

## **Already Reaping Benefits from Hosting First-Ever Travel Media Showcase in Rockford for Professional Travel Writers**

Strategic marketing is something that Chamber members know is an absolute necessity. When the Rockford Region hosted more than 70 professional travel writers at Travel Media Showcase here in late August, we scored a marketing win for the region. One of the largest travel writers' conferences in the nation, Travel Media Showcase brought together journalists and exhibitors for only the second time in Illinois, and the first time ever in Rockford.

The positive results are already showing up from the journalists who attended the four-day conference. They're writing articles, blogging, tweeting and otherwise promoting the Rockford area as a family-friendly, affordable vacation spot with many unique sites and attractions. When prospective visitors read about great places to see and they read about Rockford, it piques their interest and adds a lot of credibility to our other marketing activities such as ads, brochures and other media.

### 25-Plus Articles Already Appeared

More than 25 positive articles in national and regional publications like the Chicago Tribune, Philadelphia Sun Times and many websites like familytravelsonabudget.com have already surfaced. Journalists are raving about our sites and attractions such as Tinker Swiss Cottage, Volcano Falls, Anderson Japanese Gardens, Discovery Center Museum and more. The production company for Travel Media Showcase tracks all articles at [www.TSMamasandPapas.com](http://www.TSMamasandPapas.com).

### "Best Yet"

Other communities that have hosted this conference have seen articles for at least a year after the event. Immediate feedback from journalists who attended the conference in previous years has been extremely positive. Many said it was the best yet, and that the Rockford Region has set the bar very high for next year's host city.

We are formally following up with the journalists to see if they need more information, photos or are interested in a return trip. The relationships we build with them will reap benefits for many years.

We want to thank the many partners who helped us showcase many highlights of the Rockford Region. We appreciate our many sponsors including the Illinois Office of Tourism, sites and attractions that donated admission, Rockford Park District, LaMonica Beverages and Northern Illinois Wine Trail.

In addition to the half-dozen customized tours we created for the writers, we offered a tradeshow at Giovanni's Restaurant & Convention Center. Most trade shows offer trinkets stamped with the name of an exhibitor. This was different; RACVB partnered with local Etsy shop owners to provide unique, locally made items for the journalists. Etsy is an online marketplace for unique goods. People around the world connect to buy and sell custom goods and crafts. The travel writers received gift certificates that they

redeemed from Rockford's Etsy vendors for products such as scarves, jewelry, gloves and stationery.

These distinctive ways to position the Rockford area will continue to differentiate us as a preferred vacation spot. It will add to the \$326 million that visitors added to our local economy in 2012.