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CONTACT: Brian Rehme
312-729-3645
Brian.Rehme@fleishman.com

New *Illinois Made* program celebrates artisans, products and experiences unique to the state

Latest Illinois Office of Tourism program designed to inspire travel throughout the state

Chicago – The Illinois Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism launched *Illinois Made*, a new program featuring makers, creators and artisans from across the state. Throughout the summer, Commerce’s Office of Tourism will feature a series of in-depth videos, exclusive web content, and *Illinois Made*-inspired travel ideas at www.EnjoyIllinois.com/Illinoismade.

Experiential travel continues to be a defining factor in trip planning. According to a special 2014 report by Skift and Peak DMC, a global travel expert network, more than 72 percent of consumers would rather spend money on experiences than things. With *Illinois Made*, the the Department aims to bring the best of Illinois’ unique, creative and on-trend experiences to travelers of all backgrounds, encouraging people to extend their experiences beyond a day trip by exploring the local businesses and great attractions nearby.

From craft brewers and independent coffee roasters, to custom canoe makers and woodworking journeymen, Illinois is teeming with craftspeople that are proud to call the Land of Lincoln home, and this pride shines through in their work. *Illinois Made* brings all of these amazing experiences together in one location for travelers to explore.

Visitors can get an intimate glimpse into the lives of these craftspeople through a video series available on the website. In addition, in-depth editorial features allow visitors to dive deeper into the unique story behind each maker’s establishment. What’s more, each maker feature includes an interactive map highlighting other travel experiences, amenities and attractions near the maker’s location, allowing visitors to build an amazing customized travel itinerary unique to them.

“From our world-class museums and iconic attractions, to our beautiful state parks and historic sites, Illinois has something for everyone,” Department of Commerce Acting Director Sean McCarthy said. “*Illinois Made* highlights the people and experiences that make Illinois one of

kind, and will attract new visitors to explore our state, supporting local businesses and generating important tourism spending for our communities.”

“Illinois is home to a thriving culture of artisans and craftspeople, making unique products that are in high demand among people looking for authentic, out of the ordinary experiences,” said Cory M. Jobe, Director of the Office of Tourism. “By profiling the stories of these makers and how the state of Illinois shapes their work through *Illinois Made*, we hope to inspire both new and repeat travelers to discover the gems they didn’t know about on a trip to Illinois.”

Illinois Made is an ongoing program that will highlight the depth and diversity of Illinois’ makers, creators, and artisans. The program will introduce new featured craftspeople every few weeks throughout the summer months. The first set of makers featured includes:

- **[Epiphany Farms](#) – Bloomington, Illinois**

The story of Epiphany Farms traces Owner and Chef Ken Myszka’s journey of trading in the fast-paced life working in Las Vegas’ premier restaurants for the quiet comfort of Myszka’s roots in Central Illinois. Myszka’s farms, along with other local farmers, are the exclusive sources for all of the meals served at Epiphany Farms restaurant, taking the “think global, eat local” concept to a whole new level. In addition to a farm-fresh meal on location, visitors can also take farm tours, or make a weekend excursion out of the farm’s legendary annual Harvest Feast.

- **[Heritage Bicycles and Coffee](#) – Chicago, Illinois**

At his shop in Chicago’s Lakeview neighborhood, fifth-generation Chicagoan Mike Salvatore combined two of his favorite things in life – bicycles and coffee. But this is more than just any old bike shop. Mike’s fully-customized, American steel, hand-welded Heritage bikes quickly became the talk of the town—and the toast of Lakeview. With the neighborhood in mind, Mike and his wife, Melissa, focused on another of Mike’s favorite things: coffee. Today, Mike’s bicycles are in high demand across the country, and with everything from movie nights to art shows, Heritage Bicycles and Coffee has grown into just as much of a destination as the Chicago neighborhood it calls home.

- **[Funks Grove Maple “Sirup”](#) – Shirley, Illinois**

The Funks have been tapping the family’s maple trees to produce bottles of their legendary maple “sirup” since 1824. Family traditions don’t come any deeper than this, and this heritage can be tasted in the end product. Generally, it takes between 35-50 gallons of pure sap to produce one gallon of their famous maple sirup. You can taste the time it took to harvest every sweet drop. But it’s not just sirup, a visit to Funk’s Grove general store just off the historic Route 66 provides sweet candies, gift boxes, special treats and more.

- **[Marcoot Jersey Creamery](#) – Greenville, Illinois**

In the idyllic town of Greenville, you’ll find the 7th-generation, family-owned Marcoot Jersey farm specializing in the handcrafted production of artisan cheeses. Their grass-fed, 65-cow Jersey herd – well-known for producing a rich, hormone-free, high-quality

milk – provide the secret behind their award-winning products: a collection of more than 16 cheese varieties, all carefully aged in underground caves replicating the Swiss tradition of aging cheeses in man-made cheese caves. From the country store to farm tours, the Marcoot family’s heritage shines through in every aspect of this Illinois-proud business. The Marcoot general store is also the perfect stop to pick up award-winning cheeses, pasture-raised beef and pork, sweet treats and a variety of local preserves.

- **[Scratch Brewing Company](#) – Ava, Illinois**

Near the breathtaking scenery of the Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois is a beer-lover’s paradise in the form of a farmhouse that doubles as the Scratch Brewing Company. Here, adventurous brewers create amazing regional beers by foraging for local wild ingredients like black trumpet mushrooms and sassafras, rather than leaning on the traditional hops and grains. *All About Beer* magazine also voted the Scratch setting as one of the most beautiful places to drink beer, and there’s plenty of amazing outdoor activities throughout the Shawnee Forest area for visitors to explore after enjoying a truly unique beer.

- **[Navarro Canoe Company](#) – Rock Island, Illinois**

In search of a new adventure, Bruce and Sue Patterson re-launched Navarro Canoe Company, long revered by paddle enthusiasts around the world. Bruce expertly crafts each canoe by hand in their Rock Island design shop, just steps from the Mississippi River. Graced with wooden ribs and varnished interiors, every Navarro canoe is like a floating original work of art.

- **[Toraason Glass](#) – Peoria, Illinois**

Hiram Toraason entered Southern Illinois University a business major, but an arts elective course revealed his true calling. So after graduation, Hiram set his sights on becoming a glass artist. Today, Hiram is part of Peoria’s thriving arts scene. Most days you’ll find Hiram shaping molten glass into modern works of art in his studio, located in the Old Town North neighborhood. Hiram’s work is on display throughout Peoria and Central Illinois, including at galleries, museums and Peoria’s very own Caterpillar Headquarters.

- **[Longshadow Gardens](#) – Pomona, Illinois**

In the quiet setting of rural Pomona, 123 acres of majestically landscaped grounds are set against the rolling hills of Southern Illinois. At Longshadow Gardens, Charlotte and Daniel Ward create works of art that have helped beautify gardens around the world. Garden planters are handcrafted by artisans – using materials that include local Bedford limestone – giving each piece a sparkle and effervescent texture all its own. Though they’re all made in Illinois, Longshadow planters can be found all over the world, from the Ritz-Carlton in Dallas and Dubai to Chicago’s Field Museum and Shedd Aquarium.

To learn more about *Illinois Made* and to view the latest video content and featured makers, visit www.EnjoyIllinois.com/Illinoismade or www.Facebook.com/EnjoyIllinois.



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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.