

NIU Remembers
Every so often
tragedy strikes
and we realize
just how fragile
life really is, how
bad things can
come into our
lives, and just
how precious life is. And, we
also realize just how fortunate
we are, how truly blessed we
are to live in communities that
reach out and embrace each
other in this time of sorrow and
grief. While we will not ever
forget Valentine's Day events at
NIU, we can take pride in the
spirit of NIU, the legacy of the
victims, and powerful and
overwhelming drive to bring
this campus back to life. The
DeKalb County partners have
adopted a phrase to welcome
back the students to their
campus home in late February,
"FORWARD, TOGETHER FORWARD"
and although the students have
returned back, news stories are
fading, we will always
remember.

As been our practice, we
continually research new websites
that may be of interest to our
regional partners. Here are some
sites for websites for you to check
out.

Illinois Tourism:

www.enjoyillinois.com

Northern Illinois Tourism:

www.visitnorthernillinois.com

Chicago Tourism:

www.choosechicago.com

Chicago Olympics:

www.chicagoolympics2016.com

Lincoln Bicentennial:

www.lincoln200.net

Travel Industry of America:

www.tia.org

Illinois Wine Industry:

www.illinoiswine.com

Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Updates

The Federal Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, in conjunction with the Kentucky kick-off celebrations on February 11th and 12th have asked for information on activities in Illinois on and around February 12, 2008. Lincoln Home, the Abraham Lincoln Association, the Old State Capitol and the Presidential Library & Museum have many activities for that date but the Commission would very much like to include activities and programs planned throughout the state. Activities in communities that have a Lincoln-theme for February 2008 and for the entire bicentennial period can be posted on the Commission's website. Submission of events can be found on the home page of the Commission's website - www.lincoln200.net.

Also, the Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission has enhanced its website to provide more information on Illinois Bicentennial Events. This new version of the site offers a state-wide calendar of events and an easy to use event form for communities to submit local activities for posting on the calendar. If you have any questions, please call Kay Smith, statewide coordinator at (217) 558-9025 or email her at kay.smith@illinois.gov.

More News Regarding the Lincoln Bicentennial

The Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission has unveiled the unprecedented statewide search for the "Voice of Lincoln," a contest that seeks to identify an individual who will record a series of radio public service announcements to promote Illinois' observance of the Lincoln Bicentennial. Contest rules are available on the Commission's website, www.lincoln200.net. Tape recordings made by the contestants, who will receive no compensation, will be reviewed by the Commission and a winner selected. Then, in cooperation with the Illinois Broadcasters Association, the winner will record a series of vignettes about Abraham Lincoln's life which will be distributed to all Illinois radio stations for volunteer airing during 2008 and 2009.

"We're honored to have been asked to play a role in providing a forum for the 'voice' of Lincoln," said Dennis Lyle, President & CEO of the Illinois Broadcasters Association. "What better way to do so than via the theatre-of-the-mind medium of radio?" The "Voice of Lincoln" is the latest initiative to promote the Lincoln Bicentennial in Illinois. The Lincoln Log, a day-by-day feature that explains what Abraham Lincoln wrote, said or did on that date in history, is a joint venture between the Commission and the Illinois Press Association that is being featured in more than 60 newspapers.

AgFun.com

Yes the snow is now covering the ground, but we know that spring will soon be here. And with that bit of news, comes a reminder to check out the new website from ATP (Agriculture & Tourism Partners of Illinois). Just unveiled is www.AgFun.com, the state's comprehensive listing of our vast array of agritourism offerings from Chicago to Cairo – and most important to us, those businesses throughout Northern Illinois.

Designed by Trittenhaus Design of Sycamore, the new site is designed to match the print guide, Agritourism Activities AND the new website just won a Governor's Award at the 2008 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism for overall Website Design. The website and guide highlight attractions and businesses by region. To make sure your information is complete, you can visit the website and update or add your own information directly. While the site does include a Calendar of Events, these events are maintained through the Illinois Department of Agriculture's site, www.AgrHappenings.com. And you can add in your own agri-events via their online form.

Make sure that you are ready for spring. The visitors will once again be looking for places to go, produce to pick and events to share with family and fiends. Check out www.AgFun.com.

Northern Illinois Wine Trail:

www.northernillinoiswinetrail.com

National Scenic Byways:

www.byways.org

Illinois Byways:

www.illinoisbyways.org

Illinois Agri-Tourism:

www.agfun.com

Film Locations:

www.onscreenillinois.com

Tour Illinois:

www.tourismillinois.org

Meet In Illinois:

www.meetinillinois.com

Sports Illinois:

www.sportsillinois.com

Heartland Int'l Music Tattoo:

www.HeartlandTattoo.org

Illinois Governor's Conference:

www.iltourismconference.com

Summer 2008 Co-Op Ad Space Available - a Few Spaces Remain

Working with Madden Media, we have co-op ad space available for the Summer 2008 Newspaper Insert, Illinois Getaway Guide. Dropping into Sunday newspapers on May 11, 2008, in major Midwestern cities, with a combined circulation of 1.6 million, each partner will receive one photo or logo, 65 words of copy, address, phone and website. Cost for the 1/6th page space is \$1,954.41 This is the last co-op opportunity offered under our FY08 IBOT Marketing Partnership Grant. Only a few spaces remain – call to reserve yours now.

Calendar of Events - Illinois Tourism Happenings . . .

March 13

Annual Museum Day, Springfield

March 18

Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition Mtg, DeKalb

March 19

ATI Board Meeting, Conference Call

April 8-10

TIA – Travelcom, Chicago

April 12-13

Heartland International Music Tattoo, DeKalb

April 16

IL Association Museum Workshop, Geneva

May 7

Illinois Tourism Alliance Annual Mtg & Spirit of Excellence Awards

Educational Opportunities

One of the ways we strive to serve our regional partners is providing access to educational resources and materials. Whether it is hosting a workshop on a specific topic (such as agritourism, festival, marketing – or any one of the ones we've offered in the past), or sharing resources gained from participation at another event, we want you to be informed and educated.

In that vein, we want to remind you about a special button on our web site's homepage, www.visitnorthernillinois.com called Educational Opportunities and you may be surprised what you will find. Last November NITDO worked in conjunction with ISEN (Illinois Special Events Network) on Festival Boot Camp. Posted on our website are all session hand-outs: topics ranging from Tourism Resources, Sponsorship, Volunteer Management, Marketing, Working with a Board of Directors and much more. These will be posted through the end of March – so check them out today and download the materials most beneficial to you and your organization. And make sure to let others know about these materials.

Last month staff participated at the ISEN State Convention, offering four sessions; and these topics included: Tourism Resources, Marketing Ideas from Mother Goose, Extreme Themes and Lemonade from Lemons – as well as three hand-outs from the workshop keynote. Jodi Rudnick from Advisors Marketing addresses 265 Free Ways to Market Your Event, Talkin' About My Generation and Generation-to-Generation Marketing. Check out her website and blog for more resources – www.advisorsmarketing.com – she was entertaining, informative and provided a great deal of info to think about long after the session ended.

At the 2008 Illinois Governor's Conference on Tourism, there were fantastic topics. While I wasn't able to attend many, working behind the scenes on the Awards Competition, many of the session hand-outs can be found online to be downloaded. Be sure to check-out www.iltourismconference.com From State of the State offered by Jack Lavin (DCEO) and Jan Kostner (IBOT) to Trends for Travel Industry by Dr. Peter Yesawich and many others – all are available for you to read, review and download.

Lastly, Madden Media, the ones who publish our Illinois Travel Guide, newspaper inserts and rep many other marketing opportunities, offered a special session at the ICCVB meeting. The presentation offered basic marketing concepts with clear examples of good and bad – offering helpful suggestions that allow each of us to review our own collateral materials, ads, brochures, etc for clarity, concept, design and overall message.

So, sit down with a cup of coffee and review this special hand-out. Download it and use these tips as you take a hard look at your own materials. We will continually add in new materials as they come available – so, make sure you list this section of our website as one of your favorites. We want to keep you informed and educated!

UPDATES: 2008 Northern Illinois Website & REGIONAL Visitor Guide

The website hits continually amaze us. We are getting phenomenal numbers of hits, visits and most importantly unique visitors. And many of these visitors are viewing multiple pages. We want to make sure that the content on the web is as detailed as possible. One of the requests we have received in the past is for more information on restaurants and hotels. We are asking for your assistance to add in more listings on your community's favorite restaurants, cafes and eateries.

We appreciate the need for our chain restaurants, but are truly interested in your locally-owned establishments. And, this listing is completely FREE. Please help us spread the word to your local partners that this is available to them. Check out the button on the website's home page that allows you to Add or Change Listings. Right now we have the listings for Lodging and Dining combined based on limited content. If we have more detailed information, the listings will be split. Once again, please help us to spread the word to your partners on this new opportunity.

The e-postcards are a BIG HIT and they have only been online for a little over one month. We are now offering partners the chance to showcase their attractions on our e-post cards. Check out the website, www.visitnorthernillinois.com to see the first eight partners we are featuring - from wine making in Galena Cellars Winery to the lion at the Midwest Museum of Natural History in Sycamore. Visitors can send these images to their friends and family and encourage them to visit our area. We are looking for seasonal beauty shots, as well as quirky



Aurora
May 10-18
National Tourism Week –
Celebrate Our Industry
May 13-15

ICCVB General Membership
Mtg, Champaign
May 17

Midwest Museum of Natural
History, Sycamore hosts Jeff Corwin

**Chicago Hosts TIA's TravelCom
'08 Destination Unknown:
Predicting Tomorrow's Travel
Environment**

Visit TIA's website for more
information on registration, fees and
speakers and topics. This is truly a
unique opportunity in our region on
April 8-10.

Attend TIA's TravelCom'08 to hear
from the industry's best brains and
take home practical, valuable advice
that will boost your bottom line.



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and fun iconic shots and we will be including a small caption on the front of the e-card. So, we want to change the images each month – to keep them fresh, timely and interesting. So, our designer has arranged for a special email address to receive your images, so send your best ideas to nitdo@trittenhaus.com. Use the subject line to state e-post card submission.

And while we are talking about photos, we can always use more images for the website, kiosk, banners and whatever else we come up with to create. If you want to send images for consideration, please use the following criteria: 1) minimum of 300 dpi; print size of 5' x 7" minimum; clearly identified location/attraction being sent, and permission obtained to share the images you submit. Again, send them directly to our designer at our "special email address", nitdo@trittenhaus.com and include in the subject line a reference to regional photo.

And make sure that your listing info on our website is accurate and complete. You can now add or edit your information via our online form! Do it now before you forget, and remember your listing info is FREE. Each listing contains information on your attraction or business, description, address, phone and where available, your website. While we can't possibly list every attraction in the entire 14-county area, we will try to be as inclusive as possible in our website. So, go to the home page, find the button to add or change your listing. You have the ability to enter the information directly on-line. If you have a specific question about the website, or perhaps want to get a copy of the new 2008 Visitor Guide, send an email to mary@visitnorthernillinois.com.

Spring Break In Illinois: KidVentures – New Tourism Initiatives

IBOT has launched a Spring Break in Illinois program designed to encourage travel throughout the state with new planning tools and special incentives. The program offers special Chicago hotel rates as well as Illinois KidVentures -- new kid-centric travel itineraries that will help families plan fun, memorable spring getaways. Visitors can learn about all Illinois offers this spring by visiting www.enjoyillinois.com/springbreak.

According to Jan Kostner, IBOT Deputy Director, "Illinois is a great destination for travelers looking to get away this spring -- we have some of the best indoor water parks, nationally-recognized museums, and unbeatable city tours in the Midwest. Our site will help plan the perfect spring vacation for families looking for affordable and enjoyable spring break options or anyone who needs a break from the daily grind."

Additionally, planning a spring break getaway to Illinois is fun for the whole family with Illinois KidVentures. Families can explore a special website on www.enjoyillinois.com/springbreak created especially to excite children about all of the incredible attractions that Illinois has to offer. The interactive site showcases eight Illinois KidVentures bookable travel itineraries and will be further enhanced during March to offer downloadable games and a calendar of events. Visitors to the site explore itineraries such as:

Safari in the City: Discover world-class museums and come face to face with a Tyrannosaurus Rex, Komodo dragon or an Egyptian mummy; take in performances of Wicked, Jersey Boys or the Joffrey Ballet; and swing by Navy Pier to ride in a sky-high Ferris wheel, shop and take boat tour. (Chicago)



Splash and Explore: Hours of excitement wait in the Chicago suburbs -- swim, slide and ride at tropical indoor water park CoCo Key, cheer on your favorite knight while feasting at Medieval Times, and sit in the driver's seat of a racecar and speed down a virtual racetrack at GameWorks. (Chicagoland)

Whiz Kids: Uncover the prehistoric past or discover the secrets of outer space without leaving Illinois! Go on a space mission at the Challenger Learning Centers in Woodstock. Head to Rockford to see dinosaurs Jane and Homer at the Burpee Museum and conduct science experiments at the Discovery Center Museum. (Northern)

Abe's Adventures: Visit Lincoln's old stomping grounds and learn about one of the most important U.S. presidents. Dress up like Abe and play with Lincoln Logs at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum or visit the Lincoln Home in Springfield. (Central)