

# Visit Indiana

Indiana convention and visitors bureaus look to branding and marketing campaigns.

by Shari Held

**WHAT WILL MAKE** Hoosiers and other visitors ready and willing to part with their hard-earned cash for a few days of vacation fun this year? For those in the tourism business, that's the \$64 million question. A study conducted last year by the Office of Tourism Development identified several things visitors appreciate about Indiana—scenic beauty and outdoor recreation ranked high, as did the small-town experience and casinos. But the No. 1 activity was shopping.

“Not just in Indiana, but nationwide,” says Amy Vaughan, director of the Indiana Office of Tourism Development. “It is not the motivator for traveling, but it is what people end up doing. When people are on vacation, that is when they have the time to shop.”

This year, with the high cost of traveling, the 59 million people who visit Indiana each year are expected to shop around for the best bargains and values. Thirty-five percent of visitors to Indiana attractions come from within the state. Indiana draws 13 percent of visitors from the Chicago area and another 20 percent come from surrounding states. Altogether, they



SHAWN SPENCE PHOTOGRAPHER

spend \$9 billion annually while in Indiana.

“The message we want to get out to people is that Indiana destinations are a good value for the money,” says Vaughan. “They have free soda pop at Holiday World. Free suntan lotion. It’s closer to home than Disneyworld. There are great tourism destinations in Indiana where you will get a strong value for your money and you won’t have to spend a lot of money on gasoline.”

**Indiana—“Restart your engines.”** Last year Indiana got a new brand—“Restart

your engines.” This year it got a new Web site. The Office of Tourism Development unveiled [www.visitindiana.com](http://www.visitindiana.com) in January. The new site has trip ideas based both on theme and geographic location, an improved trip planner, a new time and temperature function and an improved search function.

Typically the Web site gets 1.8 million visitors each year. Vaughan is hoping the improved site will drive those numbers even higher during this year’s peak tourism season. But the new brand and Web site are just two components of the state

**Impact** The state’s brand “Restart your engines,” introduced last year, already has increased awareness to 79 percent says Amy Vaughan, director of the Indiana Office of Tourism Development.

marketing campaign.

“One year doesn’t give a new brand enough time to make as big an impact as it can after two or three years, but the preliminary response from the research has been very positive,” Vaughan says. “Brand awareness increased from 60 percent in initial

## TOURISM

testing to 79 percent in our advertising effectiveness study.”

With a budget of \$4.36 million, Indiana is far below the average state tourism budget of \$12.8 million. This year the office is launching a more comprehensive advertising campaign. It is running “image” ads in nine magazines, including national publications *Family Circle* and *Cooking Light*, combined with 15-second TV spots and 30-second radio spots in Champaign, Ill., Grand Rapids, Mich., Louisville and Cincinnati, as well as in Evansville, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, South Bend and Terre Haute. The office also purchased cable TV spots in the Chicago market.

“Chicago is an expensive market,” says Vaughan. “But we are trying to increase our presence there. “The [overall] message we are getting is that we are on target, but it is going to take more money and more time.”

**Fort Wayne/Allen County—“Room for dreams.”** Fort Wayne launched its new brand—“Room for dreams”—this January, and is in the process of updating its Web site. The new brand was the result of a partnership between the Fort Wayne/Allen County Economic Development Alliance and the Fort Wayne/Allen County CVB. It works for tourism as well as economic development and quality of life.

“We partnered to do research for a new community brand that different marketing organizations, such as our two, the city itself, the chamber of commerce, the board of Realtors—anyone who markets Fort Wayne



outside of this area—could use,” says Lacey Anderson, marketing communications manager, Fort Wayne/Allen County CVB, who manages the brand

The CVB is also investing in its largest media buy ever. For the next six months it is running full-page ads in major media markets within a 300-mile radius—Detroit, Cincinnati, Chicago, Grand Rapids and Indianapolis.

The message revolves around four key points: Fort Wayne has many opportunities. Fort Wayne is all about independence. Fort Wayne is



**“Where the Midwest Meets”** “The District,” a \$40 million riverfront entertainment center, was recently opened by Casino Aztar.

### “Room for Dreams”

That’s Fort Wayne’s new all-purpose brand. The Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo was rated among the “Ten Best” by *Child* magazine.

all about family. Fort Wayne is a city with many unique spaces and amenities, such as the Grand Wayne and Harrison Square.

Some of the area’s main attractions are the Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo, named one of the nation’s “Ten Best Zoos for Kids” by the editors of *Child* magazine, and the Lincoln Museum, which has the largest private Lincoln exhibit in the Midwest.

### Evansville/Vanderberg County—“Where the Midwest Meets.”

The Evansville CVB centers its marketing campaign on being a destination place for youth sports events and meetings. “Those numbers seem to have steadily increased throughout the last six years,” says Laura B Libs, marketing and communications manager, Evansville Convention & Visitors Bureau. “We are very happy about that.”

Libs anticipates that trend will continue, especially with the recent addition of three attractions this year. “The District,” a \$40 million entertainment center—including Jillian’s Billiards Club, Ri Ra Irish Pub and Restaurant and the 100-room upscale boutique hotel Le Merigot—was opened by Casino Aztar, which is the area’s “biggest draw by far.” Other new attractions are The Evansville African-American Museum and cMoe, the Koch Family Children’s Museum of Evansville. Next year, the Mesker Park Zoo, another main attraction and the only zoo within a 100-mile radius, will debut “Amazonia,” its South American Rain Forest exhibit.

Libs, who also serves as president of the Southern Indiana Regional Marketing Cooperative, says the organization is marketing the region as a driving tour along Interstate 64. Its marketing tools are geared toward highlighting the cities and towns along the route.

“Southern Indiana has such a diverse appeal,” she says. “We have wineries, we have caves, we have Holiday World, which is a wonderful theme park, right in our midst.” Despite the high cost of gas, a recent study by the Travel Industry Association indicates that 60 percent of people surveyed will go on vacation this year and most of them will drive, rather than fly.

### LaPorte County—In search of a new brand.

Eighty-five percent of the LaPorte County Convention & Visitors Bureau’s budget goes toward marketing the county. Currently the county is in search of a new

## TOURISM

brand—one with community tie-in. “Destination discovered,” the old brand, just isn’t working.

“We need a brand that the entire county can embrace, so everyone in the county becomes an ambassador for LaPorte County,” says Maureen Mellen, director of marketing for the LaPorte County Convention & Visitors Bureau. “We have such a diverse product—Lake Michigan, the sand dunes and lighthouse are at one end and the other end is more rural. It is hard to find a brand that everyone is excited about.”

Other area attractions include the Blue Chip Casino and Hotel, the Barker Museum, Old Lighthouse Museum and the new LaPorte Historical Museum. In the past, the CVB’s

marketing efforts have been focused outside the area—Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan and Missouri—in both the leisure and motor coach markets. “But what we are starting to do is really putting a little bit more marketing effort within the county,” Mellen says. But in a major way.”

Visitor guides are being inserted into the area’s major newspapers and mailed out to every household. Radio is used to promote major events, and this year is the first time the CVB has run TV commercials on two different stations. Another first this year is advertising in the theatres.

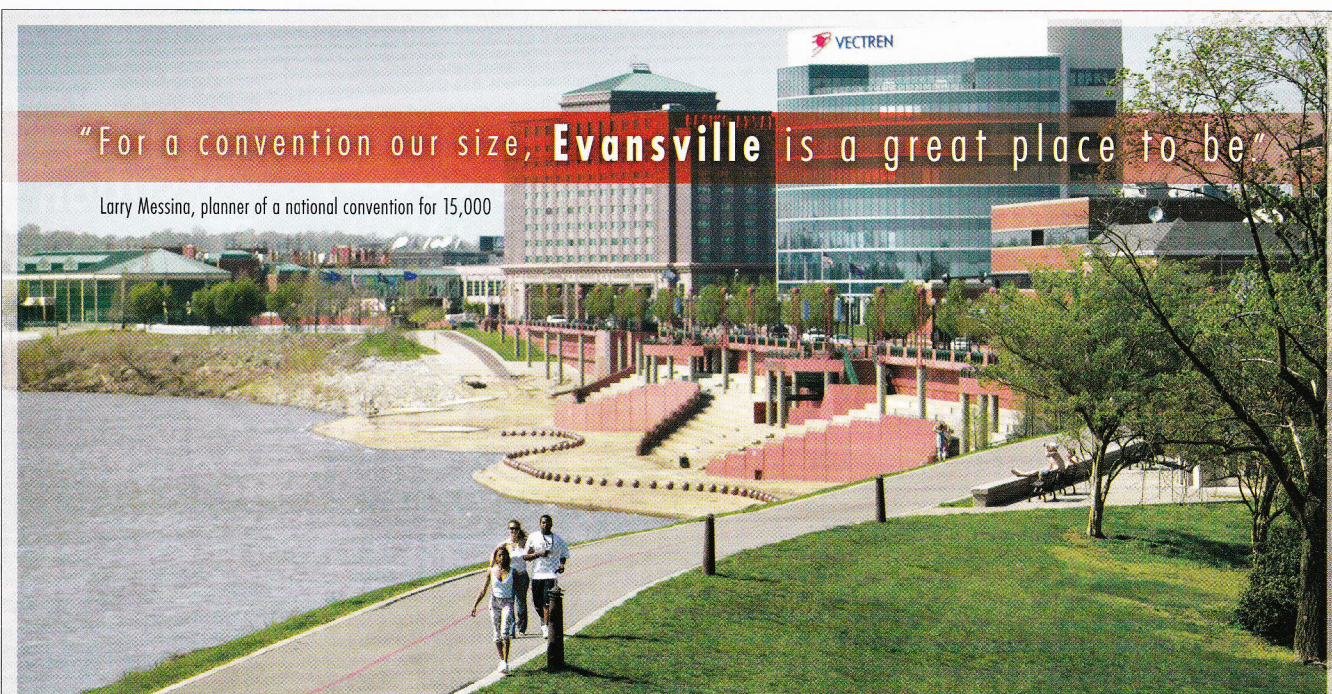
**Lafayette/West Lafayette—“Two great cities. One great university.”** Jo Wade, president of the Lafayette/

West Lafayette CVB, was instrumental in getting the new brand—“Two great cities. One great university.”—adopted in 2003. “We were called Greater Lafayette before,” she says. “Having both city names, Lafayette and West Lafayette, which is what visitors see on maps, is a big point for us. And our Web site URL is [www.homeofpurdue.org](http://www.homeofpurdue.org). The new brand hasn’t changed a lot of advertising direction but it has given us that additional consistent wording to use. We have a photo contest that we are just starting now, and we named it ‘One Great Photo Contest’ around that brand as well.”

Purdue University is one of the area’s biggest attractions. “Research shows

that we get about 2 million visitors per year to our area,” Wade says. “Overnight and return visits are heavy. We attribute a large number of return visits to the fact that parents are visiting the students attending Purdue University, and alumni will come back for games over and over again.”

Studies show that tourism brings \$186 million to the county in direct impact each year. The CVB promotes the local history, locally owned shops and attractions, such as its festivals (Feast of the Hunter’s Moon and Taste of Tippecanoe), and parks including Prophetstown State Park, Indiana’s newest, and Wolf Park, a non-profit research facility that showcases pack wolves, foxes and bison. ■



Evansville is a great place for *your* next convention.  
Contact the Evansville Convention & Visitors Bureau today.  
800-433-3025 | [www.evansvillecvb.org](http://www.evansvillecvb.org)

