

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois “The Celebration of A Lifetime” in Full Swing

SPRINGFIELD, IL (January 31, 2000) – For the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), Bureau of Tourism’s Millennium program, 1999 was just the beginning. “Illinois: The Celebration of A Lifetime” is the state’s three year Millennium program, designed to showcase the heritage and spirit of Illinois, commemorate Illinois’ history and help residents and visitors be a part of the exciting statewide celebration.

“Our unique program which includes partnerships with Korbel Champagne, Six Flags Great America, Read to Succeed and *American Photo Magazine*, gives residents the opportunity to explore their heritage over three years and encourages visitors to come to Illinois and participate in our celebrations” said DCCA Director Pam McDonough.

In 1999, “The Celebration of A Lifetime” program focused on educating both the Illinois tourism industry and consumers alike on how they could participate in Illinois’ millennium program. Illinois residents and visitors got a taste of the upcoming millennium during the summer of 1999, as they enjoyed a practice champagne toast with Korbel Champagne (the official champagne of the Millennium) at Korbel’s Illinois Millennium Practice Party in front of the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. Co-hosted by Illinois tourism Spokesperson Roy Leonard and Korbel, the event got visitors ready for the Millennium with a toast contest, an Illinois trivia contest and a practice New Year’s countdown.

Also in 1999, Illinois created a new millennium Web site that links from

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their existing Web page www.enjoyillinois.com, and is a resource for consumers making their plans to visit Illinois during the millennium. Offering seasonal contests and giveaways, detailed descriptions of Illinois' millennium programs, information on planning a millennium trip or family reunion in the state, interactive postcards for family and friends and descriptions of fun-filled millennium activities in the state, it is a must-see resource for those planning millennium travels.

In 2000, Illinois will continue the celebration throughout the year, with every month chock-full of statewide millennium events and festivals. Whether it's Eagle Tours, a Snow Sculpting Competition, a Spring Fling in Amish Country, a Hot Air Balloon Festival or a Fall Tour of Homes, Illinois offers hundreds of fun activities to celebrate the unique heritage of every Illinois city throughout the year 2000.

Students will also have a wonderful opportunity to commemorate this milestone year by participating in the Illinois' sponsored Read to Succeed program. As part of the program, students at more than 3,200 participating schools in grades K-6 who complete 600 minutes of reading on Illinois' history outside of the classroom will win free admission to Six Flags Great America in Gurnee, Ill. Due to DCCA's sponsorship of the Read to Succeed program, students in 136 additional schools in Illinois will benefit by having the opportunity to participate in the program. Read to Succeed will help students in Illinois and surrounding states learn about our state's heritage and encourage visitation to Illinois.

As the 20th century comes to a close, the year 2001 will be a year to commemorate Illinois' place in history and its contributions to the future. Illinois will tie together the three years of celebration with a special commemorative issue of *American Photo* magazine. Working with the magazine, amateur photographers will participate in a three-day photo trek from June 23-25, 2000 and capture each region of the state on film. The resulting photographs will be compiled into a commemorative issue of the magazine available to consumers throughout the year 2001.

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In the millennium, Illinois will celebrate its history and spirit as it prepares to commemorate the state for future generations. For festivals and activities to family reunions and events, Illinois is the place to have The Celebration of A Lifetime for the millennium.

For detailed information on hundreds of Millennium events, attractions or accommodations and routes throughout Illinois, visit the Millennium Web site at www.enjoyillinois.com/2000 or call an Illinois travel counselor at 1-800-2CONNECT (TTY: 1-800-406-6418).

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA), Bureau of Tourism works to enhance the economic development climate for the citizens of Illinois.