

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



More than 66,000 Strolled on State

River Lights, fireworks, tree lighting and Santa helped kick off holiday season

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2015

ROCKFORD, IL – Record-breaking crowds joined together to kick off the Merry & Bright holiday season at the third annual Stroll on State presented by Illinois Bank & Trust.

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau produces the annual event, which quickly became a Rockford tradition when it debuted 2013. Each year the event has grown in both size and scope, with this year's event attendance estimated at **66,000 visitors** (determined by aerial photography, feedback from crowd spotters, shuttle bus ridership and sales/participation numbers for local businesses and attractions throughout the duration of the event).

"Each year we are finding that more and more people are starting their holiday season with us in downtown Rockford by making Stroll on State a tradition for their family and friends," said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO. "Stroll is about coming together as a community, rediscovering downtown Rockford, seeing our city in new ways and experiencing the awe and wonder of the holidays."

"Illinois Bank & Trust is proud to be part of an event that gets bigger and better every year. The size and scope of the event is not really what matters, though. The experience of connecting friends, families and our community on one exciting day in downtown Rockford is the real success. On behalf of Illinois Bank & Trust, we hope Stroll on State was the kickoff to a wonderful holiday season for all," said Jeff Hultman, market president of Illinois Bank & Trust.

What downtown businesses say about Stroll:

- "From the time we opened at 10:30 in the morning, we had a solid and steady stream of customers either preparing for Stroll, or enjoying the Stroll. This steady stream continued until 10:30 p.m.," Patrick Alberto, executive chef, **Octane InterLounge**
- "We were excited to have a wonderful turnout this year for Stroll on State. We completely reorganized the shop in order to accommodate for the crowds and were extremely pleased with the holiday cheer and politeness of all of the guests! As a result of the higher turnout, our sales were up 17% from last year. We can only be excited and really appreciate the work that goes into putting this event on. Thanks for another great year," Jarrod Hennis and Britney Lindgren, owners, **Rockford Art Deli**.

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Encompassing more than 15 blocks in downtown Rockford, the event features an array of family-friendly activities from horse-drawn wagon rides to visits with Santa to musical performances. The highlight of the evening is the lighting of the City of Rockford Christmas Tree, presented by SwedishAmerican (a division of UW Health), as thousands gather to count down to the official launch of the holidays in Rockford.

"Every year, I am overwhelmed to see the response from the community as we gather to light the tree," said Groh. "So many smiling faces dot the crowd ... it instills great pride for our community."

In a post-event survey, festivalgoers gave the event and downtown Rockford high marks. Of the nearly 800 responses to the survey, 92 percent said the event was "Excellent" or "Very Good" or "Good." And **91 percent said they would return to downtown** Rockford in the future based on their Stroll on State experience.

A few other notable takeaways from the survey include:

- 85 percent **made a purchase** while attending.
- 60 percent of shoppers **spent more than \$25**.
- 92 percent of those attending were from Winnebago County, with **47 percent from Rockford**.
- 37 percent said 2015 was the **first time they attended** Stroll on State.
- 89 percent said they **would recommend** Stroll on State to a friend.
- 70 percent said they experienced Stroll for more than 2 hours.

Stroll on State by the Numbers (complete list attached):

- 5,181 people rode a Stroll Shuttle to the event
- 307 ornaments on the Official City of Rockford Christmas Tree, sponsored by SwedishAmerican
- 100 string-lit trees dotting the riverfront and downtown streets
- 3,000 families visited with Santa Claus
- 9,000 people enjoyed a horse-drawn wagon ride, sponsored by Allstate Insurance
- 62 roving carolers
- 1,640 family photos taken at the official photo booths in the Chase Bank lobby
- 4,700 effects during the 15-minute SkyLights Fireworks, sponsored by WilliamsManny

Sponsors & Partners: The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, with the support of many partners, brings Stroll to the community. "We know none of this could happen without the amazing teamwork and dedication from all of our partners and sponsors who work for months putting this event together," said Groh. "Stroll on State is definitely by the community and for the community, and we look forward to many more years of merriment." Stroll on State returns in 2016 on Saturday, November 26.

—MORE—

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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 and Fire & Ice
- Landstar Systems, Inc. – Sponsor of the Christmas Tree at Eddie Green Park
- River District Association – Sponsor of the Christmas Tree at Memorial Hall

Partners:

- City of Rockford
- Rockford Park District
- Rockford Sharefest
- Heartland Community Church
- Rockford First

Media Sponsors:

- Mid-West Family Broadcasting
- Northwest Quarterly
- Rockford Register Star
- Rock River Times
- Rock Valley Publishing
- Townsquare Media
- WIFR
- WREX
- WTVO/WQRF

View the full list of sponsors and partners on the website www.strollonstate.com.

The Merry & Bright season continues in Rockford through the end of January with many more community events and programs. Check out www.gorockford.com/merryandbright for recommendations and information.

RACVB exists to drive quality of life and economic growth for the citizens of Rockford and Winnebago County through tourism marketing and destination development. www.gorockford.com

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Brought to you by the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Presented by
ILLINOIS
BANK & TRUST

NOVEMBER 28, 2015

By the Numbers

Photo credit: Rockford Park District Curt Johnsen, edited by Jesse Fox



66,000

people attended Stroll on State

307 large ornaments

1,640
photos taken in the photo booth

20 horses leading wagons

9,000
people who rode in the horse and wagon



3,000
families visited Santa

20

city blocks covered in the expanded grounds of Stroll on State

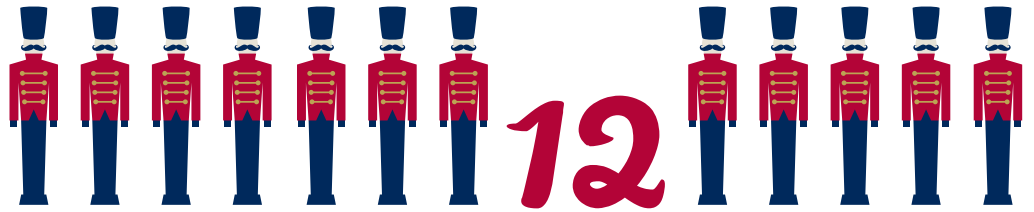
120

LED lights used for River Lights

100 lighted string trees

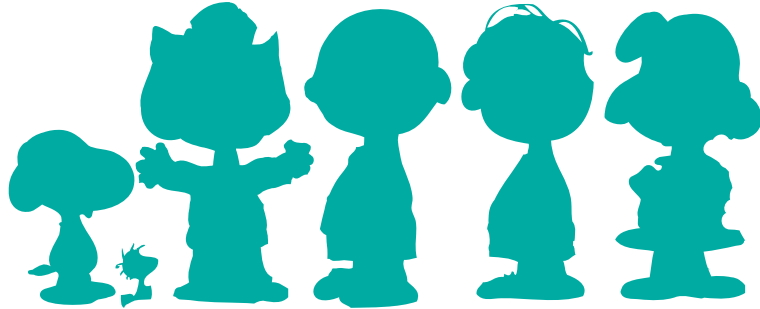


1,750
 outdoor and indoor ice skaters
 (and 2,750 ice skating spectators!)

Nutcracker decorations created specifically for Stroll on State

700 people watched "Good Grief, Rockford!"
 performed at the Nordlof Center

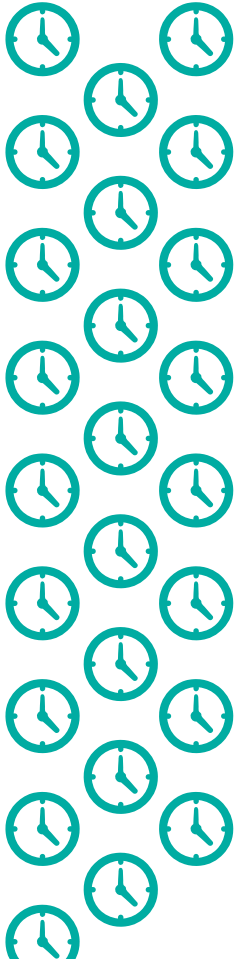


5,181

shuttle bus riders



3,000
 total volunteer hours



100

organizations partnered
 to put on Stroll on State

32,800

individual lights on the official city
 Christmas tree and additional 2 trees



700

toe-tapping
 people watched
 Moonlight Jazz
 Orchestra



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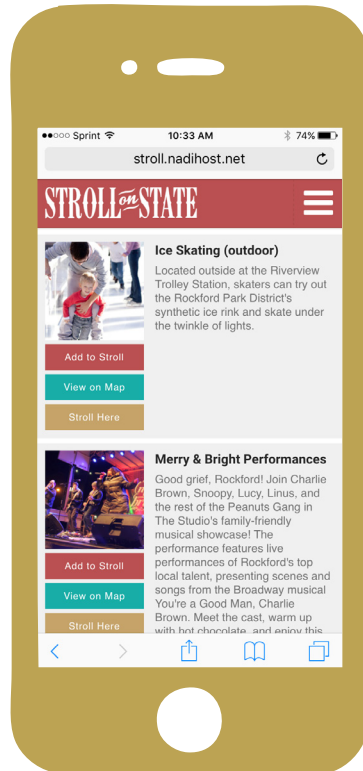
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ILLINOIS
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NOVEMBER 28, 2015

Advertising

2,133,903

combined news circulation audience of Stroll on State media



6,478

"Plan Your Stroll" app users

111,797

total reach on **Facebook** with Stroll on State posts



97

total followers on **Snapchat** (launched November 16)



3,324

people viewed the 2014 Stroll on State video on **Youtube** on November 28

33,077

 pageviews of **strollonstate.com**

92,426

 Trip Advisor impressions

237

 stories in the media about Stroll on State (a total ad value of **\$242,438.59**)
Reported by Cision

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 Lenrok Industries - Jeff Cornell
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 lisA fRosT Studio
 Lowes
 Meridian
 Moonlight Jazz Orchestra

New Zion Baptist Church
 North Love Baptist Church - Reformers Unanimous
 Oak Street Health
 Once Upon a Dream Performances
 Phantom Regiment
 Port-A-John
 Jim Rever
 Rock River Development Partnership
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 Rockford Cement Products
 Rockford Dance Company
 Rockford IceHogs

Santa Claus
 Special Moments Photo Booth
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 The Studio
 Usual Suspects
 Washington Elementary Choir
 YMCA of Rock River Valley

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