

As we celebrate the **100th Anniversary of Route 66**, we are excited to recognize the outstanding Byway Members who continue to preserve, promote, and celebrate the Mother Road! With more than **1,050 individual public votes**, our shortlist of finalists represents some of the very best of Illinois Route 66. We invite all Byway Members to join us on **November 10, 2026, at the Ace Sign Company Museum** for our Centennial Awards Gala, where the winners will be announced! We especially encourage our finalists to attend this memorable evening featuring entertainment, dinner, dessert, an open bar, and more. **Tickets are limited, so be sure to reserve your seat at illinoisroute66.org!**



Please remember, ALL finalists are Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Members.

The Preservation Powerhouse Award

This award honors a member who has gone above and beyond to restore, maintain, or protect a historic Route 66 landmark. Whether it's a vintage filling station or a classic diner, this category celebrates those keeping the physical history of the road alive.

- Sprague's Super Service
- Old Joliet Prison/Joliet Historical Museum
- West End Service Station/Great Rivers and Routes
- Cannonball Jail/Macoupin County Historical Society

The Sign of the Times Award

This category recognizes the best use of neon, murals, or vintage-style signage to enhance the Mother Road's aesthetic. It celebrates the vibrant visual "spark" that draws travelers off the highway.

- Motorheads 66 Shield & Big Ron
- It's Electric Neon Sign Park
- Pontiac Murals Tour
- Great Rivers & Routes Postcard Murals

The Centennial Storyteller Award

Awarded to the business or community that has created the most impactful educational exhibit or tour (like the State Fairgrounds Experience). This member excels at teaching the next generation about the cultural significance of the road.

- The American Giants Museum
- Litchfield Museum
- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum
- Edwardsville Children's Museum-Route 66 Roadway

The "Guardian of the Route" Award

The Route 66 Legacy Community Award Description: Awarded to the town that breathes new life into their section of Illinois Route 66 through revitalization efforts, new attractions and a commitment to keeping the neon glowing for future generations.

- Pontiac
- Granite City
- Staunton
- Litchfield

The "Next Generation Navigator" Award

This award honors the destination, attraction, or business that best captures the imagination of travelers of all ages. From interactive "discovery" stops and kid-sized photo ops to amenities that make traveling with a family seamless, this category recognizes those who are actively passing the torch of the Mother Road to the next generation. It's for the places where "Are we there yet?" turns into "Can we stay longer?"

- Pink Elephant Antique Mall
- SkyView Drive-In Movie Theatre
- Children's Discovery Museum in Normal
- Edwardsville Children's Museum-Route 66 Roadway

The Mother Road Maverick Award

This award recognizes the member who has most effectively "put themselves on the map" through a creative Route 66 promotion. Whether it's a viral social media campaign, a stunning new visitor guide, or a clever partnership with influencers, this category celebrates those who are driving modern traffic to historic miles. It honors the strategic thinking that keeps Illinois Route 66 a top-of-mind destination for global travelers.

- Visit BN
- Great Rivers & Routes
- Visit Springfield
- Visit Pontiac

The Rising Icon Award

(Opened 2020–2026)

This award celebrates the "newest spark" on the Mother Road. It is given to an attraction, museum, or landmark that has opened its doors in the lead-up to the 2026 Centennial. From the supersized sculptures in Granite City to the immersive dome theaters or the newly restored stretches of original pavement, this category honors the bold investments that ensure the road's future is just as exciting as its past.

- Route 66 Motorheads & Alive on 66!
- American Giants Museum
- "It's Electric" Neon Sign Park
- Gemini Giant's New Location & the Landing Pad

The Main Dish Award

From the legendary Springfield Horseshoe to the "mile-high" pork tenderloin, this award celebrates the savory classics that have become essential pit stops. It honors the kitchens that have consistently served up the literal "taste" of the Mother Road to hungry travelers for over a decade.

- The Cozy Dog Drive In
- The Ariston Cafe
- Old Route 66 Family Restaurant
- Jubelts Bakery & Restaurant

The Sweetest Miles Award

This category highlights the best in roadside indulgence; think blue-ribbon pies, old-fashioned soda fountains, and homemade donuts. Whether it's a frosty malt or a slice of "foot-high" pie, this award recognizes the businesses that provide that perfect, sugary pick-me-up that keeps road trippers smiling.

- Carl's Ice Cream
- Whirl-a-Whip
- Route 66 Creamery
- Mr. Twist Ice Cream – Granite City

The "Ultimate Mother Road" Icon Award

This premier award honors the single most recognizable, photographed, and beloved feature of the Illinois stretch. Whether it is a towering Muffler Man, a neon-drenched diner, or a historic bridge, this category celebrates the landmark that has served as the "face" of Illinois Route 66 for the last 15 years and remains an essential bucket-list stop for travelers worldwide.

- Chain of Rocks Bridge
- Pontiac Mural
- Illinois Route 66 Experience
- Million Dollar Courthouse

The Heritage "Service with a Smile" Award

Focus: Restored or Operational Gas Stations

This award honors a historic filling station that has been successfully preserved, restored, or remains in operation as a beacon for Route 66 travelers. Whether it now serves as a visitor center, a museum, or a functioning shop, this category celebrates the "open door" policy that has defined Illinois hospitality for the last 20 years.

- Shea's Gas Station/Mahan's Filling Station
- O'Brien Tire & Auto
- West End Service Station
- Soulsby's Service Station

The "Mother Road Treasures" Award

This category honors the shopping destinations that serve our travelers. It recognizes businesses that offer more than just merchandise—they provide an experience as well. From sprawling antique malls in repurposed historic buildings to quirky roadside curio shops, this award celebrates the retailers who keep the "commerce of the corridor" thriving while preserving the material history of the 20th century.

- Pink Elephant Antique Mall (Livingston)
- Mother Road Antique Mall (Carlinville)
- Historic Route 66 Flea Market in Granite City
- The Rooted Home (Farmersville)