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Contact: Rebecca Olchawa
Edelman Public Relations
312/729-1710

Discover Spring in Illinois NOW!
Free magazine provides travel ideas to help make the most of longer days and warmer weather

CHICAGO (February 20, 2002) – Imagine tiptoeing under 14 feet of plummeting water to enter a paradise of more than 250 tropical plants. Or strolling through ornate gardens complete with bridges, sculptures and waterfalls that lead to a teahouse and an authentic Japanese pond. Travelers don't have to go far to experience such pleasures. They're all right here in Illinois.

Start planning these and other spring travel experiences with the help of Illinois' award-winning travel magazine *Illinois NOW!* Currently available, the spring issue features hundreds of travel ideas, plus a chance for readers to win a weekend getaway at the Ritz-Carlton Chicago. To obtain a free copy, call 800-2CONNECT or visit www.enjoyillinois.com.

Offering more than 40 pages of recommendations on the best things to do and see from March until May, this issue of *Illinois NOW!* features Illinois' most sensational gardens, the state's best springtime golf spots, Chicago's blues scene, and a collection of quirky museums. Whether travelers are looking for "Hidden Gem Museums," "Red Hot Blues," a "Garden Variety," or a place to "Swing into Spring," *Illinois NOW!* provides helpful information for making any spring fling memorable.

Those looking for unique, off-the-beaten path ideas need not look further than "Navigator," a regular feature in *Illinois NOW!* Among the many recommendations in this issue are the Mid America Morel Mushroom Festival in Shawnee National Forest (April 20-21); Nauvoo's new Mormon Temple, which will open to the public for just five weeks on May 18-June 22; and the annual migration white pelicans make through Alton en route from Mexico. March is the ideal time to view these magnificent birds.

Also included in *Illinois NOW!* is a complete listing of spring fairs, festivals and events, categorized by region. Not-to-be-missed spring events include the 8th Annual Chicago Flower &

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Garden Show at Navy Pier (March 9-17), the Central Illinois Auto Show in Peoria (April 5-7), the original Raggedy Ann & Andy Festival in Arcola (May 18-19), and Eldorado's Daffodil Festival (April 13-14), the perfect way to welcome spring.

Readers can flip to the last page of *Illinois NOW!* to learn about this issue's "Illinois Icon" -- Bald Knob Cross. Built in 1937 as a monument to peace, this icon stands in southern Illinois' Alto Pass and is the location of an annual Easter Sunrise Service (March 31, 6:30 a.m.), as well as the unusual Blessing of the Bikes that follows.

Last but certainly not least, the spring issue offers readers a chance to win a luxurious weekend getaway for two at the Ritz-Carlton Chicago. This ultimate weekend package includes dinner at the hotel's award-winning French restaurant and a \$500 shopping spree at the Water Tower Place, featuring more than 100 shops and restaurants.

Illinois NOW! is published quarterly by Redwood Custom Communications for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, Bureau of Tourism. The magazine's user-friendly format includes contact numbers and Web addresses for featured activities, events and destinations. Its contents are color-coded by region, making it easy for readers to navigate the pages and ultimately, the state.

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.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Cover art is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Rebecca Olchawa at 312/729-1710.

*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.*