

Important Dates This Month

May 1: Underwood Welcome Center Grand Opening

Department of Transportation Director Nancy Richardson and Department of Economic Development Director Mike Tramontina will both speak at the grand opening of the Underwood Rest Area and Welcome Center.

May 8: Smart Conference, Polk County Convention Complex, Des Moines

This economic development conference includes sessions on civic engagement, community sustainability, green streets, workforce and more. Featured luncheon speaker is Robert Stephens, the founder of Geek Squad. www.iowasmartconf.com.

May 10-18: National Tourism Week

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Travel Industry Association's National Tourism Week celebrations, designed to promote the power of travel. This year's theme is "Discover Great American Traditions." www.tia.org

May 31 – June 4: POW WOW, Las Vegas

Jeff Spence from the Iowa Tourism Office will promote Iowa at this international marketplace. Leads will be available.

May is Iowa Tourism Month!

Throughout the month of May, a total of \$3,000 in Casey's General Store gift cards and nearly \$10,000 in Travel Iowa Gift Baskets, featuring admission tickets and other items from 2007 Iowa Tourism Award winners, will be given away through the Iowa Welcome Centers and www.traveliowa.com in celebration of Iowa Tourism Month. The promotion is a partnership among Casey's General Stores, the Iowa Tourism Office and many of the 2007 Iowa Tourism Award winners.



Two lucky people who register at www.traveliowa.com will each receive a \$500 gift card and a Mini Travel Iowa Gift Basket. Visitors to any of the state's 20 Welcome Centers can register to win a \$100 gift card and a Travel Iowa Gift Basket (one winner per location).

Each Travel Iowa Gift Basket includes:

- One mug featuring the famous "Ghost Players" from the Field of Dreams
- Two collectible Chipper the Black Squirrel coins; four Chipper postcards; 2-for-1 admission coupons to the RailsWest Railroad Museum, Historic General Dodge House and Squirrel Cage Jail
- Two complimentary Music Man Square and Meredith Willson Boyhood Home tickets
- Complimentary overnight camping plus two hours of watercraft rental in Linn County
- Complimentary family four pack of Blank Park Zoo ticket passes
- RAGBRAI coffee table book
- Two complimentary Iowa State Fair admission tickets
- Complimentary Matchstick Marvels admission tickets for two adults and up to three children; coupon for a free souvenir book
- Two complimentary Science Center of Iowa admission tickets; \$5 gift card
- Two complimentary Arnolds Park passes; two complimentary Boji Splash passes; \$50 in Okoboji chamber dollars; coupons from The Inn at Okoboji and local restaurants
- One bottle of wine from Stone Cliff Winery

The promotion's official rules can be found on www.traveliowa.com. All winners (one per Welcome Center; two online) will be determined by a random drawing and announced the first week of June.





Tim Waddell, Division Administrator, Community Development Division, IDED; Sue Armour, Tourism Leadership Award winner; Julie Allesee, Travel Federation of Iowa President.

SUE ARMOUR RECEIVES 2008 IOWA TOURISM LEADERSHIP AWARD

Sue Armour, the director of the Mason City Convention and Visitors Bureau, received the 2008 Iowa Tourism Leadership Award at Iowa Tourism Unity Day, April 18.

She has been an active participant in the Iowa tourism industry for more than a decade. As a current Travel Federation of Iowa District Leader, she speaks frequently with her legislators on the importance of travel to Iowa's economy. She has also served as vice-president and president of the Central Iowa Tourism Region. A former board member for the Iowa Group Travel Association, she now functions as management staff for that organization, keeping records and the Web site current and assisting members with questions.



Travel Federation of Iowa district leaders.

In her role as CVB director, she promotes Mason City's attractions including Frank Lloyd Wright architecture and Meredith Willson's boyhood home. She has been successful in securing the Pyrotechnics Guild International Convention (in 2005 and again for 2009), the 2008 National Trappers Association Convention and the Robertson Cup National Hockey Tournament for Mason City. Additionally, the city's destination planner guide received the 2007 Iowa Tourism Award for best consumer publication (from a city of more than 10,000).



Barbara Morrow, Senior Travel Editor, Midwest Living.

The Tourism Leadership Award was presented as part of Unity Day, an annual event that celebrates the impact of travel in Iowa. Other Unity Day activities included a keynote message on seven customer service "wows" from Chip Madera, a legislative update, networking opportunities and the unveiling of the 2009 cooperative advertising program. The event was co-sponsored by Meredith Travel Marketing and Midwest Living magazine.

Find more photos from Unity Day in the Travel Industry Information section of www.traveliowa.com.

New Certified Welcome Center Counselors

Four Welcome Center staff members were recently recognized as Certified Travel Counselors. Kay Tews of the Davis County Welcome Center as well as Oliver Horst, Brenda Horst and Sterling Horst from the Southern Loess Hills Welcome Center all successfully completed a 100-hundred question test about Iowa to qualify for the distinction. 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, 106 Welcome Center Travel Counselors are certified.

Quad Cities and Des Moines CVBs Earn Accreditations

Both the Quad Cities and Des Moines Convention and Visitors Bureau have been confirmed as accredited bureaus by the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP).

Developed by the Washington, D.C.-based Destination Marketing Association International, DMAP accreditation standards cover a wide variety of topics including governance, finance, management, human resources, technology, visitor services, group services, sales, communications, membership, brand management, destination development, marketing, research/market intelligence, innovation and stakeholder relationships. A destination marketing organization (DMO) must meet all of these standards to be accredited.



The Vision Iowa Board approved \$1,000,000 in grants to projects in Algona, Mediapolis and Morning Sun at their April meeting in Waterloo.

The following projects were awarded grants from the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Fund:

Make a Splash! Let's Pool Together – Algona Family YMCA
Amount Awarded: \$700,000

This project includes the construction of an approximately 18,400-square-foot addition to the Algona Family YMCA which will include an indoor swimming pool, childcare nursery, fitness center, multi-purpose room and conference meeting room. Renovations of about 2,700-square-feet will add or expand the weight room, family and special needs changing rooms and second floor restrooms. This award is contingent upon the completion of fundraising in 180 days.

Mediapolis Swimming Pool Project – Mediapolis
Amount Awarded: \$100,000

This project will include the construction of a 6,600-square-foot pool with a water slide, tot slide, water drop, flow geyser and sand play area.

Morning Sun Community Center – Morning Sun
Amount Awarded: \$200,000

This project will include the construction of a 5,700-square-foot community center and art gallery. The community center will have two multi-purpose spaces suitable for community events, meetings, private parties and receptions. The gallery will feature oil paintings by Morning Sun native Lora Rock. This award is contingent upon the completion of fundraising in 180 days.

To date, 13 Vision Iowa projects have been awarded a total of \$227,550,000. The CAT program has provided funding to 287 projects, awarding a total of \$96,486,780. The next Vision Iowa Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, in Des Moines. For more information, visit www.visioniowa.org.

TOURISM HALL AT FAIR

Iowa tourism exhibits at the 2008 Iowa State Fair will still be located in the Varied Industries Building, but will now be in the actual hallway instead of the classrooms. The booths were moved to enhance their visibility. Limited booth space is available. Contact Lonie Mezera at lonie.mezera@iowalifechanging.com or 515.242.4727 if interested in exhibiting. This year's Iowa State Fair is August 7-17.



Designated in 1996, Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area (SSHNA) is one of 37 federally designated heritage areas in the nation and is an Affiliated Area of the National Park Service. The Heritage Area covers 37 counties in the northeast quadrant of Iowa bordered by I-80 on the south and I-35 on the west.

Through a network of 106 partner sites, ranging from dairy farms and museums to vineyards and tractor assembly plants, Silos & Smokestacks works to preserve and interpret the story of American agriculture. Silos & Smokestacks provides partner sites with technical assistance and training opportunities, grant funding for projects and programs, as well as promotion of the region.

Other programs include the LIFE (Living in Iowa Farm Experience) Group Tour Program and the SSNHA Education Scholarship Fund, which helps fund student field study trips and internship opportunities at designated partner sites.

Visit www.silosandsmokestacks.org for more information.

Tourism

By the Numbers

1

Number of other places where depth of Loess is as deep as Iowa's.

5-7

Hours needed to drive the entire length of the Loess Hills.

7

Counties included in the Loess Hills.

220

Miles in length of the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway.

15,000 - 18,000

Age, in years, of the Loess Hills.

Source: Iowa Travel Guide, Golden Hills RC&D,
www.byways.org

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Affordable Meetings Show a Success



Jeff Spence from the Iowa Tourism Office, Michelle Thomas from Meskwaki and Brian Fleming from Fun City in Burlington promoted Iowa at the Affordable Meetings Mid-America show in Chicago April 9-10.

Sandra Tonkin of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators from Overland Park, Kansas, was the lucky winner of the iPod Touch engraved with www.traveliowa.com.



WELCOME CENTER STAFF TRAIN IN NORTHEAST IOWA

A group of 25 employees and volunteers from Iowa's Welcome Centers attended the Welcome Center Training and Familiarization Tour April 21-23 in northeast Iowa.

This year's tour began at the Heartland Acres Agribition Center in Independence and included stops at the Dan Gable International Wrestling Institute and Museum in Waterloo; the Little Brown Church in Nashua; Eagles Landing Winery in Marquette; Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah; the World's Smallest Church in Festina; and a barn quilt tour of Fayette County. Watch for pictures from the tour in next month's Traveler.