

Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition News



August 2010

ILHC MURALS...SO MANY GREAT STORIES COME TO LIFE



The Illinois Lincoln Highway is cranking this along. In the past few weeks, murals have been installed in University Park, Fulton, and Rock Falls. And in late August look for a special one in Malta to be installed.

It is a tremendous undertaking, and we are continually amazed at the stories the artist brings to life...and the goal is to have as many done as by year-end. Want to get a glimpse of our creations in the past month? University Park talks about the fantastic journey back in 1916 of the Van Buren sisters, riding their Indian motorcycles cross-country. Fulton depicts the picturesque view atop of the Fulton-Lyons Bridge spanning the Mississippi River. Rock Falls celebrates a festival tradition...Auto Day at the Corn Carnival where cars were decorated, with you guessed it, corn! North Aurora celebrates the fun found at Exposition Park, along the Lincoln Highway (Route 31) which was touted as one of the country's largest parks.



There are some new ones coming too...Ashton has a great story of their Paving Jubilee celebration; Malta (to be installed by month-end) of course, references the Seedling Mile, the first one in the entire nation. Morrison's story is the famed 1921 Whiteside County Fair, where it advertised parking for 3,000 cars...quite a feat in 1921. Well, that's enough for now, but WOW- more are coming every month and they are great too!

To see the ILHC murals already completed; you just need to check out the website (www.drivelincolnhighway.com) and we'll post updates on their progress. There is a great new web feature just unveiled. We're excited! Over three dozen murals will be completed at the conclusion of this project...one of the LARGEST public art endeavors in the State!

PORSCHE RALLY...A BIG HIT

On Tuesday, July 6th, in some really hot temperatures, the staff of the ILHC welcomed some gorgeous cars....and some friendly visitors to Malta, specifically to Kishwaukee College the site of the Lincoln Highway Seedling Mile. Working with the Porsche Club of America and the St. Charles CVB, staff spent time working to create clues, questions, and direction for their annual Gimmick Rally, along the Illinois Lincoln Highway. Drivers (and their passengers) were asked to answer 30 questions about the LH history, sites along the roadway and also to follow the exact route as outlined by organizers. Over 140 cars were participating, and since the ILHC had installed an Interpretive Gazebo at the exact site of the refreshment break, there were lots of "answers" found by reading the panels. The day was hot, and we ended it just as the rain started...and we enjoyed helping the participants find the clues.....and we're all planning to take a drive one of these fall afternoons. We'll let you know how we do on the Rally questions....hope we know the answers!



ILHC SPONSORS THE KISHWAUKEE FEST AND LINCOLN HIGHWAY PARADE

Late July, DeKalb County welcomed the return of a Drum & Bugle Corps Show to NIU's Huskie Stadium, something that has been missing for over a decade. On a somewhat smaller scale, the show did return and the Northern Illinois Tourism and ILHC were sponsors of this great event.



It began with a series of concerts from Tuesday-Thursday in DeKalb, then a downtown Twilight Parade along the Lincoln Highway (thus calling it the Lincoln Highway Parade) on Friday night, and ended with the Drum Corp show on Saturday. This was a great event and a boost to DeKalb County overall. Thanks to the volunteers who brought this event back. We look forward to 2011.

BUSINESS NOTE: MURAL ARTWORK IS COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS...

OK...hate to say this, but with the excitement being generated by the murals, and people wanting to share these great images and stories, we need to stress one important fact: the artwork for each of the murals is the property of the ILHC, signed over to the Coalition upon completion and installation of each mural. ILHC holds the copyright for all designs. And, at this time the artwork CAN NOT be used for any commercial purposes and only authorized for reproduction by permission of ILHC.

We know this sounds crazy, but we are working with rules that pertain to materials produced by grant dollars. And, we are a 501c3, so we want to make sure that IF and WHEN we get into the merchandising arena, we are knowledgeable and compliant of our obligations. So, please wait and work with us on these endeavors. We know that options are note cards, post cards, magnets, even coffee mugs...and we know that we are getting offers from community partners wanting to showcase their specific mural. BUT, when we do create merchandising materials....we want to be able to do them in a high-quality manner and for all murals. Thanks for understanding.....call Bonnie with any questions. And we appreciate your support on this request!

ILLINOIS LINCOLN HIGHWAY COOKBOOK

David Alan Badger is finalizing his visits to all the Illinois Lincoln Highway communities to gather some favorite recipes from local businesses. He will compile all of them together along with pencil drawings of the businesses to form an Illinois Lincoln Highway Cookbook. There will be a foldout map, a title page with a list of ILHC board & staff and a page for ILHC background information. The book will be laid out with several sections to identify the communities along the route. And, we've asked him to include a special section on our Interpretive Gazebos and Murals.



Visit David's website at www.davidalanbadger.com and get a glimpse of his talent and how it could showcase your community! AND the partners who have signed up for this project will also be the retail outlets selling these great cookbooks. The ILHC is very excited to see this project completed so everyone can have an opportunity to purchase one. Recently, Illinois River Road and Route 66 National Scenic Byways finished their cookbooks and are very pleased with the final product. Our book is set to hit our retail partners in early fall 2010.....WOW, a possible Christmas gift idea, don't forget this as an option.

STATE'S FINANCIAL NEWS IS GREATLY IMPACTING TOURISM PARTNERS...

By now, you know that the financial situation of the State of Illinois is impacting tourism partners across the State. To date, the state has closed all of the 13 TIC's, ceased advertising efforts, eliminated visitor fulfillment...and the delay in payments (from FY10) has hurt everyone involved. And since we started FY11 and no contracts/grants have been initiated (much less no funding released), everyone is experiencing challenging times to remain open. Our Northern counterpart, the Southern Illinois RTDO, closed its doors at the end of July....and are without staff. The other TDOs, including NITDO, struggle daily to remain open and operational....but no one knows for how long this can continue...and here at ILHC, we rely heavily on

operational support from NITDO, as well as funding grants from the Office of Tourism.



The letter below has been sent to Governor Quinn, with copies also sent to Jack Lavin and Warren Ribley, stating the gravity of the situation. This letter emphasizes the importance of tourism and how we are a part of the solution to the State's budget issues. ICCVB (the Illinois Council of CVBs) is encouraging you to take this letter to your legislators to keep them informed of our funding situation and how the delay in funding will further jeopardize other tourism organizations and their ability to stay open. We appreciate your support to communicate with the state officials and legislators on the situation....thanks! Sample letter is below....please edit as you choose.

*Governor Pat Quinn
Office of the Governor
James R. Thompson Center
100 W. Randolph, 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601*

Dear Governor Quinn,

I am writing to thank you for your continued recognition of Illinois' visitor industry as a job-supporting, revenue-generating economic engine. Throughout Illinois - all 102 counties - women and men are supporting families, improving communities and bettering their lives because they have a job in the visitor industry. Your support of this industry makes this possible.

As you well know, tourism annually generates \$2.1 billion in tax revenue to the State of Illinois and local governments, supports 303,500 jobs and pumps \$30.8 billion in to our state's economy. Additionally, each family in Illinois annually saves \$1,100 in taxes thanks to revenue generated by visitors. Tourism is clearly part of the solution to Illinois' economic recovery.

You are facing many challenging decisions, and we appreciate the deliberation and care you are giving each one of them. As you consider ways to quickly create quality jobs and grow Illinois' economy we would ask that you continue to support tourism and the integrated marketing programs led by your Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity and its

Office of Tourism. We are partners and want to continue to work hand in hand to be part of the solution to bring Illinois back to the economic engine it should be.

Illinois has led the nation in tourism marketing. Its innovative approach of leveraging state, local and private funds in support of growing the economy by growing tourism has become a model for other states to follow. We all know that this is not just a State investment but one that is supported locally through matching funds our communities invest in tourism. We certainly want to keep funding on both the state and local level in tact. Again, your efforts and support have made this possible.

On behalf of the tourism industry, we understand how difficult it has been for you to watch our state's 15 Tourism Information Centers and the Southern Illinois Regional Tourism Development Office close their doors. We respectfully request that you act as soon as possible to commit funds generated by the hotel occupancy tax for these and other tourism-related programs. We are concerned that a lengthy delay will result in a "domino effect", causing Illinois' state and local tourism investment and corresponding market share to be irrevocably eroded, costing precious jobs and general revenue fund dollars for many years to come.

As a case in point, Southern Illinois' dependence on tourism for jobs for the local economy is typical of other rural areas of the state, and while on a much smaller scale indicative of the importance of Illinois' tourism investment in urban areas as well. The closure of the 15 Tourism Information Centers and the Southern Illinois Regional Tourism Development Office that serves nineteen Southern Illinois counties (see attached) eliminated critical resources that attract and guide visitors to an area sorely in need of the tourism jobs and economic stimuli that they provide.

These nineteen rural, low population counties in Southern Illinois maintained almost 4,000 tourism-related jobs and produced over \$26 million in state tax revenue in 2008. There is now no agency in place to serve these counties. Tourism has provided jobs in rural areas as many of the industries that have traditionally maintained the economies of these regions have declined.

Additionally, the 15 Tourism Information Centers that closed had an estimated impact of \$68 million in revenues generated to the State of Illinois which is based on the overall spending of the 1.5 million people that visited the Tourism Information Centers on an annual basis. We now have no one to greet or assist visitors while here in Illinois. We also have no method of fulfilling visitors requests for information, which further exasperates the message we are sending to visitors -- that Illinois is not visitor friendly. More importantly, over 40 people lost their jobs when these centers were shuttered.

Independent hospitality industry reporting and forecasting organizations which provide guidance to corporations in the lodging and restaurant industry, such as Smith Travel Reports and PKF Hospitality Research, are among those reporting a significant increase in travel expenditures this past June and predicting double digit growth in 2011.

A member survey conducted in late July by the Illinois Council of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (ICCVB) indicates that hotel occupancy and rates increased, often dramatically, in June 2010 over June 2009. On a more ominous note, however, virtually all of them will reduce or eliminate advertising and tradeshow participation if there is continued uncertainty or a reduction in funding regarding the state tourism program.

As you look to the future, please know that Illinois' visitor industry stands with you to achieve solutions to the state's fiscal crisis and in advancing the state's economy. As we work with you, our industry will continue to return economic results that benefit all of Illinois and each of its citizens.

ILHC MAINTAINS A PRESENCE AT ILLINOIS OASES



ILHC continues to work with NITDO to maintain a presence for the Byway at the Visitor Information Kiosks at the Tollway Oases. We have displayed both our comprehensive 2010 Illinois Lincoln Highway Visitor Guides and our rack cards. And, we have worked with NITDO staff at a new event, Safety Fests, which have been held at the Belvidere Oasis, the week leading up the summer holidays: Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day. For the first two events, we joined other regional partners provided information, gift items and as manned tables near our Visitor Information Kiosk. AND the next one set for September 1st in Belvidere...want to join us? There will once again be a mini-expo where regional partners can showcase their destination, distribute coupons and trinkets, and talk to the visitors about things to see and do. The first ones had tons of regional representation in the form of materials and giveaways....and we were truly appreciative of partners! If interested in participating on that Wednesday, let us know!

FIND US AND OUR PARTNERS ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

Did you know that the ILHC is on Facebook and Twitter...and did you know that we try to post updates on our own news, BUT more importantly, on YOUR news. We talk about your events, your happenings, your things to see and do that would interest a visitor...and of course, we talk about our gazebos, our murals, and our visitor guide. To find us, the Illinois Lincoln Highway, find their pages at facebook.com/DriveLincolnHwy or @DriveLincolnHwy.



We have also working with our Northern Illinois Tourism and the Northern Illinois Wine Trail in the Social Media mix. Now here is where we can use your assistance - to get more fans and to provide news to share, also find the Northern Illinois Tourism, on Facebook at facebook.com/VisitNorthernIL and on Twitter @VisitNorthernIL our newest endeavor, with the smallest reach to date is for the Northern Illinois Wine Trail. You can find posts about the wine trail facebook.com/NorthernILWine and on Twitter @NorthernILWine.

ILHC STAFF PARTICIPATES IN NATIONAL COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

Bonnie Heimbach, who serves in a dual capacity as the ILHC Project Director and the NITDO Executive Director, was selected to as a representative for the Advisory Committee for the NSB Resource Center. Approx. 15 committee members were chosen from all parts of the country, representing tourism, byways, tribal organizations, USDA, and others....all working together to chart the future planning and operational services provided to byway partners through the Resource Center. A 2-day working session was held in late June to provide the overview of the tasks, set goals and outcomes and begin the process on a point-by-point scenario. And following up, we have had at least two conference calls/webinars to continue to gather feedback and insights. The most recent one asked for evaluations on the supporting materials, their newsletter and their website. This is a challenging and daunting task, but one that will assist the ILHC and other byway leaders for years to come...and the ILHC is pleased that Bonnie was selected to participate.



In addition, Bonnie Heimbach, was elected to the Board of Directors for the National Scenic Byway Foundation. Since January, the Board has met in monthly teleconferences, and is working with the Federal Highway Administration, the Resource Center and other partners to assure the continued support for the National Scenic Byway program at a federal level, and most importantly, to maintain the funding and support provided to the individual byways. A Planning Retreat is being planned for the Board members...and Bonnie suggested working with Chicago Southland CVB and hosting the event (tentatively set for November 4-5) in Tinley Park, along the Illinois Lincoln Highway. We should know in the next few weeks if the ILHC and Illinois partners can welcome this group to our area.

Social Media is all the rage and ILHC has joined in! You can Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DriveLincolnHwy

Twitter @DriveLincolnHwy

Flickr (where you can also post your own photos) at flickr.com/photos/illinoislincolnhighway

CONTACT US FOR TOURISM MATERIALS

With the lack of funding at this time, we regret that we can't ship you cases of materials, BUT we do want to get them into the hands of your potential visitors. We can deliver materials in person if we're heading in your direction. Don't forget that our small loading dock is over-flowing. And, of course we think our 2010 Illinois Lincoln Highway Guide is exceptional as another great piece for visitors to utilize when planning their trip to our region. We can deliver materials in person if we're heading in your direction. Contact the office or email her if you need some...and we'll try to make arrangements to get you some cases....with funding delays, we can't ship quantities using carriers such as Fed Ex, UPS or even snail mail. You can also download our guide directly. And we have rack cards on specific offerings: the new Northern Illinois Wine Trail and the Illinois Lincoln Highway Interpretive Murals and Gazebos....so we can deliver those as well. Let us know!



Calendar of Upcoming Events...

September 21 - 10am, ILHC Board Meeting, DeKalb

November 3-4 - ISEN State Convention, Tinley Park

ILHC BOOSTING IMAGE LIBRARY

Help is needed from our tourism partners. We have been working hard at building our image library and we are always on the lookout for new shots of all that happens in our area. We are always looking for images from ALL seasons and ALL types of events. People shots are awesome to have on hand! And, we have already begun work to update the images for our regional website, as well as beginning to pull images for the 2011 Illinois Lincoln Visitor Guide (hard to believe, but its true). You can assist by sending us your images (with proper photo credits) to mary@visitnorthernillinois.com (she is the keeper of ALL images for both ILHC and NITDO). Thanks!



ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

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