

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



RACVB Wins Awards at State Tourism Conference *Awards Include Best Branding, Best Social Media Marketing*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ROCKFORD, IL — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau walked away from the Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism with two awards honoring excellence in branding and social media marketing efforts. Over 500 individuals gathered at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago to recognize best practices and strategies in Illinois' travel & tourism industry.

RACVB received the following Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards:

- **Best Tourism Branding** for Misery Loves Company. Launched in March 2013, Misery Loves Company was a fun, friendly, tongue-in-cheek tourism campaign masquerading as a response to Forbes Magazine's latest ranking of the Rockford Region as the 3rd most miserable city in the USA. The campaign included video created by RACVB's advertising agency, Graham Spencer, and was promoted through email blasts, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, creative imagery and messaging on and throughout RACVB's website and social media channels; news releases and media outreach/interviews to regional/Midwest media outlets; and t-shirt sales at eight locations.
- **Best Social Media Marketing**, for Stroll on State. The social media campaign for November's Stroll on State event reached 294,692 Facebook fans, 381 Instagrammers, 200 Twitter users and received 1,805 views on YouTube. The success and awareness of the event is due in part to the intentional integration among these social media platforms allowing RACVB to engage hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors.

"We chose to take an edgy approach with Misery Loves Company and Stroll on State. While very different initiatives, these awards demonstrate the importance of having marketing efforts that are worth remembering if you want to remain a leader in destination marketing. Both proved to be successful for the region and the positive feedback we have received has been astounding," states RACVB President/CEO John Groh.

The annual conference was highlighted by initial estimates that indicate Illinois welcomed more than 101 million visitors in 2013. Also, Illinois' hotel motel tax collections for 2013 are projected to reach a record-breaking \$230 million.

About the Awards: IETA recognizes innovative tourism promotional and marketing initiatives from across the state. Representatives of destination marketing organizations, trade associations, chambers of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, tourism attractions, museums and cultural institutions, restaurants, hotels, retail and entertainment centers and other travel-related companies who are registered to attend the conference are invited to submit entries.

RACVB is a private, non-profit organization that champions efforts to promote the Rockford Region as an overnight visitor destination. The RACVB adds wealth to the region's economy by investing in marketing programs that grow tourism.

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