

Iowa Tourism Unity Day is April 28!

The Iowa Tourism Office and Travel Federation of Iowa (TFI) will host the 2006 Iowa Tourism Unity Day on Friday, April 28, at Hy-Vee Conference Center in West Des Moines.

Unity Day is an annual spring event where Iowa's tourism industry comes together to network, learn about state initiatives and coop opportunities, hear legislative updates and prepare to celebrate May as Iowa Tourism Month. This year's keynote address will be given by Dr. Dale Henry, a nationally known author, educator and businessman who will present "The Proverbial Cracker Jack: How to Get out of the Box and Become the Prize."

Along with the many other activities scheduled, the Iowa Tourism Office and the TFI will again recognize an individual who has shown exemplary leadership within the industry and who has contributed significantly over the past year to enhancing Iowa's tourism industry.

Register to attend today by contacting Lonie Mezera at lonie.mezera@iowalifechanging.com or at 515.242.4727. ■

HITCHCOCK HOUSE ADDED TO IOWA'S LIST OF NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

The Hitchcock House, a restored station on the Underground Railroad, was recently named a National Historic Landmark. Built in 1856, the building is also recognized as a National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site.



HISTORY

Located near Lewis, the home of Reverend George B. Hitchcock played a vital role in the Underground Railroad network as a welcome respite for runaway slaves and abolitionists who traveled through the state. A minister of the Congregational Church, Hitchcock was an ardent abolitionist and an agent for the Underground Railroad.

Born in Massachusetts in 1812, Hitchcock became a student of ministry and in 1844 was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church. He worked as a traveling "circuit" preacher in the frontier country of Western Iowa following his ordination.

Settling in Lewis in the mid-1850s, Hitchcock built a log cabin where he lived until the completion of his stone house around 1856. From this house, Hitchcock carried out his Underground railroad activities, providing shelter to fugitive slaves making their way north.

An ardent abolitionist virtually his entire adult life, George B. Hitchcock died in 1872 in Kansas. His home in Iowa stands as a testament to his role in the antislavery movement and his involvement in the Underground Railroad.

The George B. Hitchcock House is located 1.5 miles west of Lewis, Iowa, on State Road 44, south of U.S. Hwy. 6. It is open for tours from May-September, from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m., closed Mondays. Visit the house's Web site at: www.hitchcockhouse.org or call 712.769.2323 for further information. ■



Vision Iowa Board Invests Over \$2 Million in Projects at March Meeting

Five awards, one being a unique regional award, were granted at the Vision Iowa Board meeting, held at the Science Center of Iowa in Des Moines. The board awarded a total of \$2,024,000 from its Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program. To date, the CAT program has assisted 224 projects.

The award for those projects located in Sioux County totals \$1 million, with \$206,000 forgiven from a previous CAT award. The exact amount that each project will receive is being negotiated between the communities and the Vision Iowa Board.

The four projects are:

Orange City Community Betterment Project – Orange City

Total Project Cost: \$635,231
Amount Requested: \$127,046

Orange City is undertaking a major community betterment initiative that will impact four city parks and consist of six phases. Windmill Park Square will undergo a complete redevelopment that will include a historic windmill display and live water canal; a Dutch Farmer’s Market; patios and a restored band shell. Jaycee Park will receive new tennis courts. Vets Park will offer a new skateboard park facility. A neighborhood park will include a picnic shelter, and playground equipment will be added to the Puddle Jumper Recreation Trail.

Rock Valley Campground & Recreational Center – Rock Valley

Total Project Cost: \$2,166,808
Amount Requested: \$533,946

This project will turn an abandoned rock quarry into a 97-acre camping and recreation area. The site will include 89 camping sites; approximately 1.5 miles of recreational trails; roadway improvements; signage; two ponds with fishing docks; a beach area with swimming access; a playground; restroom facilities; access to the Rock River and a scenic overlook area.

Sioux Center Public Library – Sioux Center

Total Project Cost: \$5,000,000
Amount Requested: \$1,300,000

The new Sioux Center Public Library will be a 22,912 square-foot modern facility that will provide enhanced learning areas, access to new technology, and cultural and educational programs, while still fulfilling the traditional library role.

Hospers Swimming Pool – Hospers

Total Project Cost: \$657,805
Amount Requested: \$100,000

The new 4,405 square-foot Hospers Swimming Pool will replace the old pool and will include new features such as a drop slide and zero-depth entry.

Other projects that received CAT funding were:

Albion Library & Heritage Center – Albion

Total Project Cost: \$548,933
Amount Requested: \$240,000
Amount Awarded: \$225,000

The Albion Municipal Library & Heritage Center will be a 3,142 square-foot building, and will include a complete computer learning center, storage and work areas, a drive-up window and a meeting room.

Cumberland, Massena-Anita (CAM) Recreation Center – Anita

Total Project Cost: \$1,025,000
Amount Requested: \$410,000
Amount Awarded: \$225,000

This project includes the construction of a new 14,400 square-foot recreation facility in Anita. It will include a gymnasium, walking track, weight room, activity room, lounge, storage, restroom facilities and an office area. The facility will be constructed adjacent to the Anita Schools.

Grundy County Campgrounds – Grundy County

Total Project Cost: \$394,792
Amount Requested: \$194,462
Amount Awarded: \$124,000

The Grundy County Campground project includes the construction of 64 asphalt camping pads, picnic areas, fire rings, a restroom/shower-house and much more. The Campground project will be located at the Grundy County Lake just south of Highway 20 and the city of Dike.

Amana Historic Main Street: Phase III – Iowa County

Total Project Cost: \$1,699,620
Amount Requested: \$488,000
Amount Awarded: \$244,000

The Amana Historic Main Street: Phase III project focuses on the heritage of the Amana community. The project consists of a restored historic streetscape, ADA-compliant sidewalks and pedestrian routes, a bike trail, improved drainage and vehicular traffic circulation. ■

Bryan Seward Joins Sergeant Bluff Welcome Center Team



Join the Iowa Department of Economic Development and the Tourism Office team to welcome Bryan Seward as the new travel counselor for the Sergeant Bluff Welcome Center. Most recently Seward worked for the Iowa Department of Transportation as a highway maintenance supervisor, equipment operator and rest area attendant. Because of his past experience, he is very familiar with the needs of Iowa travelers. When he is not at the Welcome Center, Seward enjoys yard work, gardening and time with his family. ■

Travel Counselors to Attend Iowa Welcome Center Training

In mid-April, Iowa Welcome Center travel counselors will be attending a welcome center training and familiarization tour in western Iowa. Nineteen of the travel counselors attending are Certified Iowa Travel Counselors, a national certification program endorsed by Travel Industry Association of America. They will participate in a special workshop “Customer Service: Remember Me?” featuring Pat McGill. Their training will be held at Swan Lake Education Center near Carroll. Attendees will visit Northwest Iowa attractions in or near the communities of Estherville, Okoboji, Ruthven, Emmetsburg, Algona, West Bend, Pomeroy, Peterson, Sac City, Lake City and Carroll.

To learn more about placing your brochures at the Iowa Welcome Centers contact LuAnn Reinders at luann.reinders@iowalifechanging.com or 515.242.4732.

Welcome Center Employee Earns Certification

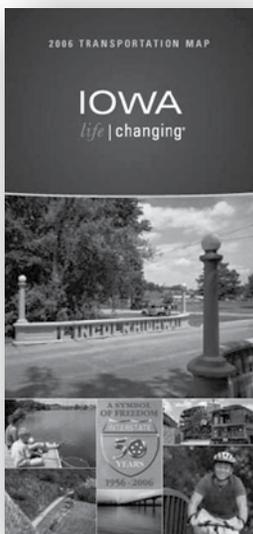
Harry Luster, Clayton County Welcome Center counselor, recently received designation as a Certified Travel Counselor. This recognition is given by the Iowa Department of Economic Development Tourism Office to travel counselors who have successfully completed a 100-question test about Iowa.

“Iowa is known for its friendly and hospitable people,” Nancy Landess, Manager, Iowa Tourism Office said. “Welcome Center travel counselors are often the first people travelers meet when they enter Iowa. It’s important that the staff and volunteers at each of our 20 centers are knowledgeable about the state and able to help curious visitors.”

Iowa is one of only nine states with a certification process that is endorsed by the National Council of State Tourism Directors, part of the Travel Industry Association of America. In Iowa, 88 Welcome Center Travel Counselors are certified. ■

2006 Iowa Transportation Map Now Available

On March 23, the Iowa Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Iowa Tourism Office, released the 2006 Iowa Transportation Map. To obtain a copy, contact the Iowa Tourism Office at 800.345.IOWA or visit www.traveliowa.com.



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Iowa Department of
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200 East Grand
Des Moines, IA 50309

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Enjoy the Outdoors...on us!

The Iowa Parks Bureau, a division of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), has designated the first weekend of May as "Free Camping Weekend" for Iowa residents. Iowans will be able to enjoy the splendor and beauty of Iowa's many state parks without having to pay for a campsite. All campsites will be available as first-come, first-serve camping only which includes Friday-Sunday nights, May 5-7.

Along with free camping, the DNR provides a number of interpretive programs throughout the weekend. Programs include a variety of topics such as guided wildflower hikes, star gazing, birding, night hike tracking and fishing clinics. Programs provide a fun opportunity for campers to explore the diverse natural resources found in state parks. To learn more about free camping weekend and about programs offered, visit www.iowadnr.com or email rebecca.spieess@dnr.state.ia.us. ■