

PUBLIC INPUT SESSIONS PROVIDE INSIGHTS FOR MARKETING BOARD

Over several days in early and mid-February, the Iowa Department of Economic Development's Marketing Board (EDMB) hosted public input sessions around the state as the group prepares to create a marketing plan for the IDED's Business Development Division and the Iowa Tourism Office. Many people from the Iowa tourism industry turned out for the sessions, asking several questions about the process and providing valid input. From these meetings we've identified the most frequently asked questions and have provided answers.

The EDMB understands the success of tourism in Iowa and is aware of the budgetary challenges that face the Iowa Tourism Office. Many proponents of Iowa's tourism industry turned out for the recent public input sessions, proving the group's strong grass-roots network and deep dedication to the success of Iowa's tourism programs. A few issues were repeatedly raised during the meetings around the state that we wanted to address. The EDMB will remain interested in input from the industry.

If you have thoughts that you would like to share with the group, please visit <http://www.iowasmartidea.com/input.html>

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2004 LEGISLATIVE SHOWCASE IS ANOTHER SUCCESS

Again this year, a large majority of Iowa legislators braved the cold to attend the Travel Federation of Iowa's Legislative Showcase. Held February 4, the event featured nearly 80 tourism-related organizations who set up exhibits to educate legislators about the quality of life projects that have opened in Iowa and those that are in the planning stages. The Legislative Showcase capped off a full day of activities including a legislative briefing and meetings with individual lawmakers. ■



Representative Ralph Watts (R-Adel) makes a visit to the Boone exhibit where Jeff Brittain (left) and Fenner Stevenson (right) explain the importance of tourism in their area.

Travel Federation of Iowa President Shirley Phillips enjoyed a visit with Senator Doug Shull (R - Indianola). This year, Senator Shull serves as vice chair of the Economic Growth Committee.



Former Vision Iowa board member and current Representative Swati Dandekar (D - Cedar Rapids) brought her son to the Legislative Showcase where she and Vision Iowa board chair Michael Gartner (right) joined them for this photo.

COOPERATIVE AD CAMPAIGN IN FULL SWING THIS MONTH

As Midwesterners begin to consider their 2004 vacation plans, several cooperative advertisements featuring Iowa hit newsstands and mailboxes this month. The Iowa Tourism Office Cooperative Advertising Program allows tourism industry partners to purchase ads in special Iowa sections at a lower price than it would cost the organization to purchase the ad on its own.

This year, approximately 130 groups took advantage of the cooperative advertising opportunities. Ads will appear in *The Iowan* magazine, *Home & Away Magazine*, *Midwest Meetings*, *USA Weekend* and *Midwest Living Magazine*. Co-op advertising sections will also appear in Midwest newspapers later this spring.



The Tourism Office will announce its 2005 cooperative advertising program at Iowa Tourism Unity Day on April 30. If you have any suggestions about new publications that should be considered for inclusion in the 2005 program, please contact Kathy Bowermaster at kathy.bowermaster@ided.state.ia.us or 888-472-6035. ■

UNITY DAY IS NEXT MONTH

In little more than one month, nearly 300 people will gather in West Des Moines for the annual Iowa Tourism Unity Day. Hosted by the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Travel Federation of Iowa, the event returns this year with the kind support of the Meredith Travel Group and *Midwest Living*. Registrations received before April 16 are only \$30 per person. After that date, the price jumps to \$40. Visit the Travel Industry section at traveliowa.com to download registration information about Unity Day.

Nomination forms for the Iowa Tourism Leadership Award are also available online. Nominations for the award are due no later than March 26. The award will be presented at Unity Day. ■

VOLUNTEERS HELP MAKES VACATION SHOW A SUCCESS

Thanks to the more than 50 volunteers from each of Iowa's three tourism regions who worked at the Des Moines Sports and Vacation Show. Held February 18 - 22 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds, the show annually attracts thousands of travel enthusiasts. Visitors who stopped by the Iowa Tourism Office's exhibit received Iowa Travel Guides, state maps and other resources to help plan an Iowa getaway. ■



WELCOME CENTER SURVEY AVAILABLE

The Iowa Tourism Office recently released the 2003 edition of the annual Welcome Center Survey. Fifteen of the state's 21 Welcome Centers participated in the survey by administering a survey to every 46th person who visited the center. Some highlights of the report are:

- 33 percent of the travelers extended their trip in Iowa after receiving information at an Iowa Welcome Center.
- 45 percent of the travelers came from Iowa's target markets of Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and South Dakota. International visitors comprised two percent of the travelers.
- Travelers spent an average of 3.8 days in Iowa, up from 3.5 days in 2002.
- Travelers took an average of 2.8 trips in Iowa, up from 2.6 trips in 2002.

Excerpts from the study are available in the Travel Industry section at traveliowa.com. Copies are also available by request from LuAnn Reinders who may be reached at luann.reinders@ided.state.ia.us or 888-472-6035. ■

VISION IOWA BOARD MEETS MARCH 10

The Vision Iowa board will meet on March 10 at the Sheraton Four Points on Merle Hay Road in Des Moines. Currently, the Vision Iowa Review Committee is considering one application: a request from the City of Cedar Rapids for \$14 million to assist their project called Cedar Bend. The Community Attraction and Tourism Review Committee is not considering any applications currently, as the program is out of money. Learn more about Vision Iowa by visiting visioniowa.org. ■

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Will the Iowa Values Fund include an appropriation for tourism marketing?

No. While there is the possibility that some cooperative opportunities may exist with the IDED's Business Development Division, there will be no direct appropriation to assist the marketing efforts of the Iowa Tourism Office through the Iowa Values Fund marketing allocation. However, a unified brand is being developed in order to leverage our limited resources, and the EDMB is committed to looking for ways to maximize marketing dollars and efforts by identifying opportunities for creative partnerships and non-traditional marketing.

Are there plans to replace the Tourism Office marketing theme, "Come Be Our Guest," and the Business Development Division's marketing theme, "Iowa, Smart Idea," with a new theme that represents both organizations?

It is very important that Iowans speak with one voice. The creation of one marketing theme will help eliminate confusion and strengthen the message that Iowa is a great place to live, work and visit. Every effort is being made to create a marketing theme that takes into consideration the needs of every group within the IDED while still communicating to all our targeted audiences. The creation of one strong brand identity does not eliminate the need to target our messages to various audiences.

How are potential new themes being tested?

Very soon, the EDMB will conduct research utilizing various methodologies to test many themes among the targeted audiences. Both in-state travelers as well as out-of-state travelers will be among the consumer groups tested. ■



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