

## Stroll on State to Light Up Downtown Rockford

*River Lights, Plan Your Stroll, Indoor Skating Highlight Numerous Additions  
Illinois Bank & Trust to be Presenting Sponsor*

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2015

Rockford, IL – The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is excited to announce its third annual **Stroll on State**, now presented by **Illinois Bank & Trust**, is set for 3 – 9 p.m. on Saturday, November 28 in downtown Rockford. The event is free and open to the public.

"Stroll on State is about coming together as a community to celebrate the season and to celebrate Rockford. This year, we are pleased to announce several new partnerships and experiences that will enhance and sustain Stroll on State," said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO.

"Stroll has quickly become a community tradition that our citizens love and look forward to. Sustaining the event and keeping it free for the community is of high importance to RACVB. To that end, we are excited to announce that Illinois Bank & Trust has made a two year commitment to help underwrite and support Stroll on State."

Jeff Hultman, Illinois Bank & Trust market president, noted that the bank is honored to help ensure Stroll on State remains free to attend and an event that brings the community together.

"As one of the largest and fastest-growing financial institutions headquartered in Rockford, we are pleased to be a key supporter of growing vibrancy in our downtown and increasing community connectivity, which are both tied to the success of our region," said Hultman. "We hope tens of thousands join Illinois Bank & Trust at Stroll on State."

When SOS launched as a community event in 2013 with more than 30,000 people attending, the RACVB quickly saw the opportunity to expand the event the following year. As SOS activities grew, so did the crowds as 60,000 people descended on downtown Rockford in 2014. This year's Stroll will expand again and offer new experiences.

### Plan Your Stroll

Looking for a new way to help festivalgoers get ready for this year's event, RACVB is rolling out an interactive "**Plan Your Stroll**" website/application that can be used on smart phones, tablets and desktop computers. The application, available at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com), will allow attendees to pick what events and attractions they want to attend and to create a personalized SOS map to use the night of the event.

"We are continuously looking for ways to make the Stroll experience easier and yet more dynamic for those coming to the celebration," said Groh. "The Plan Your Stroll tool gives attendees another way to get the most out of their experience."

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In addition to creating their Stroll agenda, festivalgoers can sign up to receive informational text messages throughout the Stroll. The texts will be used to remind attendees of major events and activities throughout the night, along with being a resource for any emergency announcements or event updates.

## Rockford's River Lights

Throughout the spring, summer and fall, the Rock River sees lots of use as a gathering point for residents and visitors alike. In an effort to enhance the river as a feature of Stroll on State and the Merry & Bright season, the RACVB is introducing a new attraction to the downtown that will launch at SOS. Influenced by the great lighting and decorations that make SOS so magical, RACVB is working with Luxe Productions to produce a captivating light show that will enhance the banks of the Rock River.

Entitled "River Lights," the show, choreographed to music, will light up following the tree lighting ceremony and fireworks show the night of SOS at approximately 7 p.m.

"River Lights will illuminate downtown Rockford's riverbanks in a way the community hasn't experienced before. Imagine a laser light show, choreographed to music, that is set against the backdrop of the riverfront and our downtown cityscape," said Groh. "River Lights will take your breath away."

Designed to be viewed both from afar as well as up close, residents will be invited to walk along the Esplanade on the west bank of the river and the Millennium Fountain path on the east side, between the State and Jefferson Street bridges.

With the support of the community, the lights will stay on and the music will continue each night following Stroll until January 2, 2016. After January 2, the nightly light performances would come to an end; however, the dramatic lighting of trees would remain year-round. "Our goal is to continue the show each night through the entire holiday season. River Lights can become a new holiday tradition and year-round destination, and with the help of the community we know it will happen," said Groh.

Donations and sponsorships are currently being sought to support this new idea. To learn more about supporting or sponsoring River Lights, please contact the RACVB office at 815.963.8111 or [www.rockfordriverlights.com](http://www.rockfordriverlights.com). Community members can give the gift of River Lights to the community by making a donation through GoFundMe, a web-based crowd funding site.

## Attractions and Events

Once again in 2015, the main event will take place along State Street from Main Street to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, with the Official City of Rockford Christmas Tree sponsored by SwedishAmerican, a division of UW Health, at the corner of W. State and Wyman streets. However, to comfortably accommodate SOS guests, the event will once again expand to involve more of downtown Rockford and to provide a better event experience.

The popular **outdoor ice skating rink** will move to a new location this year as the SOS grounds expand to include activities at the Rockford Park District's Riverview Ice House, 324 N. Madison Street. The indoor ice rink will be available for skating with costumed characters throughout the night and the outdoor synthetic ice rink will be set up near the Trolley Car 36 Barn.

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In addition, Water Street from E. State Street to the Ice House will be filled with family-friendly activities such as an outdoor **SantaLand** (where kids can visit the “big guy” himself) and **horse and wagon rides**, which are sponsored by Allstate.

Across the State Street Bridge, an indoor SantaLand will magically take over the inside of Stewart Square offering a second location for kids to see Santa and his friends throughout the night. Just outside of Stewart Square at the corner of W. State and Main Street will be the Merry & Bright Stage sponsored by SwedishAmerican. Holiday revelers will be able to see special performances throughout the night on the main stage.

Just down the street, performances by the **Rockford Dance Company** will be showcased at the Nordlof Center and the **Moonlight Jazz Orchestra** will punctuate the night at Veterans Memorial Hall at 7 p.m. In addition, a **second horse and wagon ride location** will start on N. Main Street near the Nordlof Center.

“Having two distinct yet similar family fun zones was an important element to the planning process this year,” said Groh. “We wanted to give more families the opportunity to see Santa and to take a horse and wagon ride, so offering those activities on both sides of the river was important.”

#### Additional Favorites

- **FROSTYLAND by LisA fRosT Studio** in the grand lobby of Rockford’s City Hall, 125 E. State St.
- The **Firelight Dimmers** will perform at Stewart Square.
- **Randy Finch and the Ice Brigade** are back outside the Rockford Register Star to showcase their amazing ice sculpture creations.
- The popular **Fire & Ice** display will wow crowds again as large blocks of ice are combined with bonfires to create an enchanting display at the corner of E. State and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- **S’mores stations** will be set up in two locations downtown. Whether you’ve just visited Santa or are watching the holiday movie, Stroll grill masters will grill these tasty treats all night.

#### Outdoor Holiday Markets

In the spirit of the European tradition of the outdoor Christkindlmarket, Stroll on State vendors will be predominantly outside in two main market zones. There will be a Holiday Market at the City Market Pavilion and a Holiday Market at the corner of N. Main and Mulberry Streets. These markets will feature more than 50 craft, food, drink and gift vendors similar to the summertime markets held in the region.

Vendor applications are available at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com). Submitting an application does not confirm vendor participation. Vendors will be chosen to ensure variety and placed by the SOS Steering Committee in a variety of locations in the downtown area. All applications are due by November 2.

#### SOS Volunteer Opportunities

Crews of volunteers, organized and led by **Rockford Sharefest**, will once again transform downtown Rockford with white lights, garland, ribbons, oversized ornaments and dramatic large-scale decorations, starting on Friday, November 20. Additionally, volunteers have worked since September to plan, design and build new decorations that will be installed to help enhance and enliven the expanded footprint of the

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event as well as the holiday season. Volunteers are needed to decorate on November 20 and 21. Volunteers can sign up at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com) by clicking on the volunteer section.

Those looking to lend a helping hand for the night of the festival can get more information about opportunities available at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com). The event takes many hands throughout the evening, with more than 400 volunteers needed to help make it a success.

### **Parking and Transportation**

**All parking decks in downtown Rockford will be open** during the Stroll, for a modest fee. On-street parking and surface parking lots will be available as posted. A map with suggested parking areas is available at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com).

There will be **three Remote Parking Lots** with free shuttle bus transportation again this year at the YMCA, 200 Y Boulevard; Heartland Community Church, 1280 S. Alpine Road; and Illinois Bank & Trust, 4048 E. State Street. Shuttle buses, compliments of Rockford Mass Transit District, will run continuously from 3 – 9:30 p.m.

**Supporters & Partners:** Led by the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, in addition to many partners, the following entities have come together to generously sponsor Stroll on State:

#### ***Sponsors:***

- **Illinois Bank & Trust** – Presenting Sponsor
- **SwedishAmerican, a division of UW Health** – sponsor of the Merry & Bright Stage and Official City of Rockford Christmas Tree
- **Comcast** – sponsor of MovieLand
- **WilliamsManny** – sponsor of SkyLights Firework Display
- **LaMonica Beverages** – Official Beverage Sponsor
- **Allstate Insurance** – Sponsor of Horse & Wagon Rides
- **Landstar Systems, Inc.** – Sponsor of Christmas Tree at Eddie Green Park

#### ***Media Sponsors:***

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| • <b>Rockford Register Star</b>       | • <b>WIFR 23</b>                |
| • <b>Rock River Times</b>             | • <b>WREX 13</b>                |

Sponsorship opportunities are available by contacting John Groh, RACVB President/CEO, [jgroh@gorockford.com](mailto:jgroh@gorockford.com).

View the full listing of events on the website [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com), or follow along on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/gorockfordregion](http://www.facebook.com/gorockfordregion). For more information on the event, visit [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com).

***RACVB exists to drive quality of life and economic growth for the citizens of Rockford and Winnebago County through tourism marketing and destination development. [gorockford.com](http://gorockford.com)***

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#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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