



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 3, 2007

CONTACT: Stephanie Aenchbacher 312-240-2688
stephanie.aenchbacher@edelman.com

TRAVEL INDUSTRY LEADERS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS AT THE 2007 ILLINOIS GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON TOURISM

*State's premier tourism education and networking forum
to be held in Chicago, Feb. 7-9, 2007*

CHICAGO – The 2007 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, 20th Anniversary: The Future is Ours, will take place **Feb. 7-9** at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago. Hosted by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism (DCEO/IBOT) and the Illinois Tourism Alliance (ITA), formerly known as Visit Illinois, the conference will bring together more than 600 representatives of Illinois' vibrant travel industry. This year's conference theme, "The Future is Ours," celebrates the achievements of the Illinois tourism industry over the past 20 years while exploring the vast opportunities that lie ahead through educational programs, numerous networking events and the annual Governor's Awards Luncheon.

"The 20th annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism is a celebration of the vitality of Illinois' \$26 billion tourism industry that supports 300,000 jobs," said Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich. "Since its inception, this innovative forum has evolved into one of the most successful state tourism conferences in the country and provides the industry with an ideal opportunity to continue attracting more visitors from across the state, throughout the country and around the globe."

Conference Highlights

DCEO Director Jack Lavin and IBOT Deputy Director Jan Kostner will present the annual **State of the State of Tourism Address on Thursday, Feb. 8**. Lavin and Kostner will discuss the importance of tourism in Illinois, provide highlights of the Illinois tourism industry over the past 20 years and offer insights into the multitude of opportunities available to the industry in the future.

Participants in the Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism can engage with industry experts during education sessions that focus on industry trends, new online technologies, customer service and marketing best practices, among others. Conference speaker highlights include:

- **President and CEO of Lettuce Entertain You Kevin Brown (Feb. 7)** will discuss his philosophy of staying competitive in an ever-evolving industry and apply his 25-year experience to speak about the future of hospitality and tourism;
- **Lisa Ford, author of the No.1-selling learning series on customer service, "How to Give Exceptional Customer Service" (Feb. 8)**, will explain strategies for

- creating loyal customers through partnerships and examine why customers choose to stay loyal to a brand;
- **Renowned young futurist Andrew Zolli (Feb. 8)** will highlight emerging trends that are shaping the future of the industry;
 - **Chairman Emeritus of DDB Worldwide and founder of Business for Diplomatic Action Keith Reinhard (Feb. 9)** will discuss how the travel industry can begin to reverse the challenges facing America's reputation in the world marketplace and how attendees can best represent themselves to the international traveler; and
 - **Social media expert and senior vice president, Me2Revolution/Edelman, Steve Rubel (Feb. 9)**, will discuss the growing influence of social media, how consumers are using social media to find information, and how the Illinois hospitality industry can engage consumers through online conversation.

The icebreaker reception at the Museum of Science and Industry will provide participants with the opportunity to view the much-anticipated *Body Worlds 2* exhibit or tour a World War II era U-505 German submarine. On the second evening of the conference, attendees can partake in special dining offers at many of Chicago's renowned restaurants and enjoy discounted tickets to theatrical productions such as *Wicked*, the Blue Man Group, and The Second City. Capping off the second night, the conference is also hosting a *Sweet Dreams Late Night Dessert Reception* at the Palmer House that includes live entertainment and sweets.

Governor's Awards Luncheon

On **Feb. 9**, the 20th annual Governor's Conference on Tourism will conclude by recognizing Illinois' tourism industry leaders with the **Governor's Awards Luncheon**. The awards will honor the institutions and people who have led the industry through progressive and pioneering tourism marketing practices.

For a complete conference schedule and list of speakers or to register for the **2007 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism**, visit www.iltourismconference.org or www.visitillinois.net, or call **888-658-0749**.

###

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.

The Illinois Tourism Alliance (ITA), formerly Visit Illinois, is a not-for-profit membership organization that serves as the primary umbrella for the Illinois travel and tourism industry. The group's board of directors oversees efforts to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within Illinois with core services focusing on legislative support, education and professional development.