

G R E A T R I V E R S & R O U T E S

# quarterly report

OCTOBER – DECEMBER  
2020

ALTON  
COLLINSVILLE  
EDWARDSVILLE  
GLEN CARBON  
GODFREY  
GRAFTON

MADISON  
JERSEY  
CALHOUN  
MACOUPIN  
MONTGOMERY  
GREENE  
COUNTIES



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enjoy  
**illinois**



# welcome LETTER FROM CORY

“ IT IS TRULY AN HONOR TO BE LEADING THIS INCREDIBLE ORGANIZATION DURING THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES FOR OUR INDUSTRY. ”

I WANT TO START BY SAYING THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE TOURISM BUREAU during the past months of transition and to acknowledge the amazing work of our staff and board of directors who continued, despite all the challenges, to keep our region top of mind for travelers during the summer and fall travel seasons.

This has been an unprecedented year for the hospitality and tourism industry. Across the country nearly 5 million jobs have been lost since March, thousands of small businesses have shuttered, and tourism revenue losses are in the billions. Locally, finding ways to support our small businesses, delicious destinations, and our attractions has been our top priority. Please read about our efforts in this report. I cannot emphasize this enough: support our local businesses and their employees. The next five months will be critical. We need our small businesses to survive. They will be an integral part of our tourism restart and recovery in southwest Illinois.

As we look forward to 2021, the tourism recovery will be essential for the economic recovery of our region. Economic development begins with a visit! A visit leads to investment. In fact, travel is an essential industry and essential activity. Travel is essential the way books and hugs are essential. Food for the soul. Right now we are between courses – savoring where we have been, anticipating where we will go next. The Great Rivers and Routes region will be ready for those travelers eager for a safe road trip experience in 2021. Together, we will be ready for a record year of visitor spending and investment in our communities. Together we will recover. Together we will be stronger than ever before.

THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE IN AMERICA WHERE THE GREAT RIVER ROAD MEETS THE MOTHER ROAD. LET’S TELL OUR STORY – TOGETHER!

Cory M. Jobe  
President/CEO • Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau

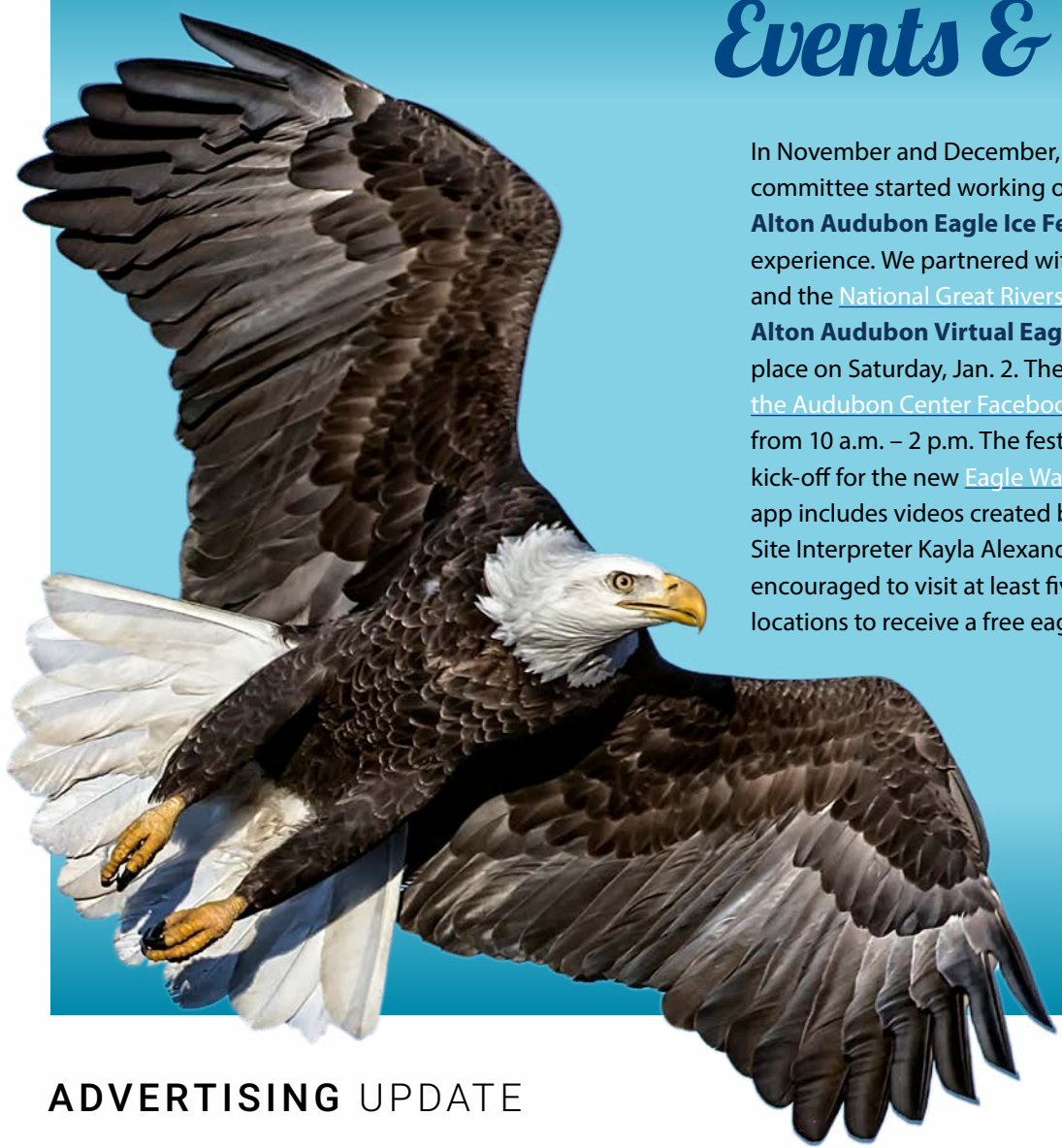


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# TOURISM BUREAU *Events & Update*



In November and December, the planning committee started working on turning the annual **Alton Audubon Eagle Ice Festival** into a virtual experience. We partnered with the [Audubon Center](#) and the [National Great Rivers Museum](#) on the **Alton Audubon Virtual Eagle Festival** which took place on Saturday, Jan. 2. The event aired live on the [Audubon Center Facebook page](#) with sessions from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. The festival also served as the kick-off for the new **Eagle Watcher's Passport**. The app includes videos created by Pere Marquette Site Interpreter Kayla Alexander. Participants are encouraged to visit at least five of 10 eagle watching locations to receive a free eagle t-shirt.



## ADVERTISING UPDATE



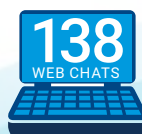
We advertised the [Rivers, Routes & Refreshment Trail](#) in *Feast Magazine* along with **Fall Colors** advertising in *GO Magazine* and *Riverfront Times*. We also placed ads for the [Christmas Wonderland](#) light display.



OCTOBER - DECEMBER  
**VISITOR  
CENTER  
STATS**



**3,142  
PHONE  
INQUIRIES**



**138  
WEB CHATS**



**1,135  
VISITOR GUIDES  
MAILED**



# MARKETING *update*

The [2021 Eagle Guide](#) was produced and delivered in November. The four-page guide highlighted the virtual eagle events that will take place in the region January through March.

October social media analytics indicated a surge in followers, engagement and reach from our posts. We gained over 300 followers in October. Our November social media campaign launched the new **#FlatLincolnFun** program. The campaign offered a family-friendly, socially distanced program to bring Flat Lincoln to favorite regional attraction and business, take a photo and post using the hashtag. Posts with the most likes at the end of the month received gift baskets.

In December, Santa and his happy elf visited local makers in Alton, Grafton, Edwardsville and Collinsville for the [Great Rivers & Routes Made Holiday Gift Guide](#). The social media campaign featured fun and festive videos of Santa's shopping trips. The Bureau also released the **#CarryoutChamp** campaign encouraging everyone to support their favorite restaurants with carryout orders. Take a photo of your order and post with **#CarryoutChamp** to show your support!



## NOTEWORTHY PRESS

In October, Grafton was featured in **KSDK Channel 5's** Fall Colors Prime-time special. The city was highlighted in the three-minute news feature. [Illinois Country Living](#) featured a fall color drive along the Great River Road as the cover story for the October edition.

The [Pink Elephant Antique Mall](#) was featured in the November edition of **Martha Stewart Living Magazine**. The attraction was part of the "Brake for Novelty" section promoting unique pit stops for your next road trip. Our region was also featured in the [Travel Pulse](#)

list of "Every State's Best Winter Travel Destination. [Josephine's Tea Room](#) was highlighted in **AAA Midwest Traveler** and Christmas Wonderland was featured in **AAA Magazine**.

In December, Cory was interviewed on **Fox 2 News** in December to promote the #CarryOutChamps promotion. Alton's light displays received a huge upgrade from **Netflix**. The city was one of six cities throughout the country selected to receive lights displays and the streaming service had thousands of lights hung throughout downtown.

# SALES update



Our sales manager participated in the **National Tour Association** virtual tradeshow. We had 21 appointments with group tour operators and ended up with solid leads for late 2021 and 2022 group bookings. We are actively pursuing two leads from the SportsETA virtual sales show in August. [Gateway Convention Center](#) is pursuing a pickleball tournament and **Gordon Moore Park** is pursuing a Major League Quidditch **SuperSeries** tournament.

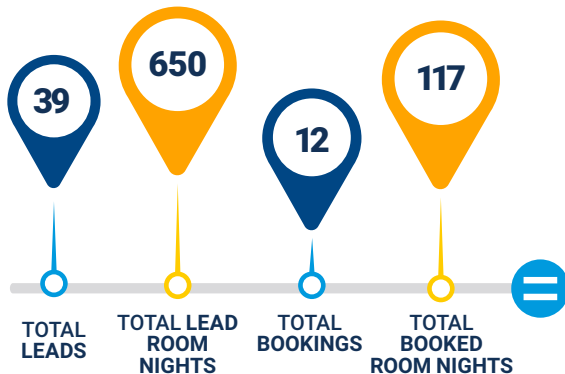
We mailed the **Winter/Spring 2020-2021 Touring News** newsletter to nearly 1200 motorcoach companies and group tour planners throughout the country. The newsletter focused on regional outdoor escapes and a Collinsville/Edwardsville suggested day trip itinerary. In November, we sent a **Touring Tidbits** email newsletter to 1420 group tour planners promoting the 2021 [Spirit of Peoria](#) cruise dates. The paddlewheeler will return to Grafton for sightseeing and lunch cruises on July 14, Aug. 25, Sept. 22 and Oct. 6. [Alton Little Theater](#) will host a Murder Mystery Dinner Theater cruise on Aug. 25.

In December, we sent another **Touring Tidbits** email newsletter to 1391 group tour planners promoting the 2021 virtual eagle festival and encouraging them to plan a 2022 eagle watching tour. We also sent a **Field Trip News** email newsletter to 265 Illinois and Missouri elementary school contacts promoting the [Alton River Dragons](#) coloring contest. Every child who submits a coloring picture will receive a free admission pass to a Sunday home game in 2021.

We are excited to work with **Viking Cruises** to schedule shore excursions to [Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site](#) when they start cruising the Mississippi River in 2022. The new partnership will bring hundreds of visitors to the historic site each year.

We were excited to help welcome motorcoach tour groups back to our region in October. We had two daytrip groups and two multi-night groups and all were very complimentary of their trips. Thank you to all of our attractions and restaurants who helped with the tour itineraries! We also hosted a site visit for Country Travel Discoveries in October and booked a new multi-night regional tour for 2021.

OCTOBER -  
DECEMBER  
SALES  
METRICS:



Lead: Potential business booked for a future date • Booking: Business secured/travelers visited our region Oct.-Dec. 2020

RIVERSANDROUTES.COM

**155,622** Website Visits  
**366,709** Page views  
**1:16** Avg. Time on Site

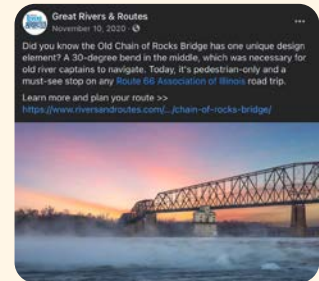
TOP VISITED PAGES

**16,909** [Grafton Ferry](#)  
**15,543** [Great Rivers & Routes Events](#)  
**12,489** [Christmas Wonderland](#)

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS:



**66,900** [It's Saturday. Take a Drive](#)  
organic reach (10/30)



**11,400** [Old Chain of Rocks post](#)  
organic reach (10/30)



**10,000** [What to Do Between Christmas & New Year](#)  
organic reach (12/27)

[37,132 followers](#)  
 [230 followers](#)  
 [2,069 followers](#)  
 [33 followers](#)

(Launched in July 2020)

# about THE GREAT RIVERS & ROUTES TOURISM BUREAU



## WHO WE ARE. WHAT WE DO

### 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.**

## WHAT WE ASPIRE TO BE

### 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

## GREAT RIVERS & ROUTES STAFF



**CORY M. JOBE**  
President & CEO



**BARBARA STACK**  
Director of Operations & Finance



**STEPHANIE TATE**  
Marketing Communications Director



**KATIE BENNETT**  
Sales & Reporting Manager



**GAIL WALLACE**  
Tourism Manager



**MIRIAH HARING**  
Tourism Coordinator

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**JOHN HOPKINS**  
Board Chairperson  
Hopkins Law Firm

**LAUREN PATTAN**  
Vice Chair  
Old Bakery Beer Company

**KRISTI HYTEN**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Community Volunteer

**MITCHELL BAIR**  
City of Collinsville

**MICHAEL BARKER**  
Argosy Casino

**KAREN BRNCIC**  
Alton Marina

**BRIAN CAMPBELL**  
City of Alton,  
1st Ward Alderman

**STACY FRIERDICH-HINRICHS**  
DoubleTree by Hilton-Collinsville

**TOM GUARINO**  
Bella Milano

**SANDY HEFNER**  
Jersey County Board

**CAMEO HOLLAND**  
City of Alton

**LINDA JUN**  
Vandalia Bus Lines

**JD LORTON**  
Aerie's Resort

**CATHY LUTTRELL**  
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Edwardsville

**MIKE McCORMICK**  
Village of Godfrey

**DAVE MILLER**  
St. Louis Regional Airport

**PATTY ROTERMUND**  
Best Western Premier Alton-St. Louis Area Hotel

**DOUG STOTLER**  
Lewis & Clark Community College

**ERIN VENTIMIGLIA**  
Tony's Restaurant