A Year In Review

Eastern Iowa Tourism Association
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Board of Directors

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National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium

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Laurie Haman
Iowa City/Coralville Area CVB

V.P. Membership
Keith Rahe
Dubuque Area CVB

Office Staff

Executive Director
Carrie Koelker
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Administrative Assistant
Connie Nebel
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2014 Annual Report
www.easterniowatourism.org

collaborative teams... cooperative partnerships... collective industry...
Keith Rahe, Vice President

- Memberships were available to counties in the Eastern region, businesses/organizations, and others interested in tourism for Eastern Iowa.
- In 2014, EITA secured participation and contributions from all 28 Eastern Iowa counties.
- 260 members, processed 22 new memberships in FY’14.
- Held five EITA General Membership Meetings for members to attend.
- Hosted three bonus statewide opportunities for regional members.
- Continued a membership campaign offering existing members a free membership by recruiting two new members.
- Updated the membership section on the website and added additional region business documents.
- Attended numerous member events and site visits.
- Offered technical assistance to various members and committees.
- Secured liaisons to serve on the Iowa Tourism Awards committee.

Cassie Bott, Vice President

Statewide Grant Program

- Secured liaisons to the Iowa Economic Development Authority Grant Program review and application process.
- Updated the current scholarship grant application.
- Awarded Tourism Conference scholarships to nine members.
- Secured funds at the April Power of Travel Day for future Tourism Conference scholarships.
- The three Iowa Tourism Regions joined forces to provide two additional statewide tourism educational components.
- Appointed delegates to serve on the statewide review grants review process and committee.

Christy Decker, Vice President

- Hosted educational programs in conjunction with General Membership Meetings and by webinars:
  - Marketing Impossible — Back to Basics and Fine Tuning Marketing Strategies — Hopkinton
  - Annual Town Meeting with the Iowa Tourism Staff — Cedar Rapids
  - Learn How to Wow — Fayette
  - Mobile Training Lab — Cedar Rapids
  - Power of Travel Day/Regional Partnership Meeting — Des Moines
  - Licensed to Steal — Walcott
  - Tools We Can Use To Grow Relationships — Annual Meeting — Dubuque
- Hosted two webinars in partnership with the Central and Western Tourism Regions:
  - The Power of Itineraries — Roger Brooks
  - The Use of Photography to Increase Sales — Roger Brooks

Marilee Fowler, Vice President

EITA Liaisons of the Travel Federation of Iowa Board:
- Wes Ehrecke, Kim Manning Aaron Buzza, Cassie Bott, and Carrie Koelker

2014 Legislative Priorities:
- Enforce Iowa’s School Start Date
- Fund Iowa’s Three Tourism Regions
- Increase Visitations Through Increased Advertising
- Co-sponsored the annual Iowa Tourism Conference and Tourism Awards in Waterloo.
- Coordinated the Legislative Showcase in Des Moines by bringing together industry representatives with elected Iowa officials to deliver tourism information and explain the importance of Tourism to Iowa and the economy.
- Assisted in securing and hosting a Legislative Luncheon.
- Coordinated a statewide District Leader program with industry members.
- Held District Leader training for Eastern Iowa delegates.
- Coordinated an industry statewide survey to tabulate the legislative needs and priorities.
- Held a tourism summit with tourism industry stakeholders.
- Re-designed and coordinated the TFI Fast Fact Tourism statistics and awareness information.
- Continued to contract lobbyists and provide electronic TFI Legislative updates to the EITA membership.
- Assisted specific needs and district leaders with talking points and contacts.
- Supported all issues of the TFI 2014 Legislative Priorities.
- Attended TFI Board Meetings.
- The Travel Federation of Iowa contributed partnerships to each tourism region to assist with partnerships, advocacy training, and educational priorities.
- Coordinated a school start date survey and enhanced initiatives for this priority.
- Aaron Buzza served as President and Carrie Koelker as Secretary on the TFI Leadership Board.

EITA Funding $97,000
Total Funds $219,000

The Eastern Iowa Tourism Association is funded on strong membership involvement and represents businesses, organizations, and individuals from every facet of the tourism industry.

Membership investments and our Iowa Economic Development Authority’s Iowa Tourism Office contract are a critical piece to our partnership. Every component is valued in our private/public partnership.

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In FY'14 the Iowa Office of Tourism invited Iowa's three tourism regions to submit proposals to apply and manage multiple special projects. Each region was appointed $25,000. After soliciting members of the tourism industry, four ideas were chosen by the Board of Directors of Eastern Iowa. Two of the four were joint partnerships with Central and Western Iowa Tourism Regions. Input was gathered for future potential regional efforts. A variety of time and talent was embedded into each and every project.

**Special Projects**

**Power of Travel Day**
A joint partnership between Iowa’s three tourism regions and the Iowa Office of Tourism. This was held April 25, 2014 in Altoona, Iowa.
- One day education and networking opportunity designed to energize and appreciate the tourism industry for their partnership and involvement. Perfectly timed to kick off the upcoming spring and summer travel seasons.
- The day included Doug Lansky, internationally known speaker presenting *The Biggest Mistakes in Travel Marketing and What You Can Learn From Them*.
- The popular Guy Pie Auction raised over $900 in scholarships for the upcoming Iowa Tourism Conference.
- Attendance increased by 22% from the 2013 event and included statewide industry participation.
- A news conference was held announcing the route and partnerships to the media for the upcoming Epic Iowa Road Trip.

**Mobile Training Lab**
A professional mobile “hands-on” training lab was orchestrated. A variety of members voiced they needed specific components defined in their branding and upcoming marketing plans. The overall goal was to have the attendees gain knowledge to implement in their daily work environment to be successful in their tourism endeavors.
- This was held March 31, 2014 in Cedar Rapids.
- A partnership was formed with Bryan Earnest, AE & V.
- A pre-advanced survey was sent to the registered attendees to target the conversation and maintain the course of the day.
- 42 registered attendees participated, surpassing the goal of 30.
- Each attendee was provided a workbook for future planning stages of branding and community building they can reference.

**Mission Statement**
To create a thriving economic environment in Eastern Iowa by promoting our region as a principal destination for potential visitors and by serving as a catalyst to enhance our members’ tourism marketing efforts.