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Illinois Tourism Information Center Opens On Navy Pier®

Illinois Bureau of Tourism offering free travel resource at Chicago's top attraction

CHICAGO (July 30, 2003) – While addressing a group of tourism industry professionals at the launch of Tall Ships ® Chicago 2003, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Director Jack Lavin today announced the opening of a Tourism Information Center (TIC) at Navy Pier®. The Department's Bureau of Tourism is working closely with the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA), owner and manager of Navy Pier, to provide visitors with travel information and to create awareness of Illinois as a first-class tourism destination.

“We're very pleased to have a tourism information center at such an ideal location as Navy Pier,” said Lavin. “Tourism continues to be a significant tool for economic activity and source of employment for Illinois residents, and this is just another way that we can stimulate additional travel to and within the state.”

With nearly 8.4 million visitors in 2002, Navy Pier is Chicago's most visited tourism attraction. The new TIC will enable the state to leverage Navy Pier's popularity to reach millions of people each year to promote the variety of travel experiences available throughout Illinois. The Bureau operates a network of 15 tourism information centers throughout the state, including two centers in Chicago – the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago's Loop and now Navy Pier. The new TIC is open and located in the Family Pavilion, the gateway to the pier, at the Navy Pier Information Desk. It is jointly staffed by state and Navy Pier representatives trained to provide Illinois, Chicago and general Navy Pier information. Infrastructure enhancements to the TIC, including additional signage, technological resources and additional displays, are planned.

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“We at Navy Pier are proud to be one of Illinois’ top tourist attractions and, at the same time, we are excited to play a role in encouraging people to visit the many other exciting sites throughout the state,” said Leticia Peralta Davis, chief executive officer of the MPEA.

“Tourism’s foundation is partnerships, and the opening of our Navy Pier center is a great example of working together to achieve a common goal of growing Illinois tourism,” said Jan Kostner, deputy director of the Illinois Bureau of Tourism. “Navy Pier is one of Illinois’ premier attractions, and having a presence here will benefit the entire Illinois industry.”

Representative Thomas Holbrook (D-Belleville), chairman of the Illinois House Tourism Committee, also noted, “The impact of tourism in Illinois reaches every corner of the state. We are committed to developing the infrastructure to support this industry in order to reap the economic benefits for all Illinois residents.”

All Illinois TICs are open seven days a week, with the exception of Christmas, New Year’s Day and Thanksgiving Day, and are staffed by trained travel counselors who provide Illinois tourism information, disseminate Illinois tourism materials, make lodging reservations for visitors, and provide traffic and weather information.

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism manages industry efforts resulting in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents. Illinois welcomed 83.3 million domestic visitors in 2002 – 27.8 million for business and 55.5 million for leisure purposes – and contributed nearly \$22 billion to the Illinois economy. The industry employed 302,600 people who earned more than \$7.7 billion.

Illinois tourism information is available free of charge by calling **1-800-2CONNECT** or by visiting the Illinois Bureau of Tourism’s Web site, **www.enjoyillinois.com**.

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The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority is a municipal corporation created by the Illinois General Assembly whose mission is to attract trade shows, conventions and public events to Chicago and, in the process, strengthen the economy of the area.