

The Mississippi River Trail Makes its Way to Southeast Iowa

The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) is a 2,000 mile bicycle route, including 330 miles in Iowa, which connects hundreds of parks and historical landmarks. Some sections are grade-separated trails, but most sections are signed along existing roadways.

The trail meanders down the river from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The first signage for the MRT in southeast Iowa will be installed along a seven-mile stretch connecting Keokuk and Montrose.

Riders can enjoy the scenic view as they safely travel between the two cities. The signs will be added to a national database that will help riders along the trail pick an appropriate route to ride. Visit the MRT website at: www.mississippirivertrail.org ●

Welcome to Autumn in Iowa! Check Out Best Iowa Vistas Online

The Iowa Tourism Office is featuring a fall foliage guide on www.traveliowa.com throughout the month of October.

The Web site will offer weekly online reports from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Forest Nursery, and also includes forestry facts, a selection of fall events and a few fun word games. Travelers can link to the calendar of events and to the scenic byways Web pages for more fall travel ideas. ●



Tenth Annual Bank Club Event a Success

Bank Club Marketplace celebrated a "Decade of Discovery" recently in Pella. The tenth-annual group travel event drew more than 100 bank club directors and nearly 100 Iowa exhibitors. Pella's Vermeer Global Pavilion played host to the event which featured peer group meetings, an open-mic forum, lunch and exhibits from across the state. In addition, the marketplace featured keynote speaker Clayton Whitehead of Sports Leisure Vacations. Whitehead spoke to the bankers on experiential tourism, customer loyalty programs and the many ways he packaged Iowa tours for his customers from Sacramento, California. Central Iowa Tourism Region and the Iowa Group Travel Association organized the event so bank club directors and the Iowa tourism industry can exchange information that leads to more group travel in the state. ●



Laurie Lietz of Clear Lake (center) and Sue Armour of Mason City (right) promote their area to two bank club planners at the annual CITR/IGTA Bankclub Marketplace.





Vision Iowa Invests in Four Projects

Four projects located across Iowa received more than \$1.3 million in investments from the Vision Iowa board. To date, Vision Iowa and the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program has assisted 201 projects and invested more than \$67.1 million.

"The Community Attraction and Tourism Program has established funding so that \$12 million can be awarded every fiscal year through 2010. Therefore, we encourage communities to bring their tourism, recreation and cultural projects to the Vision Iowa Board for consideration. We enjoy working with cities, counties and nonprofit organizations to help them realize their development goals," said Andy Anderson, Vision Iowa board chair.

Chairman Anderson, a practicing attorney at Faegre & Benson, LLP, also publicly recognized the volunteers and their employers that make these community projects possible.

"The exciting projects happening around Iowa are the result of many community volunteers giving their time and many Iowa employers encouraging and supporting their employees' efforts to improve Iowa," he said. "I want to recognize all the unpaid volunteers, including the unpaid Vision Iowa Board members, who give of their time and all the employers of Iowa who make this volunteerism possible."

Projects that received CAT funding are:

Gillette Park Renovation / Family Aquatic Center, Cherokee

Total project cost: \$3,600,000
Requesting: \$1,000,000
Awarded: \$400,000

The Gillette Park Renovation and Cherokee Family Aquatic Center Project provides for the renovation of Gillette Park and the replacement of the existing city pool. The park renovation will add walking paths, a gazebo, an amphitheater and playground. The project also includes an aquatic center and will feature water amenities, a bathhouse, an office, a concession and restroom area.

The Garden, Chinese Cultural Center of America, Des Moines

Total project cost: \$1,139,749
Requesting: \$334,537
Awarded: \$225,000

The Garden will span a 1.7-acre site between the Des Moines Botanical Center and the new Principal Center Street Pedestrian Bridge. The Garden will feature a one-of-a-kind three-story Asian pavilion over an undulating bridge which spans a pond. Water from the pond will cascade from a series of waterfalls. Bonsai-like plantings, lantern, and pagodas and sculpture rock formations will enhance the site. A Character Garden will

feature six granite boulders, inscribed with Chinese characters to represent responsibility, citizenship, fairness, respect, caring and trustworthiness.

Hale Bridge project, Jones County

Total project cost: \$483,793
Requesting: \$82,083
Awarded: \$72,000

This project involves the renovation and restoration of the Hale Bridge in Jones County. Listed on the National Historic Register, the bridge was built in 1878. It is the last multi-span bridge of its type remaining in Iowa and is one of only four multi-span bridges in the U.S.

Waukon Wellness Center, Waukon

Total project cost: \$3,150,000
Requested: \$1,000,000
Awarded: \$650,000

The Waukon Wellness Center will be a 38,000 square-foot facility that will include a walking and running track, multi-purpose room, multi-use gymnasium, racquetball courts, exercise and weight area, batting and golf cages, a senior dining and activity center, youth activity area, child care area, information area, vending area plus shower and locker facilities. The facility will also house the city's Park and Recreation Department. ●

2005 Iowa Tourism Conference

October 24, 25 & 26

Mid-America Center • Council Bluffs



The 2005 Tourism Conference is almost here! Scheduled for October 24-26 in Council Bluffs, this event promises to be one of the best! The event is presented by the Travel Federation of Iowa (TFI), and the Iowa Department of Economic Development's Iowa Tourism Office.

Pre-Conference Highlights

On Sunday afternoon, October 23, festivities will include visiting some of Council Bluffs' attractions where attendees will collect playing cards at each participating attraction. Everyone is asked to bring their "winning hand" to the Sunday night reception at the Ameristar Casino Hotel. For more information about the pre-conference event or to RSVP, contact Jamie Heenan at 712.325.1000 before October 11.

Monday Highlights

The first day of the Tourism Conference features luncheon keynote speaker Dan Kaercher, editor-in-chief of *Midwest Living Magazine*. Monday afternoon sessions include *Success Stories in Signage*; *Wayfinding that Works* with Julie Allesee and Sue Czeshinski; *Online Marketing* with Steve Markuson from eBrains, an internet research and marketing firm; and *Successful Community Tourism Development* with Andy Skadburg. Monday night ends with a reception where attendees can sample Iowa-made wine with hors d'oeuvres. Following the reception, the dinner keynote will be

motivational speaker Murray Banks, who will share humorous and inspiring ideas on how to convert the stress of change into the challenge of change.

Tuesday Highlights

The day's first session will be a presentation by Suzanne Cook with the Travel Industry Association, who will share the latest research trends and outlook for the future of the industry. Next, Erik Wolfe will present *Culinary Tourism – The Hidden Harvest*.

Governor Thomas J. Vilsack and Iowa Department of Economic Development Director Mary Lawyer will keynote the afternoon luncheon. The evening reception gives attendees a final opportunity to bid on the silent auction items and peruse the menus of the participating dine-around restaurants.

Wednesday is Destination Shirt Day

Conference participants are encouraged to sport apparel representing their community, attraction, event or tourism business.

At breakfast, Ames and Central Iowa invite the industry to join them at the 2006 conference. Silent auction winners and 2005 Tourism Awards will be presented.

We look forward to seeing you! For more information log on to www.traveliowa.com or contact Lonie Mezera at lonie.mezera@iowalifechanging.com. ●

WELCOME CENTER NEWS

Representatives from Iowa's Welcome Centers will hear the latest on dozens of attractions and destinations during a session of pre-scheduled appointments at the 2005 Tourism Conference. Choice Hotels International will sponsor the session as part of their overall sponsorship of the 2005 Welcome Center program. Our thanks to Mavis Dare of Choice Hotels!



A reminder to all attractions, accommodations and destinations – Iowa's Interstate Welcome Centers are accepting brochures for display through the Brochure Enrollment Program.

Choose all four centers or any combination of individual centers to place your brochure.

Information is available at www.traveliowa.com or by contacting LuAnn Reinders at luann.reinders@iowalifechanging.com or 888.472.6035. ●

Travel Industry Job Bank to Help Hurricane Victims Find Employment

As part of the support efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), in partnership with the Travel & Tourism Coalition and the Travel Business Roundtable, is offering free use of a job bank to help workers displaced by Hurricane Katrina find new employment as soon as possible. Feel free to contribute job listings to help our fellow tourism professionals in this time of need. TIA has also launched a hurricane recovery resources site. For more information, visit www.tia.org ●

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Great Places Event October 11

Don't miss the free Iowa Great Places Conference featuring Professor Richard Florida, author of *Rise of the Creative Class* and *Flight of the Creative Class!* on Tuesday, October 11 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. in Iowa City at the Levitt Center and Hancher Auditorium.

- Hear keynote Richard Florida discuss the creative work and ideas that are the foundation of many places' efforts to revitalize and strengthen their communities!
- Iowa's first official "Great Places" will be presented! Don't miss this opportunity to learn about these places and ALL the other places that have participated in the Iowa Great Places initiative.
- Learn about regional arts and economic efforts and how others incorporate business; historic preservation; natural, cultural and tourism assets and attractions; and more to make Iowa a better place to live, play, work and raise a family!
- Network and share your place's story and strengths with other conference participants! Expand your ideas and plans!

Registration begins at noon, with workshops scheduled from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The evening keynote address will be given by Richard Florida, who will discuss "Visions in Focus." Seating is limited, so act fast.

For more information contact Cyndi Pederson, Iowa Great Places Coordinator at Cyndi.Pederson@iowa.gov or 515.281.3223. ●

