

\$5 Million in Vision Iowa Fund Dollars Now Available

Vision Iowa Board to Accept Bids on Returned Money until October 1

The Vision Iowa Board accepted a return of \$5 million in funds at the April meeting held in Iowa City. The returned money, awarded to Cedar Rapids in 2004 for a riverfront project, will be available through the Vision Iowa Program for reallocation. The board will take applications until October 1, 2006 for this money.

Other actions that occurred at the April board meeting included grant awards from the Community Attraction and Tourism Fund (CAT). These include:

Buffalo Bill Museum Expansion – Le Claire
Amount Awarded..... \$250,000

Downtown Renovation Project – Clermont
Amount Awarded..... \$ 225,000

Eagle Grove Aquatic Center – Eagle Grove
Amount Awarded..... \$100,000

The Vision Iowa Program and the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Program provide financial incentives to communities for the construction of recreational, cultural, educational or entertainment facilities that enhance the quality of life in Iowa. For more information on this and other projects, or to obtain a Vision Iowa Grant application, visit www.visioniowa.org. ■

Kum & Go partnership offers free gas cards

Visit Iowa during the months of May and June and you could be the winner of a Kum & Go gas card worth \$50.00. Visitors can register to win at any Iowa Welcome Center during May and June. Twenty winners will be selected at random from all entries received at the welcome centers. In addition, you can register to win online at www.traveliowa.com during May and June. Three lucky winners will be drawn from the online entries.



Iowa travel and tourism professionals who attend Tourism Unity Day on April 28 also had a chance to win one of two \$50 Kum & Go gas cards. Gas card winners will be announced the first week of July. Visit www.traveliowa.com for a complete list of winners.

As an added bonus to celebrate May as Iowa Tourism Month and honor the 50th anniversary of America's Interstate Highway System, car air fresheners shaped like the state of Iowa will be given away at all welcome centers in Iowa. Travel Iowa this summer – the gas could be on us! ■

Iowa Interstate Trip Starters guide travelers to attractions along major routes

To highlight the 50th anniversary of the Interstate Highway System and to encourage travelers to extend their stay while traveling along our interstates, the Tourism Office will offer travel suggestions based on Interstates 29, 80, 35 and 380.

At www.traveliowa.com, travelers can click on a map of the interstates to view a list of attractions and destinations along their route. Links are provided to individual Web sites for more information. This special Web feature will appear during May and June. ■



At www.traveliowa.com, travelers can click on a map to view a list of attractions and destinations along Iowa's Interstate routes.



Iowa Wine & Beer Promotion Board Awards First Round of Funds to Five Events

Created by the legislature to help promote Iowa's wine and beer industry, the Wine and Beer Promotion Board is charged with finding new and creative ways to tell the story of this thriving industry. Five festivals and events were recently awarded grant dollars by the Iowa Wine and Beer Promotion Board. This is the first grant allocation by this board for event promotion.

"Wine tastings, beer and wine trails, music festivals and other special events are great ways to bring people's attention to all Iowa has to offer," said Nancy Landess, Tourism Office Manager.

The awards for all five proposals total \$4,754.40 and were awarded to:

- Maifest Wine Walk 2006 - Amana
May 7, 2006
- Grillin' with Iowa Wines - Carson
July 15, 2006
- 2006 Iowa Wine Festival - Indianola
August 26 - 27, 2006
- Festival of Iowa Beers 2006 - Amana
September 3, 2006
- Riverfront Pops - Davenport
September 9, 2006

The next Iowa Wine and Beer Board grant applications are due June 15, 2006. There remains \$8,245.60 in funds to be allocated. For more information about this industry, visit www.iowawineandbeer.com. ■

Cheers to Iowa's growing wine and beer industry!

2006 edition of Iowa Wine and Beer Brochure and updated Web site now available



Twelve native Iowa wineries and a brewery have been added to the 2006 edition of the Iowa Wine & Beer Promotion Board's brochure and Web site. The directory features listings for 39 wineries and two breweries ready for travelers to tour and taste. As of this spring more than 55 wineries have been licensed and several are developing retail establishments.

"The growth in the Iowa wine industry has been phenomenal," said Mike Killinger, a board member and co-owner of Whispering Hills Vineyard near Carson. "You'll see more wineries and great wines produced right here in Iowa."

"More and more travelers are drawn to craft-brewed beers as they travel through the state," said Teresa Sly Albert, co-owner of Millstream Brewing in Amana and board member. "They can also find our products in gift shops, grocery stores, restaurants and bars."

Located throughout the state, each native Iowa winery and brewery has a story to tell. Establishments range from a pre-Civil war winery that uses original recipes to modern state-of-the-art facilities. Most offer free samples of their products and an ambiance to linger and savor their harvest. For more information, visit www.iowawineandbeer.com. ■

Iowa Welcome Center Staff participates in annual welcome center training and tour

Three-day tour provides valuable first-hand experiences

Kudos to the Western Iowa Tourism Region for its wonderful hospitality at this year's Welcome Center Training and Familiarization Tour. Presented by the Iowa Tourism Office, this familiarization tour hosted 30 employees and volunteers from Iowa's welcome centers on a tour through western Iowa April 17-19, 2006. This yearly event gives travel counselors a chance to experience many of the state's attractions first-hand, enabling them to better relay information about Iowa's travel opportunities to visitors who seek assistance at welcome centers. Also, special thanks go out to Choice Hotels as the major sponsor of the Welcome Center Training. This is the second year of their sponsorship and we thank them for their support.



The group enjoys a visit to Hass' History Barn in Peterson, IA.



Kathy Meisner from the Sergeant Floyd Welcome Center takes in the Rock & Roll Museum in Okoboji.

This year's tour began in Carroll and traveled to Estherville, Okoboji, Peterson, Ruthven, Algona, West Bend, Manson, Lytton, Sac City and Lake City. Next year, the group will visit north central Iowa before exploring eastern Iowa in 2008. The tour returns to the state's western edge in 2009.

"Welcome center staff are our front-line ambassadors to Iowa," said Iowa Tourism Office Manager Nancy Landess. "We have found that travelers to Iowa spend more time visiting local attractions after talking with welcome center staff. We feel that providing the opportunity for those who interact with travelers to visit surrounding attractions and communities is very important." ■

Underwood Welcome Center Now Open

The Underwood Welcome Center, located on Interstate 80 Eastbound, just east of Exit 17 is Iowa's seasonal state owned-and-operated Interstate Welcome Center and is open from late April to early October.

You can reach over 250,000 annual visitors by displaying your brochures at the Underwood Center and the other three Iowa Interstate Welcome Centers. Our trained and certified Iowa Travel Counselors are ready to guide Iowa's travelers in your direction. If you are enrolled in the program, we will display your brochure in a reserved brochure rack space. We will keep a running log of the number of brochures we receive and distribute. And we will contact you when we need more brochures.

To reserve brochure space in Iowa's Interstate Welcome Centers, contact LuAnn Reinders at luann.reinders@iowalifechanging.com or fill out the form at www.traveliowa.com, then click on the Travel Industry section of the site. ■



CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL

Iowa represented at TIA's Annual POW WOW

Premier event is the largest generator of travel in the U.S.

Iowa Tourism Office Group Travel Manager Mark Eckman will attend the Travel Industry Association of America's Annual POW WOW 2006 in Orlando, Florida May 6-10. Leads generated from the marketplace will be made available to the Iowa tourism industry immediately following Mark's return.

TIA's International POW WOW is the travel industry's premier international marketplace. In just three days of pre-scheduled business appointments, more than 1,000 travel organizations from every region of the U.S. meet with nearly 1,500 international and domestic buyers from more than 70 countries. The appointments generate \$3.5 billion in international travel. At POW WOW, buyers and sellers are able to conduct business that would otherwise be generated only through an exhaustive number of around-the-world trips. ■

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2006 PlanIt Iowa a Major Success



Nancy Landess (left), Iowa Tourism Office manager, is shown with Ann Vogelbacher from the Central Iowa Tourism Region during the PlanIt Iowa Showcase in Overland Park, KS.

Twenty-nine Iowans, staffing 20 exhibit booths, hosted a record number of tour planners during the recent PlanIt Iowa Showcase. Fifty-six tour planners and guests enjoyed Iowa hospitality on April 5 at the Sheraton Hotel in Overland Park, Kansas.

The fourth annual showcase featured a session on how to develop an Iowa itinerary, lively conversation over lunch, and one-on-one time between planners and exhibitors. Clayton Whitehead, co-owner of Sports Leisure Vacations of Sacramento, California, led the itinerary session, drawing on his knowledge and passion for Iowa. The annual luncheon is a partnership event between the Iowa Group Travel Association (IGTA) and Iowa Tourism Office to promote the state to tour planners located in major cities surrounding Iowa. In addition to exhibit fees, the event relies on sponsors to cover expenses. This year's sponsors were the Marion County Development Commission, Okoboji Tourism Committee, Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad and Council Bluffs CVB.

The Iowa Tourism Office would like to thank all of you who made this a success! ■