

Phantom Regiment Are World Champs and “Rockford’s Roving Ambassadors” They Publicize Rockford with Brass, Percussion and Pizzazz

“I was 14 year-old kid living in Fremont, California the first time I saw the Phantom Regiment compete, and they definitely put Rockford on the map for me,” recalled Rick Valenzuela, executive director of the Phantom Regiment based in Rockford.

“Rockford” is emblazoned on the trucks and other vehicles that transport the 150 members of the Phantom Regiment, 80 brass instruments (including 16 tubas), 23 drums, 13 marimbas and keyboards plus flags, sabers and more. When they’re announced at competitions across the country, they are introduced as hailing from Rockford, Illinois.

Rick added, “In the world of drum corps and marching bands, people definitely know Rockford because of the Phantom Regiment.”

Each year the Rockford Region gains more attractions, more events and more buzz, for citizens and visitors to enjoy. It’s due in part to the highly creative people who move the needle forward, like the Phantom Regiment.

In Good Company

To throw the spotlight on this talent pool, the RACVB asked Nels Akerlund Photography + Video to create a photograph and video exhibit that shows 40 such people at significant sites. Each work is exhibited at 30 locations through the Rockford Region. For the full list, please visit gorockford.com.

It’s my pleasure to highlight the Phantom Regiment, one of the 40 subjects, for the Voice. They are two-time Drum Corps International (DCI) World Champions. They’re also known as Rockford’s Roving Ambassadors.

About The Phantom Regiment

Founded in 1956, the two-time DCI world champions consists of 150 members ages 15 to 21 from about 25 states and a half dozen countries such as Canada, Japan, Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Last year one person was from Rockford and 15 from the Chicago suburbs.

“The most important thing we do is to provide a life-changing experience for our young people, as they develop lifelong skills, a strong work ethic and incredible teamwork expertise,” said Valenzuela.

The Phantom Regiment travels about 11,000 miles per year, competing in cities across the country. They were world champions in 1996 and 2008. They are consistently in the top 12, known as the finals.

Each spring, following the tryouts, the members attend spring training at Rockford University and live in the university's gym for about two weeks. When the group travels for competitions, they sleep in high school gyms all over the country.

Each youngster pays about \$3,300, which is one third of the cost for instruction, food, housing, equipment and travel. The balance is covered through fundraising and sponsorships. The Phantom Regiment is a 501(c) 3 charitable organization.

How Can Chamber Members Help?

Each year the Phantom Regiment presents fundraisers at Boylan Catholic High School and Northern Illinois University. Volunteers for these special events are welcome, as well as in-kind and financial contributions. So, whether you want to help take tickets, write a check or be a spectator, contact Rick Valenzuela at rick@regiment.org or call 815.261.1956. regiment.org

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