

Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau Wins Excellence In Tourism Awards

by Stephanie Tate
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ALTON - The Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau received three Excellence in Tourism awards in the annual Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism during an awards ceremony at Chicago's Navy Pier Monday, Dec. 5.

The bureau received awards for Best Website, Best PR Marketing Campaign and Best Cooperative Partnership. The PR Marketing Campaign recognized the bureau's Eagle Season campaign and the Cooperative Partnership award was presented for The Last 100 Miles of Route 66 Postcard Mural Trail.

"We are extremely honored and thrilled to be presented with these awards from our industry peers," Great Rivers & Routes President & CEO Cory Jobe noted. "Our tourism website is second to none in the state and showcases our region with compelling imagery and strong content enticing visitors to the region. The Bureau team works hard to make sure our region shines on a daily basis."

The Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards were presented to honor the most successful tourism marketing and advertising initiatives, from convention and visitor bureaus (DMOs) and tourism destinations to attractions and innovators throughout the state who make Illinois shine.

Travel and tourism professionals from across the industry judged submissions in nine categories, ranging from best public relations and social media marketing campaigns to best event or festival, with one exceptional entry receiving best of show.

Each category contained a Budget A for organizations with annual operating budgets of \$750,000 and above, and Budget B for organizations with budgets under \$750,000.

The Bureau's website, RiversandRoutes.com, invokes visual storytelling to showcase the area's rich history, beautiful outdoors, stunning riverscape, and picturesque riverside towns. It is the only place in the U.S. where Route 66 meets Great River Road and our new website is the ultimate roadmap to memorable experiences for those navigating the region.

The Bureau's Eagle Season public relations campaign, called "The Eagles Are Coming", was laser focused on Eagle Season in southwest Illinois. The nomination stated in part: It's all about the eagles – the bald headed kind that is– during the winter months in the Great Rivers & Routes region of southwest Illinois. Celebrating the return of the wintering American Bald Eagle through a dynamic public relations campaign created a national buzz about the local birds.

Working with 12 different Route 66 communities to create a vivid Route 66 Postcard Mural Trail among other interactive Route 66 products was part of The Last 100 Miles of Route 66 initiative for the Bureau. The nomination for this award stated: It may take a

village to raise a child, but it takes 12 different communities working hand-in-hand with the Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau to create new tourism products including murals, monuments and interactive sites along the Last 100 Miles of Route 66 in Illinois.

“The winners of the Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards reflect the resilience, creativity, and passion of Illinois’ dynamic tourism industry,” said Sylvia I. Garcia, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO). “Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, we have awarded an unprecedented level of grant funding to support tourism recovery and we remain focused on supporting the tourism sector, driving economic development, and bringing our communities together.”

This year’s Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards program was presented by the Illinois Office of Tourism. The 2022 Illinois Governor’s Conference on Travel & Tourism is underway in Chicago, Dec. 5-7, at Navy Pier. The annual conference brings hundreds of Illinois industry leaders, travel experts and visionaries together to explore the latest industry trends and insights that contribute to Illinois tourism, one of the leading economic drivers in the state.