GREAT Rivers GREAT Routes GREAT Results

ALTON | COLLINSVILLE | EDWARDSVILLE | GLEN CARBON | GODFREY | GRAFTON
MADISON | MACOUPIN | MONTGOMERY | JERSEY | CALHOUN | GREENE

JULY 2019
SEPTEMBER 2019

RiversandRoutes.com
It’s true! We’re as busy as can be working to advance our region for tourism, economic development and livability. The second we complete a task, we shift to next best steps to connect and continue our quest. And now, we’re bringing each of you along for the ride. We’re sharing snippets, summaries and synopses showcasing our talented team at work in their endeavor to make this place better.

We are proud to call that special place in America where the Great River Road meets the Mother Road our home. Two iconic roads converge with nature and nostalgia and all of the routes that connect us all throughout Madison, Macoupin, Jersey, Calhoun, Greene and Montgomery counties. We hope this report energizes you to join us in our efforts to make this the greatest place ever!

Brett Stawar
President & CEO
Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau
Promoting the Great Rivers & Routes region is a never-ending job. As we’ve grown to a realized vision with the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, we’ve gained more skills, connections and resources to deliver even more results for our communities.

What’s Inside

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>What's Inside</th>
<th>TOURISM BUREAU CHECKLIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PROMOTING THE GREAT RIVERS &amp; ROUTES</td>
<td>☐ Trade Shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>GLOBAL SCALE</td>
<td>☐ Sales Missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>THE BEST OF THE REST</td>
<td>☐ Familiarization Tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>IT ALL STARTS WITH A VISIT</td>
<td>☐ Media Trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>STAFF &amp; BOARD OF DIRECTORS</td>
<td>☐ Destination Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Social Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Community Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Place Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ And, so much more!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the first quarter the bureau conducted an aggressive brand awareness advertising campaign for Rivers & Routes, resulting in July being the best month ever for reaching people through the digital world in which we live. Our campaign reached an incredible 10 million people in these months alone!

The brand awareness campaign spanned from July 1 to Sept. 8. During that time frame, website traffic increased significantly, with total users up 83 percent and new users up 84 percent from the previous period. Sessions were also up 72 percent.

Once on the website, visitors took special interest in the feature pieces highlighting our region.

Our two most popular pages on the site were the stories selling our brand, “A Great Getaway on Illinois’ Great Rivers & Routes” and “Great Places to Stay Along the Rivers & Routes.” These two pages combined were viewed more than 11,000 times.

Other pages and events that caught readers’ attention ranged from the Robert Wadlow Statue to the Twistee Treat Diner to Staunton’s Balloon Glow and Hillsboro’s 4th of July Fireworks Show.
Like the website, the various social media channels managed by the bureau’s own Amy Chartrand and Stephanie Tate all saw continued growth.

The Facebook pages for Great Rivers & Routes, All Around Alton, Illinois, Alton Amphitheater, Alton Restaurant Week and Edwardsville Criterium – the latter two of which were managed by the bureau during the quarter – all grew by more than 100 followers in the period, with the amphitheater gaining an incredible 781 followers, an increase of 6.39 percent in just three months.

The future looks bright as our marketing team, comprised of Stephanie Tate, Amy Chartrand and Nathan Grimm, is working on an even more comprehensive social media plan for 2020 and beyond!

GREAT RIVERS AND ROUTES

19,154 People Reached
2,302 Engaged

SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK
Great Rivers & Routes
All Around Alton, Illinois
Alton Amphitheater
48,313 Followers (+1,957 from previous quarter)
29,500 Engagements (+8,400)

INSTAGRAM
Great Rivers & Routes
All Around Alton, Illinois
Alton Amphitheater
4,264 Followers (+355 from previous quarter)

Visit Our Social Sites

GREAT RIVERS AND ROUTES

19,154 People Reached
2,302 Engaged
During the first quarter of our fiscal year, our media guru, Stephanie Tate, churned out more than 20 press releases highlighting everything from Jackie Joyner-Kersee joining the Edwardsville Criterium to the Benjamin Godfrey Legacy Trail dedication to Grafton’s ceremony to commemorate the largest American Flag on the Mississippi River.

Our earned media efforts for the quarter from print, online, blogs and television coverage accounted for an estimated $286,034 of free advertising value! A very cost effective way to raise our awareness!
Missouri may be the **Show-Me State**, but Show Me St. Louis continues to feature the Great Rivers & Routes region on the Illinois side of the river. Almost monthly, Brett and Stephanie collaborate with producers to create segments to promote regional events and attractions.

This quarter, the show promoted the **Edwardsville Rotary Criterium**, **Edwardsville Art Fair**, **Grafton, Raging Rivers. Alton Amphitheater**, the city of **Troy** and their **summer fireworks**, the **Jersey County Fair, Savor Restaurant Week** and **Italian Fest**, reaching 630,000 viewers in the St. Louis markets.

---

**Show Me Results**

![Alton Amphitheater](image)

![Savor Restaurant Week](image)

![Jackie Joyner-Kersee at Edwardsville Rotary Criterium](image)
As the bureau continues to grow, our efforts to entice international travelers to the region continue to expand as well.

Representing the last 100 miles of Route 66 in Illinois has increased our global recognition and put the region on the map – pun intended – for international travelers and media alike. The region has been featured in publications like Cosmopolitan China, the British tabloid The Daily Mirror and the UK’s The Daily Telegraph in recent months.

Brett, Stephanie, Katie and Nathan hosted several FAM tours for international media and product managers for overseas travel agencies. With so much to offer, it’s no wonder the Great Rivers & Routes region is an increasingly popular destination for international travel!

The UK’s The Daily Telegraph
Our Illinois Office of Tourism Delivered a Major Gift! A team from Midwest Living magazine came for a **Road Rally FAM** tour in mid-September. Stephanie and Brett spent the day and night exploring just a few of the Great Rivers & Routes region’s attractions, seeing the Pink Elephant Antique Mall, Brooks Catsup Bottle Water Tower, Cahokia Mounds, Chain of Rocks Bridge, Old Bakery Beer Company, Mississippi Mud Pottery and Aerie’s Resort before enjoying dinner at Cleveland-Heath and spending the night at Aerie’s.

Stephanie joined Luke Harris of Crossroads Bike Tours for a guided bike tour on the Sam Vadalabene Trail and had breakfast at Post Commons before departing. The region put its best foot forward for one of the country’s premier magazines and the results will be published this spring!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner E-news Sent</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEAD ROOM NIGHTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>1,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>6,302</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOKINGS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of the Road Rally FAM tour at Cahokia Mounds
At the bureau, we pay special attention to large impact groups such as motor coach group tours, meetings and conferences, and sporting tournaments or events.

Katie Bennett, our sales manager, brings large economic impacts in one fell swoop, providing a great return on investment and benefiting an itinerary full of local attractions, restaurants and, often, lodging in the process. Katie works to convince all types of planners (meeting, wedding, sports and group tours) to choose our destination for their event to bring hundreds of people to the area at once.

**On the Itinerary**

All staff have been reaching out to partners in our new territories to create exciting new stories, and group tour itineraries.

Katie and Brett met with several partners and business owners in Greene County during a meeting hosted by Jennifer Russel of the U of I Extension. Katie and Stephanie also spent a day in Hillsboro meeting with Black Rabbit Coffee, Cozy Café, the historic Red Rooster Inn, Bremer Sanctuary and Opera House Brewing.

Katie continues to collaborate with the St. Louis CVC to put together joint itineraries that would bring more groups to the region for longer stays. The itinerary themes focus on Route 66, brewery tours, Mississippi River history, music history and live performance options or attractions.
Katie attended the Small Market Meetings conference in Green Bay, Wisconsin, in late September. She took joint appointments with a representative from the Gateway Convention Center and had 24 appointments scheduled during the three-day conference.

We also welcomed some great group arrivals this quarter. The bureau provided welcome bags to attendees of the ASA Softball Tourney, passengers of riverboat cruise dockings and overnight visitors for The United Methodist Village car show.
A huge development for the region came in the form of American Cruise Lines and the city of Alton signing a five-year agreement to allow the cruise line’s Mississippi River passenger cruise ships to have priority docking for turnarounds on the Alton riverfront starting in 2020.

The agreement gives American Cruise Lines the right to dock its ships on the Alton riverfront for five years with options to extend the agreement for additional five year terms. The agreement also calls for the cruise line “to promote tourism and retail activity in Alton.”

In 2020, a total of 11 cruises are scheduled to dock in Alton with an anticipated economic impact of $171,540. That number increases to 13 cruises in 2021 and 12 each in 2022 and 2023, with an anticipated economic impact of $741,225 over the course of the four years. Economic impact numbers are based on the value the average leisure visitor spends in a community during an overnight stay in downstate Illinois.
Katie and Nathan are working to expand our sports sales footprint within the market and took several steps in the first quarter of FY 2020.

Recently, the Edwardsville Parks Department released their **2020 baseball/softball schedule** for Plummer Family Park. Three companies that Katie met at trade shows and we hosted for site visits - Game Day USA, JP Sports and USSSA Baseball - booked multiple tournaments. We are working on hotel contracts for all of the weekends tournaments scheduled for the 2020 season.

Elsewhere, our sales team worked for Alton on two huge sports-related weekends in September. The **Alton Catfish Classic** had 97 boats participate with the majority of fishers traveling more than 60 miles to participate. From logo creation to social media promotion to booking rooms, the bureau helped reel in a winner for our communities. We also worked with **Bike MS Gateway Getaway Ride**, who welcomed nearly 1,400 participants with an estimated 600 room nights (based on rider surveys and distances traveled to attend).
Visitor Center staff Gail Wallace, Miriah Haring and Molly Price work nonstop serving guests 361 days a year. As a bureau, we’re proud to support the many events and venues in the Great Rivers & Routes region. Topping the list this quarter was Grammy Award-winning artist Nelly at the Liberty Bank Alton Amphitheater. The St. Louis-bred rapper graced the outdoor venue’s stage on Sept. 6 and delighted a near-capacity crowd, which was the biggest ticketed event in the amphitheater’s history. Approximately 3,700 people filled the venue’s 4,100 capacity venue.

All hands were on deck to close out summer on a high note with two great events, the All-Star Restaurant Week and Kid’Cation.

Restaurant Week, which takes place twice a year, featured 25 partners in Alton, Bethalto, Godfrey and Grafton. The event welcomed more than 1,500 visitors come through the Downtown Alton Visitor Center. Kid’Cation, the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau’s annual 10-day event to celebrate the end of summer with promotions like Train Day and the Sweet Treat Trail, had a record 23 partner activities for kids and good turnouts across the board.
The Great Rivers & Routes region added another fabulous Illinois Made business to its ranks when Taylor’s Mexican Chili Parlor in Carlinville was honored during a ceremony on Sept. 23. Acting deputy director of the Illinois Office of Tourism Jan Kemmerling and numerous community leaders were on hand to celebrate the designation for the chili parlor, which has been operating since 1904. Taylor’s joins Mississippi Mud Pottery, Buena Vista Art, Old Bakery Beer Company, Grafton Winery & Brewhaus and Kruta Bakery as Illinois Made honorees in the Great Rivers & Routes region.

Out And About

In addition to marketing major events at the Liberty Bank Alton Amphitheater, the bureau continued to work with USTA Edwardsville Futures, Opera Edwardsville, Italian Fest, Edwardsville Criterium, Edwardsville Art Fair, Jazz & Wine Festival and Alton Food Truck Festival in support of their signature events. Stephanie played a key role in the Italian Fest’s publicity and success, serving as co-chair for the festival’s marketing efforts.
Professional Development
In order to stay on top of the latest destination marketing and development trends, bureau staff regularly attends professional development conferences to learn and grow as a DMO.

In July, Barbara and Brett attended the Destinations International Annual Convention, which was conveniently held just across the Mississippi River in America’s Center Convention Complex in St. Louis. A month later, Barbara and Stephanie attended the U.S. Travel Association’s Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) in Austin, Texas. The education and information gained at these conferences will prove invaluable as the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau continues to get bigger and better.

Show Of Support
Bureau members were also active in attending a range of meetings throughout the region, including the Route 66 Blue Carpet Corridor, Christmas Wonderland, RiverBend Growth Association, Ed-Glen Chamber of Commerce, Collinsville Chamber of Commerce, Meeting of the Rivers Foundation, Lower Illinois River Rural Prosperity Initiative, AltonWorks, SIUE Community Outreach, Illinois Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus and Edwardsville Rotary, among many others.

Attendance at these meetings ensures our region is represented and our partners’ voices are heard.
It’s a phrase we’re fond of around here. (In fact, we’ve literally got it plastered on our wall.)

Everything we do is geared toward getting people here – from the solitary international travelers experiencing a Route 66 bucket-list trip of a lifetime to annual meetings that bring hundreds of professionals to the region and everywhere in between. Tourism helps raise the collective tide that lifts all the individual boats that make up the Great Rivers & Routes region.

We’re proud to be your tourism bureau, and team in the trenches. Take a look at our phenomenal team on the next page and let us know what we can do for you!

Mission
Advance the overall destination experience and awareness for Madison, Macoupin, Montgomery, Jersey, Calhoun and Greene counties, in collaboration with community stakeholders, to strengthen the local economy and quality of life.

Vision
Provide world-class destination management and marketing leadership that improves this region’s quality of life and economic vitality.

Core Values
• Commitment to excellence, professionalism and fiscal responsibility
• Open and transparent communications
• Consistency and fairness in all relationships
• Encouragement of initiative, innovation, and the expression of ideas
• Promotion of collaborative and cooperative efforts with community partners and stakeholders

Who We Are
It takes all of us working together to ensure a thriving hospitality economy. We all bring value to the process of visitor experience. We’ve got a solid team in place that is here to nurture that experience and visitor economy.
OUR STAFF & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brett Stawar  
President & CEO

Barbara Strack  
Director of Finance & Operations

Stephanie Tate  
Marketing & Communications Director

Gail Wallace  
Tourism Manager

Katie Bennett  
Sales Manager

Nathan Grimm  
Tourism Development Manager

Amy Chartrand  
Marketing Content & Advertising Specialist

Miriah Haring  
Tourism Coordinator

Molly Price  
Visitor Center Assistant

Cathy Jo Meininger  
Accounting Clerk

Our Board

John Hopkins,  
Board Chairperson  
Gori Julian & Associates

Lauren Pattan,  
Vice Chair  
Old Bakery Beer Company

Kristi Hyten,  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Community Volunteer

Brian Campbell  
City of Alton, 1st Ward Alderman

Kim Durr  
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Cameo Holland  
City of Alton

Stacy Friedrich-Hinrichs  
DoubleTree by Hilton-Collinsville

Sandy Hefner  
Jersey County Board

Mike McCormick  
Village of Godfrey

Michael Barker  
Argosy Casino

Linda Jun  
Vandalia Bus Lines

JD Lorton  
Aerie’s Resort

Patty Rotermund  
Best Western Premier Alton-St. Louis Area Hotel

Erin Ventimiglia  
Tony’s Restaurant

Mitchell Bair  
City of Collinsville

Karen Brncic  
Alton Marina

Tom Guarino  
Bella Milano

Cathy Luttrel  
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Edwardsville

Dave Miller  
St. Louis Regional Airport

Doug Stotler  
Lewis & Clark Community College

Cindy Warke  
Gateway Convention Center