

# NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



## Illinois Women's Bowling Association Chooses Rockford Region for 2012 State Tournament *Economic impact estimated at \$1.5 million, 15 jobs to be created*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**ROCKFORD, IL** — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau announced today an agreement to bring a significant, high-profile bowling tournament to the Rockford Region. Rockford was chosen as the location for the Illinois Women's Bowling Association's (IWBA) 2012 state tournament, beating out Peoria for this coveted big win.

The tournament will bring nearly 650 bowlers to the area for 14 consecutive weekends, for a total of 9,100 bowlers. That will fill an estimated 8,400 hotel room nights, increasing hotel occupancy by 5% during that period from an overall occupancy rate of 43% to 45% using 2009 actuals as a benchmark. In addition to staying in area hotels, these visiting bowlers will spend their money at local businesses, restaurants and attractions, generating an estimated \$1.5 million for the area economy.

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau worked with the Rockford Women's Bowling Association to put together a comprehensive bid for the tournament that was presented to 250 delegates at the IWBA 2010 State Tournament in Belleville, Ill., on Saturday, February 20. The vote was 2 to 1 in favor of coming to Rockford over Peoria.

"Rockford has a lot to offer at such a reasonable price, from quality facilities to unique attractions and restaurants, so it was an easy to sell our organization on the Rockford community," said Laura Heller, president of the Rockford Women's Bowling Association. "Rockford knows how to treat our bowlers to a good time, and they really enjoy coming to the area."

The 2012 state tournament, themed "Sock Monkey and You in 2-0-1-2," will be held over 14 consecutive weekends from February 3 through May 6, 2012, at Don Carter Lanes and Forest Hills Lanes. IWBA last came to Rockford in 2004, when they held their 75<sup>th</sup> state tournament at Forest Hills Lanes and Don Carter Lanes.

"Rockford's strong reputation as a leader in sports is not limited to soccer and softball tournaments," said John Groh, RACVB President/CEO. "Rockford has proven to be a quality destination for bowling tournaments such as IWBA, which bring a significant amount of money to our local economy. It is crucial that we continue to invest in

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the visitor industry, including the sports arena, to drive the local economy and provide long-term results that will benefit the entire region.”

### **Bowling Highlights in the Rockford Region**

- According to Sinnissippi Saga, “bowling was first evident here [Rockford] in the early 1900s and, with the advent of automatic pinsetters in the late 1940s and 1950s, it became a popular sport.”
- Walter C. Anderson, considered to be Rockford’s greatest bowler, set a national record in 1928 by bowling 21 consecutive strikes without a 300 game. Anderson bowled in a “Fruit League” at the Grand Billiard and Bowling, which later became 7<sup>th</sup> Street Recreation.
- Rockford’s first officially recognized 300 game was bowled in 1902 by Ernest Fosberg.
- The world’s first sanctioned 300 game of the millennium was bowled in Rockford by Paul Nimitz on Jan. 1, 2000, at 10:30 a.m.
- The Rockford Women’s Bowling Association hosted the 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tournaments of the Illinois Women’s Bowling Association.
- The Rockford Region hosted the USBC Intercollegiate Team Championships in 2005, 2006 and 2009 at the Cherry Bowl.
- In 2010, the Rockford Region hosted the Illinois High School Girls Bowling State finals for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

*The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is a private, non-profit organization that champions efforts to promote and further develop the Rockford Region as an overnight visitor destination. RACVB generates positive economic impact for the community through investments in tourism marketing, sales, promotion and advocacy. [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com)*

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