming industry events:
  - April 24-28: International Pow Wow®, Los Angeles, Calif.
  - May 15-16: Lewis & Clark National Signature Event, Hartford, Ill.
  - June 25-July 5: Grand Excursion 2004, Rock Island, Ill., to St. Paul, Minn.

### MESSAGE FROM THE STATE TRAVEL DIRECTOR



*Jan Kostner*

As you have no doubt heard by now, the FY05 proposed budget for the Illinois Bureau of Tourism will dramatically decrease the industry's funding. Our overall tourism budget in FY04 was \$47 million. The proposed FY05 budget is \$21.7 million. This represents a 54 percent cut in funding.

While I understand there may be concerns that this development brings, I want to assure all of you this is a challenge our industry will overcome. It will mean sacrifice. It will mean tightening our belts. It will also mean we all have a responsibility to join together as a team of industry partners in continuing to promote this great state.

It's important we understand the context in which these budget cuts are taking place. Just over a year ago when the new administration took office, Illinois faced a \$5 billion budget deficit. This deficit was 13 times larger than any in Illinois history and represented a true financial crisis. Over the past year, this debt has been reduced

to \$1.7 billion. This is great progress, but there is still much work left to do.

The Blagojevich Administration is committed to a balanced budget and has proposed a bill that requires every spending increase to be matched by a corresponding revenue increase or spending reduction. We are committed to a series of reforms that will include consolidating state agencies, cutting government waste and closing corporate loopholes – all without raising taxes.

Throughout this process, the budgets of every state agency have been studied in search of ways we can address our fiscal crisis. Over a multi-year period, almost every agency in the state will be faced with varying levels of budget cuts. This is the year that tourism will be affected. We are now all faced with difficult decisions on how to implement these cuts. While we do not relish having to make these choices, they are necessary if the state is to regain its sound fiscal footing.

The good news is that we as an industry have a strong infrastructure of experienced and talented staff throughout the state. So many of you have long dedicated yourselves to promoting tourism and we will be relying on your creativity and innovation during the coming months. Now, more than ever, is the time for our industry to unite as a team. I am confident that, by working together

*(Continued on Page 2)*

# STATEWIDE NEWS

## Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism

The 2004 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, March 29-31, at the Hilton Chicago – a must-attend annual conference – is the place to sharpen your marketing skills, grow awareness of industry trends and get an outlook for the future of tourism.

The conference kicks off with the State of the State of Tourism address that will be given by Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Director Jack Lavin and Illinois Bureau of Tourism (IBOT) Deputy Director Jan Kostner. This year's educational program will focus on the key elements necessary for succeeding in the business of tourism with a stellar lineup of nationally renowned speakers, covering a variety of topics. Keynote speakers will include futurist Ed Barlow, who will outline a dynamic approach to preparing for what is ahead; Peter Yesawich of Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell, who will provide insights on the state of the tourism industry; and a motivational session by Scott Friedman, a renowned motivational speaker who will offer advice on mastering challenges, and relieving stress and burnout.

Breakout sessions will focus on a variety of topics including Internet marketing, ecotourism, packaging, customer service, tourism research, international tourism, grants and sports marketing.

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

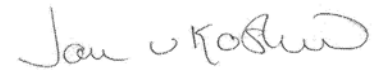
with an open dialogue, we will continue to successfully promote Illinois as a premier travel destination.

At the end of this month, we will all have the opportunity to come together and discuss both challenges and opportunities at the 2004 Governor's Conference in Chicago. The conference, March 29-31 at the Hilton Chicago, will focus on the theme, "Make No Little Plans." This quote by Daniel Burnham, which continues, "...they have no magic to stir men's blood"

is just as applicable today. Together we can prove that a smaller budget need not lead to a smaller vision.

Thank you for all of your hard work and please do not hesitate to contact me, or my staff, with any questions or concerns. I look forward to seeing you at the conference.

Best regards,



Early bird rates are available through March 8, starting from \$325 for an individual registration and as low as \$250 per person for groups of three or more. Watch your mailbox for the complete conference brochure, which details the full conference schedule. For more information, call (888) 658-0749 or visit [www.illinoistourism.org](http://www.illinoistourism.org) or [www.visitillinois.net](http://www.visitillinois.net).

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, call Patrick Snyder at (312) 658-1047. If you would like to donate an item for the Governor's Conference Silent Auction, please contact Marge Heissingner at (217) 525-7980 or [citdo@visitcentralillinois.com](mailto:citdo@visitcentralillinois.com). To participate in the Governor's Awards program, contact Bonnie Heimbach at (815) 547-3740 or [nitdo@visitnorthernillinois.com](mailto:nitdo@visitnorthernillinois.com).

### IBOT names pr agency

Following an extensive search process conducted by management consulting firm Pile and Company, Edelman has been awarded the Illinois Bureau of Tourism's public relations contract.

The Chicago-based public relations firm's vast experience and talent won them the three-year contract for both domestic and international tourism.

Throughout Illinois' 10-year relationship, Edelman has assisted the Bureau with media relations, special events and other outreach including efforts from International Pow Wow, the Illinois Road Trip lottery ticket and the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism to the quarterly Illinois eNewsletter and the launch of *Illinois Now!*

Edelman is a global communications firm with proven capabilities in all facets of public relations, marketing, research and evaluation. The firm's accolades include being named the No. 1 tourism practice among independent PR agencies by *PR Week* and 2003 Agency of the Year by *The Holmes Report*.

Founded in Chicago in 1952, Edelman maintains co-headquarters in Chicago and New York City.

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With a staff of 1,800 and annual billings of \$214 million for fiscal year 2003, Edelman is the world's fifth largest PR agency and remains the largest private independent agency with 39 offices around the globe.

Edelman has consistently had the largest and most comprehensive tourism practice among the global public relations firms. Every year since 1999, Edelman has been named the No. 1 independent tourism practice in the U.S. by *O'Dwyers PR Daily*. A key area for the firm, the tourism practice grew out of a long involvement with the National Tour Association beginning in 1987 and through the acquisition of the Illinois Bureau of Tourism and Mexico's Ministry of Tourism accounts in 1992-1993. Since then the practice has developed into a comprehensive team of more than 30 specialists around the world who focus on tourism-related media relations, promotions, industry relations, conference planning, technology, crisis management and business-to-business public relations.

The public relations contract will continue to be managed by Lisa Link (domestic) and Elisa Marcus (international).

### **Spring into Illinois Now!**

Start planning a picture-perfect spring getaway now. Currently available, *Illinois Now!*, the state's free travel magazine, gives readers the scoop on the best places to celebrate the bicentennial of Lewis and Clark's voyage of discovery, advice on planning an unforgettable family reunion, and the details on cozy

### **INDUSTRY INSIDER: ABBE MCCRACKEN**



*To help you get to know who's who in Illinois tourism, ITN profiles an industry leader each month. This month, we introduce Abbe McCracken, vice president of Edelman's Tourism & Lifestyle group and head of IBOT's domestic tourism account.*

Abbe McCracken has an extensive background in public relations and marketing services for the tour and travel industry. Her clients have spanned the world in both physical location and communication needs, from promoting luxury resorts in the Canadian Rockies to increasing visitation in the Land of Lincoln.

cabins and lodges that are a sure cure for spring fever. A complete listing of the top spring festivals and events is also included.

To obtain a free copy of *Illinois Now!* or more information on traveling throughout Illinois this spring, call an Illinois Travel Counselor at 800-2CONNECT or visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

Copies of the seasonal magazine are also available at tourism information centers, convention and visitors bureaus, regional tourism development

McCracken manages tourism accounts for Edelman's Chicago and Atlanta offices. She currently oversees creation and implementation of strategic public relations programs for the Illinois Bureau of Tourism, Pinehurst in North Carolina, The Homestead, Suburban Extended Stay Hotels and Beaches of South Walton. Her work for the state of Illinois has received numerous accolades, including a Public Relations Society of America Chicago Skyline award and a Silver Trumpet from the Publicity Club of Chicago, both for the November 2002 ceremonial opening of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield.

McCracken joined Edelman's Tourism & Lifestyle practice in 2000 and has also worked with clients such as Expedia.com and Sea Island, Georgia.

Before joining Edelman, McCracken worked for M. Silver Associates in New York City

offices and state park lodges throughout Illinois.

### **Marketing efforts reach more than 200,000**

As we welcome spring and the colorful array of festivals and events that accompany this time of year, we are proud to commemorate one year of IBOT's eNewsletter. Having promoted Illinois' many fine attractions and events through all four seasons, we return with our spring 2004 issue, which will be distributed to more than 70,000

*(Continued on Page 4)*

e-mail addresses. This marks well over 200,000 potential travelers who have received our eNewsletter since the initial effort last spring. Keep an eye out for this issue's focus on theater in Illinois, the upcoming baseball season, and anniversary events surrounding Lewis & Clark and the Grand Excursion.

If you are interested in being added to our distribution list, please contact Brad Strauss at [Brad\\_strauss@commerce.state.il.us](mailto:Brad_strauss@commerce.state.il.us).

### Illinois and the Grand Excursion

Rediscover the mighty Mississippi River in Illinois. Nestled along the hills and foliage of Western Illinois, the Grand Excursion 2004 Celebration commences in Rock Island and Moline, home to a lively riverfront. Join the flotilla as it departs from the scenic Quad Cities and participate in numerous activities and events being hosted by Illinois communities along the route.

Cruising northward, visitors will find Fulton's authentic Dutch windmill offering viewing opportunities of the Mississippi. And just as in 1854, the banks of the Galena River will be filled with individuals welcoming the flotilla into the picturesque Northern region.

To learn more about the Grand Excursion Celebration in Illinois or for great travel ideas and assistance planning your Illinois getaway, call 800-2CONNECT or visit [www.enjoyillinois.com](http://www.enjoyillinois.com).

#### INDUSTRY INSIDER: ABBE MCCRACKEN *(Continued)*

where she managed public relations programs for tourism clients including the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort, Canadian Pacific Hotels, Intra-west, Mystic Coast & Country Travel & Leisure Council, Monaco Government Tourist Office and Ceara, Brazil. McCracken's work for these clients won six Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International Golden Bell awards.

McCracken has also worked with Stone & Associates Marketing Communications in Hendersonville, Tenn., where she handled marketing and public relations for Cypress Gardens, the Tampa/Hillsborough Convention & Visitors Association, the Daytona Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Sevierville Chamber of Commerce (Tenn.). Her activities included everything from marketing plan development and organization of media familiarization tours to media buying and creative design.

McCracken holds a Bachelor of Science in Communications from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and continues to be a die-hard Volunteers or "Vols" fan.

And when not busy working on the Illinois Bureau of Tourism account or rooting on her favorite team, she travels as often as she can. Past experiences include extensive travel throughout Europe, as well as to a variety of

sunny destinations including Hawaii, Brazil, Cabo San Lucas, Miami's South Beach, British Virgin Islands and St. John.

An avid scuba-diving enthusiast, McCracken recently dove with manta rays, each donning a 12-foot wingspan, off the coast of Hawaii's Big Island and has fed sharks while scuba diving off the coast of Fort Lauderdale.

Not quite as daunting, yet equally interesting, McCracken was on the entertainment staff of Dollywood – Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Theme Park – from age 10-17 as her clogging team performed weekly throughout the summers at the park.

A native of Morristown, Tenn., McCracken lived in Paris (France) the summer after graduating from college and spent time exploring the many ins and outs of the city. Since arriving back in the states, McCracken has lived in Nashville, Tenn., New York City and Chicago before moving to Atlanta last year. She and Ryan, her husband of nearly six years, reside in Atlanta and are awaiting the birth of their first child next month.

To learn more about Edelman, contact McCracken at:

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# NATIONAL NEWS

## Consumer confidence dropped in February

Consumer confidence tumbled abruptly in early February, with the drop especially pronounced among lower-income households, according to the University of Michigan. The University's index of consumer sentiment fell 10 percent to 93.1 in the first part of February from 103.8 in January. Economists had expected the index to inch ahead.

Source: *Travel Advance*

## Internet generated \$715 million for U.S. lodging industry

According to Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC), the Internet generated an average of 26,000 incremental rooms occupied per night and annual incremental room revenue of \$715 million in 2003. This incremental gain was offset by a \$1.99 billion loss for the U.S. lodging industry as a result of the Internet's lower-pricing effects. The net effect for the industry in 2003 will be a negative \$1.27 billion. Average daily rates for branded properties would have been \$3.18 higher per occupied room night in 2003 than if there were no Internet effect.

Source: *Travel Advance*

## Opportunity knocks

Eco-friendly tours make good business sense in an era when

travelers say they'll pay more to be green. While environmentally friendly motorcoach tours can be readily found in Australia, Africa or Costa Rica, a recent Internet search for bus ecotours in North America yields only a handful of similar experiences. Although coach tour operators in North America have ample opportunities to package ecotours, they generally do not promote them to the enormous market that values ecotourism and is willing to pay for it.

Source: *Travel Advance*

## World Travel & Tourism Council predicts growth in U.S. tourism this year

Following more than two years of poor performance, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) is forecasting a strong return to growth for the U.S. travel industry in 2004. Demand, encompassing all components of travel and tourism consumption, including investment, government spending and exports, is expected to grow 7.3 percent in real terms to \$1.5 trillion this year. The U.S. is expected to benefit from strong European and U.K. traffic, resulting from the strong pound and euro to post nearly \$100 billion in total visitor exports, a gain of 14.7 percent over 2003.

Source: *Travel Advance*

## Good beginnings

First-quarter travel is off to a solid start, with end-of-year 2003 momentum carrying over into 2004, says travel industry analyst James V. Cammisa, Jr. Domestic trip volume appears to be running four percent above last year, when pre-Iraq War uncertainties depressed travel demand. Leisure

travel gains continue to outpace business travel, as seen in the strength of cruise and resort bookings and in weekend versus weekday hotel occupancies.

Source: *Travel Advance*

**ILLINOIS**  
**RIGHT HERE. RIGHT NOW.**

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*Governor*

Patrick Quinn  
*Lieutenant Governor*

Jack Lavin  
*Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity*

Jan Kostner  
*Deputy Director, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism*

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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.*