

THE RESCUE OF ROSEMONT How a simple suburb transformed into a booming destination [pg. 32]

# illinois

## meetings + events

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### SMALL RESORTS, *Big Payoffs*

4 quaint gems perfect for your next getaway



**plus!**

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**A TEAM-BUILDING TAKEOVER**

Chicago companies teach corporations how to cooperate  
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**WHAT MAKES UTICA TICK?**

Starved Rock springs to life with events



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# GET *with the* GROUP

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There's a team-building takeover in Chicago. With more interest (and providers) than ever, these activity squads show how you can take corporate events to the *next level*.

.. **By Jamie Ludwig** ..



Chicago is known for its fervent sports fans who, rain or shine, tirelessly cheer on their favorite teams throughout every victory and setback. But while the Bears, Blackhawks, Cubs or White Sox may generate the unwavering engagement and excitement of their respective supporters, that sort of team spirit and camaraderie can be hard to keep alive in the workplace.

So to help boost morale, conquer internal changes or just do something special for their employees, more and more companies are looking to corporate team-building specialists to design unique experiences for staff. These interactive group activities are also great for events, going above and beyond the traditional networking sessions, dinners or professional workshops to create opportunities for attendees to engage with each other and break down any existing barriers.

In that team spirit, *Illinois Meetings + Events* magazine set out to find some of the best local pros at creating collaborative experiences; we get their thoughts on why it matters and how to build a winning team every time.






## WINDY CITY FIELDHOUSE

Windy City Fieldhouse is a Chicago institution when it comes to sports activities, birthday parties and private events—but what many don't know is that soon after it opened its doors in the mid-1990s, it filled a void in the city for corporate team-building events as well. President and co-founder Murrel Karsh says the inspiration came from his former co-workers in the corporate world who challenged the company to create better options for team-building experiences.

"We developed programs that were designed to engage and entertain type-A personalities," says Karsh. "It was very different, and it kind of exploded." To date, the company has led thousands of corporate events with popular options like *The Amazing Race* and *Mission Impossible* scavenger hunts, as well as charitable activities like building bikes together to be later donated. Events can be held on site at Windy City Fieldhouse's 55,000-square-foot facility, but Karsh says 90 percent of them take place elsewhere, at a venue Windy City selects based on clients' wants and needs.

In a world where workers are bogged down with distractions from every angle, Karsh says engagement is key. "If it is not the right program, you will lose people in a second," he declares. Additionally, he says the growth of nontraditional work environments, such as telecommuting, has brought up new challenges for team development. He advises event planners to select the right program and framework for their event to create positive results. "What's most important is to help them make an impact," Karsh says. "The prerequisite is having fun, but there's so much more you can achieve, which dramatically increases the value for the company, and makes the event planner look great." 

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## TEAM-BUILDING IDEAS TO TRY

### Scavenger Hunt

It's a great way to succinctly introduce team members from outside of the area to all it has to offer.

### Artistic Achievements

Sign up your company up for painting, music, dancing or writing workshops.

### Creative Problem Solving

Whether it's indoors with pen and paper or model kits, or outside on a ropes course, your team's brains will be fully engaged.

### Speed Networking

Like speed dating, it's your chance to have employees from different teams and offices get to know each other.

### Sweet Charity

This one is trending big time. Take your team to volunteer at a food pantry, build bikes together or pack backpacks with school supplies.

### Themes

Give your competitive events an extra boost of fun and frivolity by centering them on themes. For example, Pirates vs. Sharks or Aliens vs. Zombies.

### Game Show

Customize a TV-show-themed program to test your guests' company knowledge, or to learn new things about each other.

### Picnic

Hire a team-building specialist to help ramp up the fun and interaction at your next outdoor event.

### Box Seats

If you're treating your team to a ballgame or other special event, a private box will let your guests interact more than a row of seats.

### Small Resorts

Take your team away from the office to a place of relaxation and inspiration, and see what you accomplish. (See page 22)