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September 26, 2005

Illinois Film Office Rolls Out the Red Carpet for Hollywood Studios

Hollywood-based Illinoisans Encouraged to Help Bring the Business Home

LOS ANGELES – The Illinois Film Office rolled out the red carpet in Hollywood with its Sweet Home Illinois gala on September 26th, one of the state’s primary efforts to aggressively attract movie and television productions to Illinois. Sweet Home Illinois brought together more than eight hundred Tinseltown celebrities, executives, producers and others behind the camera who have roots in the Land of Lincoln. The star-studded event featured countless restaurants, a la “Taste of Chicago,” to satisfy home state cravings for deep-dish pizza and Chicago-style hotdogs and offer former Illinoisans the opportunity to mix and mingle at the Universal City Hilton.

“Whether behind the camera or on the big screen, there are hundreds of ‘Hollywood Stars’ in California who have deep connections to Illinois. These alumni all know the incredible sites, within the city of Chicago and across the state of Illinois, that offer a vibrancy, character and beauty that you just can’t find anywhere else, and it is important for each of them to help bring their business home,” said Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich.

Many well-known Illinoisans active in Hollywood are committed to reviving the state’s film industry; among those attending the festivities this year were the legendary Jim Belushi, Ernie Banks, Joe Mantenga, Fred Willard and Harry Lennox. Master of Ceremonies Tom Dressen presided over the gala and Brenda Sexton, Director of the Illinois Film Office, presented ‘Commitment to Illinois’ awards to Vince Vaughn, for conceiving “The Break-Up” story and leading efforts to bring filming of the movie to Illinois, Jay Lavender, for writing “The Break-Up” script that features Chicago prominently, Dama Chasle, a producer who led efforts to film “Roll Bounce” and “Prison Break” in Illinois, and Joyce Sloane, one of the legendary founders of Second City.

In addition to the Sweet Home Illinois party, the Film Office will host a breakfast on Tuesday, September 27th in Los Angeles for more than 100 Los Angeles producers to explain the updated film tax credit incentives that have made Illinois more competitive to film. They will learn first-hand from producers of “The Break-Up,” including executive producer Stuart Besser and co-producer and co-writer Jay Lavender.

“Illinois has a history of cultivating the performing arts, and its often television or movies that is the capstone of success for people in this industry. We’ve already proven that we have the crews, talent and locations necessary for filming in this state, and its Gov. Blagojevich’s leadership that has made our state competitive again with the Illinois Film Tax Credit,” said Brenda Sexton, Director of the Illinois Film Office.