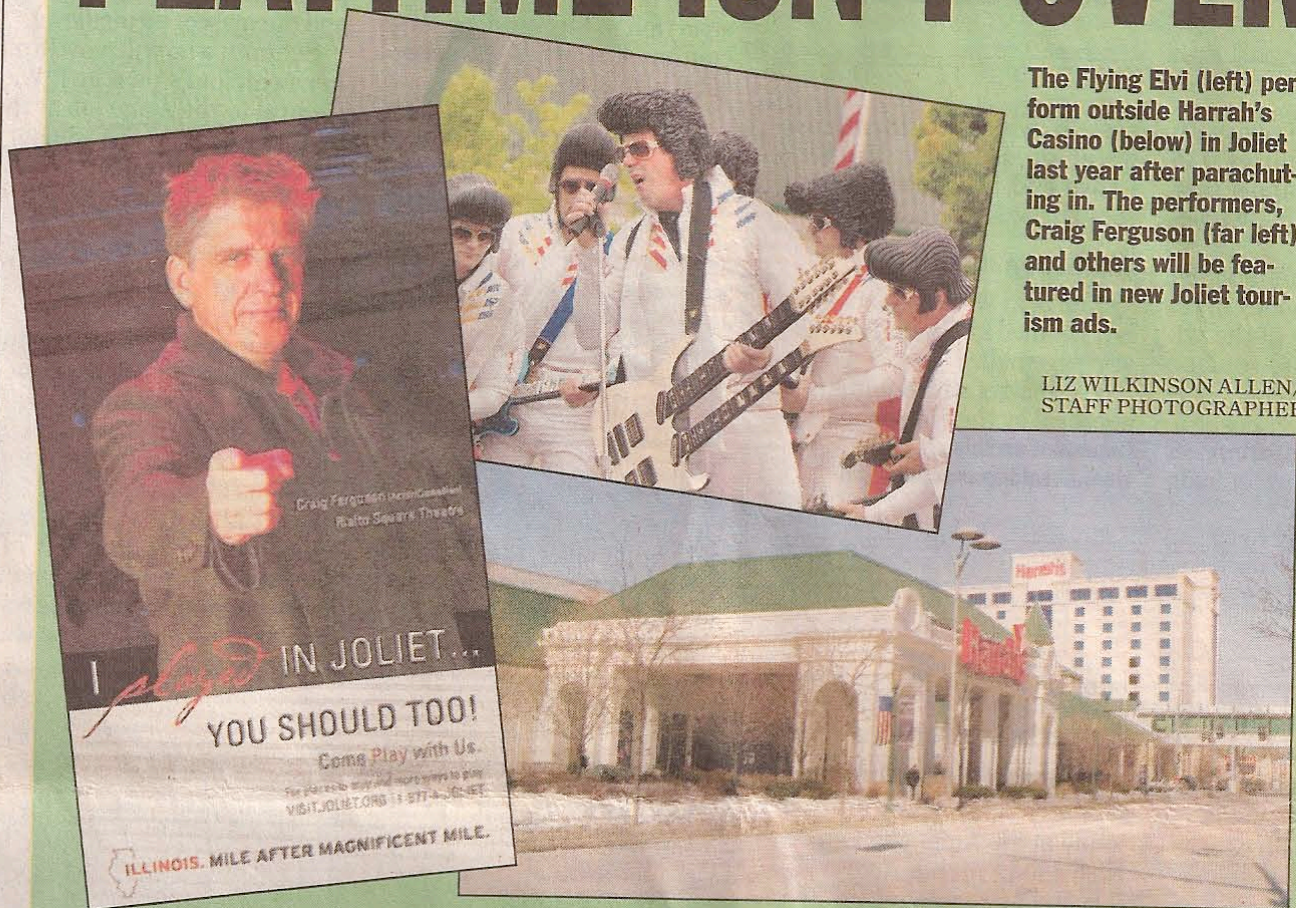


JOLIET TOURISM CAMPAIGN TO COUNTERACT ECONOMY

# PLAYTIME ISN'T OVER

The Flying Elvi (left) perform outside Harrah's Casino (below) in Joliet last year after parachuting in. The performers, Craig Ferguson (far left) and others will be featured in new Joliet tourism ads.

LIZ WILKINSON ALLEN/  
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**By Bob Okon**

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**JOLIET** — The city is banking on the idea that there is money to be made encouraging people to have fun in Joliet, even in a rough economy.

The marketing theme for Joliet in 2009 will be “I Played in Joliet ... You Should Too.”

Stars who performed at the Rialto Square Theatre and athletes who played at Silver Cross Field will be part of the campaign to draw people to the city's attractions this year.

Those signed up to participate in the campaign so far are comedian Craig Ferguson and Cubs Hall of Famer Fergie Jenkins. The Flying Elvi, a group of Elvis imperson-

ators who drop in by parachute at Harrah's Casino events, also will join in.

The city council voted Tuesday to spend \$54,000 for the marketing campaign, which includes about \$10,000 for television time. The state is contributing just under \$36,000 in a matching grant.

### Hard marketing

The advertisements will appear in such magazines as *Midwest Living* and in television commercials aired through Comcast cable.

“Your brother-in-law in Geneva is probably going to see them,” said Ben Benson, director of the Joliet Visitors Bureau.

Because times are tough, the goal is to market hard just to keep up with the business brought to

town last year.

“We would be pleased if the numbers maintain as much as they were last year and don't drop off,” Benson said. “We're thinking we can do that.”

Benson said he was encouraged to learn recently that a consultant looking at the Joliet-area market found that local hotels were holding their own, compared to a national slump in the lodging business. The study is being done to determine the market for a second hotel outside of Harrah's casino in downtown Joliet.

The results of that study are scheduled to come out later this month.

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