

Press Release | October 7, 2020

Contact | MacKenzie Taylor, 309.282.3287

Hospitality Industry Recovery Campaign to Promote Safe Dining, Shopping and Experiences in the Peoria Area

The campaign encourages locals and visitors to safely support local restaurants, hotels, retail and attractions

Peoria, IL- The Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (Discover Peoria), Heart of Illinois Hospitality Association (HOIHA) and the Downtown Development Corporation (DDC) of Peoria, along with the support of the City of Peoria, collectively have launched a **Hospitality Industry Recovery Campaign to bolster the local restaurants, hotels, retail and attractions that have been dramatically impacted by COVID-19.**

“The COVID-19 health crisis has hit everyone and every business industry hard,” said J.D. Dalfonso, President/CEO of Discover Peoria. “But the hospitality and tourism industry perhaps has been hit the hardest. So often, a night out with friends or family or a spontaneous overnight stay at a hotel is how we create lasting memories and create new experiences. COVID-19 has impacted our ability to do this and thus, impacted the hospitality industry that helps us create those experiences.”

Staggering numbers released by the Greater Peoria Economic Development Corporation and the Illinois Department of Employment Security showed that as of the end of August 2020, the Leisure and Hospitality sector of the Peoria MSA had 9,500 jobs, which is nearly 50 percent less than the 18,400 jobs available in August 2019. By far, this has been the slowest employment sector to see recovery in the Peoria MSA. Overall, jobs are down 11 percent in total for the Peoria MSA over the prior year.

“The fourth quarter of the year is vital for restaurants, retail and attractions as the holiday spending season picks up and the cold weather moves in,” said Dalfonso. “We need to make sure that the leisure and hospitality industry receives all the help that we can give them to survive, particularly our locally-owned, small businesses that need our community support now more than ever.”

The recovery campaign will feature two main themes to spur the economic recovery for the hospitality sector: Heart Open Now and Memories Made by You.

Heart Open Now focuses on supporting our local restaurants by dining out responsibly, whether that is indoor or outdoor dining. Local restaurants as of October 7 are allowed to serve both indoor and outdoor dining guests, along with takeout and delivery service.

“Our restaurants are doing everything they can to create a safe atmosphere for guests to dine out without having to worry about health,” said Carl Bunker, HOIHA Executive Director. “Masks worn by servers and staff, updated cleaning procedures and proper spacing of tables and chairs continue to be the norm in restaurants throughout the area. When customers also comply with the safety protocols, dining out can still be a fun and safe experience for everyone.”

HOIHA has created the website www.heartopennow.com to help customers find member restaurants of the association, along with members of the DDC and Discover Peoria restaurants that are offering indoor and outdoor dining options.

Discover Peoria began the “Keep Calm and Carry Out” campaign this past spring when the COVID-19 restrictions first went into effect. That campaign will continue to encourage carry-out and delivery options for restaurant patrons, as well.

Memories Made By You will focus on the hospitality industry as a whole, encouraging people to continue planning fun, safe experiences with their friends and family throughout the regions.

“Our amazing venues can still host your safe and socially responsible wedding or other celebrations,” said Dalfonso. “We want people to know that they can still take part in all the great events and activities our region has to offer -- from adventures at our local parks or indoor climbing or axe-throwing. Grab your mask, keep your groups small and make memories!”

To help provide specials and deals to the community during this time, Discover Peoria has partnered with the company TapOnIt! to provide coupons and deals. What is TapOnIt? They send amazing offers on things to do, see, eat, and buy in the Peoria area straight to your phone via text! It is the easiest and best way to save money and discover new things to explore in the community.

To sign up for the coupons and deals, go to <https://texttaponit.com/peoria>, enter your mobile phone number and you can enter to win \$250 in gift cards to five local Peoria restaurants of your choice.

These campaigns come on the heels of the Downtown Development Corporation of Peoria's newspaper advertising that began in July to support local businesses.

"The hospitality industry is a very important segment of the downtown that has been hit especially hard during the restrictions of the pandemic. The DDC is pleased to join with our partners by contributing to a cooperative marketing campaign encouraging everyone to be safe and support local businesses as much as possible to eat, shop, and play in Peoria," said Michael Freiling, CEO of the DDC of Peoria.

"These businesses have been working very hard to keep their doors open while at the same time implementing important safety precautions to keep their customers safe. The DDC encourages all to support your community by shopping local whenever possible!"

"We are excited to see multiple organizations coming together in the Peoria community to help support and promote our leisure and hospitality industry that is struggling right now," said Dalfonso. "These businesses help to give our communities their unique character and help us create memorable experiences. We need to support and encourage them in every way we can right now."

###