

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Puma Cup Kicks Off Spring and Summer Tournament Seasons

Largest tournament brings in \$2.31 million of economic impact to the region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2016

ROCKFORD, IL — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) welcomes the Rockford Raptors Soccer Club's Puma Cup to the Rockford region for a 14th consecutive year. The **Puma Champions Cup College Showcase** will take place **Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 1-3**. The **Puma Champions Cup** will take place **Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 8-10**. Both tournaments will be played at **MercyRockford Sportscore 1** and **MercyRockford Sportscore 2** and **Wedgbury Stadium**.

The Puma Champions Cup College Showcase includes 204 teams representing U12-U19 year old athletes in boys and girls divisions. The high level of competition attracts approximately 86 college coaches to scout and recruit players. The Puma Champions Cup is a competition for 588 teams, which is an increase of 216 teams from last year, representing mid to lower level boys' and girls' teams in the U8-U19 age range. These combined tournaments include teams traveling from across the Midwest including two international girls teams from Canada. The combined two Puma Cup tournament weekends make it the largest soccer tournament held in the Rockford region with an estimated 52,275 attendees expected to have an economic impact of \$2.31 million.

"Over the last 15 years I have watched this tournament grow and become one of the region's most successful International soccer tournaments around. This year alone these athletes and their families will fill approximately 9,000 room nights in our local area hotels, over the two weekends, which is a significant increase from previous years," said Lindsay Arellano, Director of Sales and Servicing. "With the recent upgrades and new lighted turf fields at MercyRockford Sportscore 2, the Rockford Park District is able to accept more teams and play longer into the evening. We are truly grateful to the numerous community partners, such as our hotels, restaurants and attractions, who continue to provide a high level of service for the soccer players and their families while they're visiting the Rockford region.

Puma Cup symbolizes a big achievement in the Reclaiming First initiative as this is the first time any athletes have played on the five multi-purpose synthetic turf fields at MercyRockford Sportscore 2. These fields are lighted and can be used for soccer, softball, baseball, football, ultimate Frisbee, lacrosse, and other turf field related programs.

Additional site improvements include: adding a minimum of 1,000 additional parking spaces, new food and beverage building, restroom facility, paths, and other player and spectator experience enhancements. During the Puma Cup tournament construction will continue on the new food and beverage building but the restroom facility is operational. Temporary food carts will be on-site to accommodate tournament guests. The food and beverage

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building is anticipated to be fully operable May 1, 2016. The Rockford Park District will hold a dedication to celebrate the expansion of MercyRockford Sportscore 2 in June.

The modernization of MercyRockford Sportscore 2 began with upgrades to Wedgbury Stadium, making it a premier sports tournament destination. The new state-of-the-art facility allowed the Rockford Park District to seek a FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) certificate. FIFA standards for sports turf systems are designed to ensure that a consistent world-class standard of surface is available internationally.

“Soccer players from a five state region will be the first to experience these state of the art fields so we are extra excited to welcome these guests to our facility and hear their feedback. These five fields allow for expanded play and programming plus we no longer have to worry about rainy conditions impacting games as synthetic turf provides a consistent year-round, all-weather playing surface,” said Louis Mateus, General Manager of MercyRockford Sportscore Complexes.

Additional information related to the tournament can be found at rockfordraptors.org. Admission is free for spectators.

About Reclaiming First

Reclaiming First is a community-wide comprehensive plan to enhance and enlarge the sports facilities in the Rockford area to reclaim the region’s dominance in sports tourism. The plan will retain, regain, and grow sports tourism in an increasingly competitive market vying for sports tourism dollars, and provide world class amateur sports tournament facilities for Rockford area residents. Amateur sports tourism at MercyRockford Sportscore 1 and MercyRockford Sportscore 2 currently accounts for \$15.25 million in income for the Rockford region that would otherwise not occur. Local municipalities receive an estimated \$1.8 million in the form of direct additional general fund tax revenue from amateur sports tournaments. Further, income generated from amateur sports tournaments means local citizens are able to use these facilities at reduced or no cost.

The Winnebago County Regional Tourism Facility Board formed to administer the hotel tax includes board/council members and chief elected officials and staff leaders from the Rockford Park District, Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, City of Rockford, City of Loves Park, Village of Machesney Park, City of South Beloit, Village of Rockton, Village of Roscoe, Village of Cherry Valley, and Winnebago County. For additional information on Reclaiming First, see reclaimingfirst.org.

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

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