



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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TRAVEL INDUSTRY RALLIES AROUND RECORD YEAR AT THE 2006 ILLINOIS GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

Industry leaders gathered to celebrate achievements and collaborate for the future

CHICAGO – The 19th annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, the state's premier educational and networking forum for the travel industry, was held Feb. 22-24 at the Hilton Springfield in Springfield, Ill. The conference, themed "The Main Event: Winning the Tourism Game," celebrated the Illinois tourism industry's successes and introduced initiatives for the upcoming year. The conference was hosted by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT) and Visit Illinois, and was attended by more than 600 representatives from the travel industry.

The 2006 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism presented attendees with engaging educational programs that focused on industry trends, research and evaluation, and marketing best practices. This year's speaker roster included noted experts such as National Tour Association President Hank Phillips, futurist Watts Wacker, training/leadership expert and former Disney executive Doug Lipp, and NFL analyst for Fox News Chicago and former Chicago Bear Tom Waddle. Each evening, attendees enjoyed networking events including an icebreaker reception at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and a second-night social at the Hilton Springfield that offered dining, dancing, music and sports-themed entertainment.

DCEO Director Jack Lavin and IBOT Deputy Director Jan Kostner discussed the changing nature of Illinois tourism and its vital role in statewide economic development during the State of the State of Tourism Address on the morning of Thursday, Feb. 23. Throughout the address Lavin and Kostner touted the industry's achievements.

"In 2004, Illinois welcomed nearly 92 million visitors who pumped a record travel-spending high of \$24.5 billion into our state's economy, an almost 7 percent increase over 2003," said Lavin.

Other highlights from the address include:

Facts and Figures

- In 2004, travel to Illinois directly accounted for nearly 300,000 Illinois jobs, including 1,000 new jobs that generated nearly \$7.8 billion in payroll.
- Illinois welcomed 90.61 million domestic visitors in 2004, the highest volume to date.
- Leisure travel to Illinois has increased by 8.6 percent. The majority of these travelers came from the Midwest (Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Indiana and Michigan).
- Business travel to Illinois has increased by 2.2 percent. Illinois welcomed 25.73 million business travelers in 2004 up from 25.19 million travelers in 2003. Business travel to Chicago is up by 6.6 percent, making it the country's top business destination.
- Consumer awareness of the "Illinois. Mile After Magnificent Mile" brand is at an all-time high of 57 percent. Midwest competitors' brand awareness averages 34 percent.

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Governor Rod R. Blagojevich

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism

- Through Gov. Blagojevich's film tax credit legislation, projects filmed in Illinois in 2005, such as *The Break-Up* and *Stranger Than Fiction*, generated \$94 million and nearly 15,000 jobs.

New Initiatives

- September 2005 marked the first Illinois Wine Month as designated by Gov. Blagojevich. Through special promotions and events, Illinois Wine Month publicized the state's 193 vineyards and 63 wineries which cumulatively contribute \$60 million to the economy.
- IBOT and Chicago's WTTW Channel 11 collaborated to produce *Wild Chicago's Illinois Road Trip*, which will premiere April 21 and will feature seven half-hour episodes highlighting offbeat destinations around the state.
- This spring, IBOT will introduce the *Illinois Movie Sites and Sets* campaign designed to capitalize on visitors' love for movies to stimulate travel to Illinois.

"The Illinois tourism industry has demonstrated great resilience and continues to gain momentum in 2006," said Kostner. "After observing the passion and dedication exhibited by attendees of the Governor's Conference, I am confident the industry will maintain its high standards of excellence."

Tourism Marketing and Achievement Award Winners

The conference concluded on Friday, Feb. 24 with the Governor's Awards luncheon emceed by Sam Madonia, sports anchor of WFMB-AM, Springfield. Twenty-seven awards were presented at the luncheon to tourism groups and individuals that have made outstanding achievements in promoting Illinois events, attractions and destinations. Four well-known Illinois tourism leaders retiring this year were inducted into the "Illinois Tourism Hall of Fame" at the luncheon. The honorees were Larry Bowman, executive director of the Williamson Convention and Visitors Bureau and interim director of the Southern Illinois Tourism Development Office; Wendy Perks Fisher, president of the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau; Marge Heissinger, executive director of the Central Illinois Tourism Development Office and Tom Rivera, president of the Greater Woodfield Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The awards were presented in 10 categories and were split in three divisions – Division A for organizations with operating budgets under \$250,000, Division B for groups with budgets ranging from \$250,001-\$700,000 and Division C for groups with budgets greater than \$700,000. A panel of judges consisting of marketing professionals chose from 142 entries based on clarity of message, creativity, originality and the project's overall success.

2006 Governor's Awards Recipients

Print Advertising

Division A: Galena Garlic Company for the *Galena Garlic Festivale* poster

Division B: Elgin Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for *Weekend Family Fun Getaways* ad

Division C: Galena/Jo Daviess County Convention & Visitors Bureau for their *Outsiders Welcome* ad

Alternate Advertising

Division A: Galena Cellars, Vineyard and Winery for their *Galena Cellars Nouveau Celebration* poster

Division B: Kankakee County Convention & Visitors Bureau for their meeting/group planner/post cards

Division C: Shedd Aquarium for their *Rediscover Your Shedd* bus shelter campaign

General Brochures

Division A: Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau for their *Experience a True American Hometown* brochure

Division B: Joliet Visitors Bureau for their *2005 Summer in Joliet Festivals Guide* and *2005-2006 Fall & Winter in Joliet Festivals and Events Guide*

Division C: Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau for their *Jane: Diary of a Dinosaur* brochure

Visitor Guides

Division A: LaSalle County Tourism Coalition for their *LaSalle County Visitor Guide*

Division B: Elgin Area Convention & Visitors Bureau for their 2005 visitors guide

Division C: Aurora Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for their *Come and Go Visitors Guide*

Media Kits, Meeting Planning or Group Tour Guides

Division A: Spring Green Lodge for their Groundbreaking Ceremony media kit

Division C: Lake County Convention & Visitors Bureau for their destination guide

Newsletters

Division A: Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center for their newsletter

Division B: Elgin Area Convention & Visitors Bureau for their newsletter

Division C: Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau for their *Go Rockford News* newsletter

Web Sites

Division A: Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center for www.starvedrocklodge.com

Division B: Alton Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau for www.visitilton.com

Division C: Aurora Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for www.enjoyaurora.com

Audio/Visual (Radio)

Division A: Macomb Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for their *Minutes of History* radio ad

Division C: Aurora Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for their *Off Peak* radio ad

Audio/Visual (Television Ads or DVDs)

Division B: Alton Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau for their *Meeting of the Great Rivers* DVD

Division C: Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau for their *Television Visitors Guide*

Advertising and/or Public Relations Campaigns

Division A: August Hill Winery for their launch of August Hill Winery campaign

Division B: Carbondale Convention & Tourism Bureau for their *Haven't you heard...Carbondale is putting on a new face* campaign

Division C: Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau and Springfield Hotel Lodging Association for their summer ad campaign

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Media requiring additional information on the 2006 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism may contact Anne Dattulo at anne.dattulo@edelman.com, 312-240-2829, or Alexa Gunther at alexa.gunther@edelman.com, 312-616-1657.