

## Mark your calendars for Iowa Tourism Unity Day

If you haven't already, make plans to attend Iowa Tourism Unity Day on April 29 in West Des Moines. Hundreds of tourism proponents from around the state gather at this annual event to enjoy a motivational message, announcement of the 2006 cooperative advertising options, a legislative update and more.

Another highlight of Unity Day is the presentation of the Iowa Tourism Leadership Award. Presented each year, this honor recognizes a person who has significantly contributed to the Iowa tourism industry. Nominations for the award are due March 25.

Everything you need to get registered for Unity Day and to submit a leadership award nomination is online in the Travel Industry section at [traveliowa.com](http://traveliowa.com). ●

## Most lawmakers turn out for annual Legislative Showcase

Thanks to a combination of great weather, informative exhibits and a convenient location, the Travel Federation of Iowa's annual Legislative Showcase experienced great success this year. Nearly all of Iowa's lawmakers attended the annual event, held February 15 at the 4-H Building on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. More than 80 organizations from all parts of Iowa exhibited at the showcase, educating legislators about the impact of tourism locally and statewide. TFI's goals for this legislative session include bringing the Iowa Tourism Office's budget up to the regional average, maintaining the existing school start date legislation and supporting programs such as Vision Iowa and REAP. ●

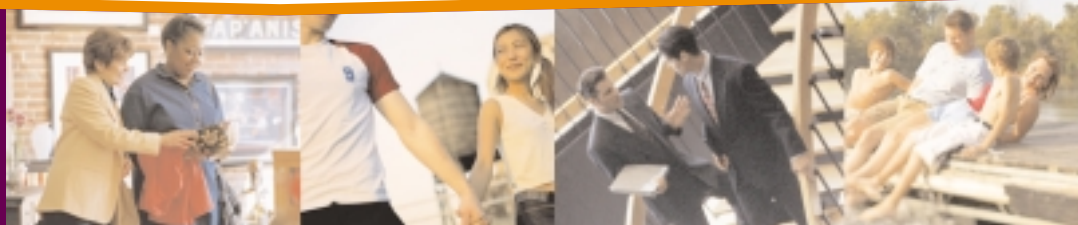


Iowa Department of Economic Development board chair, Bob Bocken (center), stopped by a booth for the proposed Mineral City Hotel & Casino in Fort Dodge. (Also pictured, from left to right: Jim Kersten, Steve Daniel, Ken Bonnet and Dan Kehl.)

Palo Alto County brought a large group to Legislative Night. Here, their contingency breaks for a photo with local lawmakers, Rep. Dolores Mertz from Algona and Senator John "Jack" Kibbie of Emmetsburg.



Rep. Jack Drake (left) stops by the Le Mars booth for some ice cream and conversation with Angie Watson and Terry Ahlrich.



## Six communities get CAT awards in February

The state's Vision Iowa board approved investments in six projects at its February meeting in West Des Moines. Each award came from the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program, a component of Vision Iowa that provides financial assistance for smaller projects. To date, the CAT program has invested approximately \$59 million in 163 projects in all parts of Iowa. About \$1.2 million remains in the program in fiscal year 2005.

Newly appointed Vision Iowa board chair, Andrew Anderson, presided over his first meeting and said he is proud of these awards because they represent communities of all sizes and in all parts of the state. "These projects will play a vital role in improving the quality of life in Iowa," he said. "And they can help attract former Iowans back to the state."

Projects that received CAT funding in February are:

### **RIVERSedge, Bettendorf**

Total project cost: \$56,780,800  
Requested: \$5.4 million  
Received: \$4.1 million grant  
(Awarded over two fiscal years)

This project includes the completion of Phase I of Bettendorf's RIVERSedge project, including:

- Construction of a 40,000 square-foot convention facility that will include a multi-purpose room, break-out meeting rooms and kitchen facilities.
- A 250-room expansion of the Isle of Capri Casino & Hotel.
- Development of a parking ramp to accommodate the expanded hotel and convention complex.
- Construction of a new Skywalk Bridge that will connect the convention facility to the hotel and parking ramp.

### **Cedar Falls Aquatic Center, Cedar Falls**

Total project cost: \$5,693,411  
Requested: \$1,305,000  
Received: \$100,000 grant  
Aquatic Center

### **Story City Community Recreation Center, Story City**

Total Project Cost: \$2,238,310  
Requested: \$450,000  
Received: \$200,000 grant

This 15,060 square-foot Community Recreation Center will include a gymnasium and a track.

### **Community Betterment Project, Le Mars**

Total project cost: \$4,224,500  
Requested: \$1,255,300  
Received: \$650,000 grant

Project components include:

- A 3.5-mile recreational trail extension. Phase II of this component will include a nature trail and a two-mile recreational trail extension.
- Nine-hole addition to the Le Mars Municipal Golf Course and expansion of the club house.
- Addition of an indoor pool, a therapeutic pool and walking track at the Community Wellness Center.
- Relocation of the area Sportsman's Club facility.
- Relocation of the Wing RC Club facility.

### **Nashua Welcome Center, Nashua**

Total project cost: \$498,840  
Requested: \$175,000  
Received: \$150,000 grant

This project calls for the relocation and restoration of a 1916 railroad depot, located along the Avenue of the Saints. The approximately 3,200 square-foot facility will offer restrooms, vending machines, an ATM and Iowa products. Volunteers will staff the welcome center during the day to provide information about attractions in Nashua, Chickasaw County and the state.

### **Climbing Wall, Sioux City**

Total project cost: \$341,570  
Requested: \$150,000  
Received: \$75,000 grant

This project features the construction of a climbing wall in the Long Lines Family Rec Center in Sioux City. The wall will include overhangs, a bouldering area and a campus wall. ●

## Iowa ads begin this month

Millions of potential travelers will learn more about Iowa this month when cooperative advertisements will appear in *Midwest Living*, *Home & Away*, *The Iowan* and *USA Weekend*. Combined, these publications boast a readership of more than 2.25 million people. Later this spring, look for advertisements featuring Iowa in *The Des Moines Register*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Group Travel Leader*, *Better Homes & Gardens* and more. Thanks to every organization that participates in the Iowa Tourism Office's cooperative advertising program. ●

# Travel Trends

## Iowa Visitation

	2003	2004	Change
<b>First Quarter</b>	<b>3,395,000</b>	<b>3,837,000</b>	<b>13 percent</b>
<b>Second Quarter</b>	<b>4,643,000</b>	<b>5,811,000</b>	<b>25 percent</b>
<b>Third Quarter</b>	<b>6,401,000</b>	<b>6,812,000</b>	<b>6 percent</b>
<b>Year to date</b>	<b>14,429,000</b>	<b>16,460,000</b>	<b>14 percent</b>

## TravelScope

The Iowa Tourism Office works in partnership with the Travel Industry Association (TIA) of America on a monthly study called TravelScope. Each month, TIA's U.S. Travel Data Center mails a survey to a sampling of 25,000 panelists asking them to provide details of up to three pleasure and/or business trips in the past month. Annual and quarterly reports are created based on the survey's findings. The annual report is posted in the Travel Industry section at [traveliowa.com](http://traveliowa.com). A summary of the third quarter report for Iowa is below.

- Total trips for the first three quarters of 2004 increased by 14 percent over the same time period in 2003.
- Fifty-four percent of all travelers were visiting friends and relatives, while 17 percent of trips were for entertainment/sightseeing. Eight percent were reported as business trips.
- Eighty-one percent of travelers traveled by auto, truck or camper/RV on their trips to Iowa. Seven percent traveled by air. Five percent rented a car.
- Of households that included children, the average number of children per trip was two.
- The average household travel party size was 2.3 people.

- Travelers spent an average of 1.8 nights in Iowa. If they stayed in a hotel, motel or bed & breakfast, travelers stayed an average of 2.2 nights.
- Thirty-two percent stayed in a hotel, motel or bed & breakfast while in Iowa. Twenty-six percent stayed in a private home.
- The average in-state expenditure per trip was \$190.
- Attending a social/family event was the most popular activity in Iowa (23 percent of all travelers), followed by shopping (17 percent), rural sightseeing (9 percent), and visiting historical places and museums (7 percent).
- Thirty-five percent of the travelers were from Iowa, followed by Illinois (10 percent), Nebraska (eight percent), Missouri (seven percent), Minnesota (seven percent), Kansas (four percent), Wisconsin (three percent), and South Dakota (three percent).
- The average household income was \$65,947.
- Eighty-two percent of the heads of households had some college education or more.
- The average age was 47.

**Research** is integral to the success of Iowa's tourism industry. At the Iowa Tourism Office a great amount of time and energy is dedicated to continually surveying the traveling public—in our state and around the world—so that we may spend our resources wisely, develop an effective marketing plan and communicate the impact of travel to our constituents.

Over the next several months please look to this new column, "Travel Trends," to learn about some of the research projects the Iowa Tourism Office conducts.

And don't forget to visit [traveliowa.com](http://traveliowa.com) often, as most of our research is housed there, and is available for your local needs.

## Governor names new Vision Iowa board chair



In January, Governor Vilsack announced Andrew (Andy) Anderson's appointment as chair of the Vision Iowa board. Andy formerly assisted the Vision Iowa board as an Assistant Attorney General for the Iowa Department of Justice.

Currently, he is an attorney with the Faegre and Benson Law Firm in

Des Moines. Andy replaces Michael Gartner, who resigned after five years at the helm of Vision Iowa.

"Andy's experience in the fiscal and legal operations of the Vision Iowa program will strengthen our efforts to bring economic growth to all areas of our state," said Lt. Governor Sally Pederson. "As we move to a new era in providing all corners of the state with cultural and community investment opportunities in the CAT program, Andy's energetic leadership will be key." ●



Iowa Department of  
Economic Development  
200 East Grand  
Des Moines, IA 50309

PRSR STD  
POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Des Moines, IA  
Permit No. 1195

## Iowans head to Kansas City this month

On March 30, nearly 40 members of Iowa's tourism industry will promote our state in Kansas City at the annual PlanIt Iowa Marketplace. Held in Overland Park, Kansas, the event will familiarize many Kansas City-area travel planners with Iowa's communities, events and attractions. Exhibitors will also attend Meet the Media, featuring two guest presenters: Diana Lambdin-Meyer, a freelance writer, and Marge Peterson, a contributing editor for *Home & Away Magazine*. Diana and Marge will share tips for working with the media and will answer questions about media relations. ●

## Iowa exhibits at Sportshow

Thanks to volunteers from each of Iowa's three travel regions who helped staff an exhibit at the Des Moines Sports how. Held February 16 – 20 at the Iowa State



Fairgrounds, this show annually attracts thousands of people with an interest in travel and the outdoors. Region members answered questions of people who visited the Iowa booth and handed out hundreds of *Iowa Travel Guides*. ●