

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Quarterly Report

FY16, Q3

January – March 2016



**News &
Notes**

Marketing

Sports

Meetings

Bookings

The mission of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.



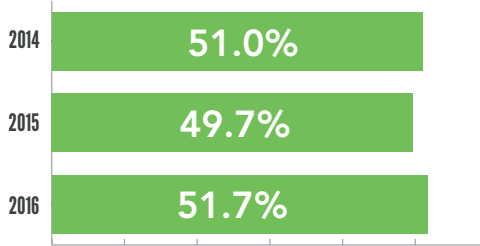
- Roberta Holzwarth** (Chair), Holmstrom & Kennedy PC
- David Anderson** (Vice Chair), Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Bill LaFever** (Secretary), Bill Doran & Co.
- Gary Strakeljahn** (Treasurer), Electroform Company
- Stacy Bernardi**, Representing Winnebago County
- Robert Burden**, City of Loves Park
- Todd Cagnoni**, City of Rockford
- Patrick Curran**, Curran's Orchard
- Bryan Davis**, SupplyCore
- Tim Dimke**, Rockford Park District
- Dave Fiduccia**, Winnebago County Board
- Einar Forsman**, Rockford Chamber of Commerce
- Jamie Getchius**, City of Rockford
- Patrick Hoey**, Village of Rockton
- Ben Holmstrom**, William Charles Construction
- Marco Lenis**, Vocational Rehabilitation Management
- Tim Myers**, WIFR-TV
- Michael Nicholas**, Rockford Area Economic Development Council
- Ted Rehl**, City of South Beloit
- Darrell Snorek**, LaMonica Beverages, Inc.



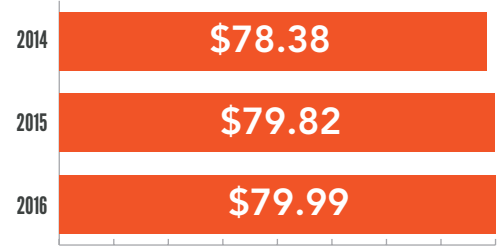
- John Groh**, President/CEO
- Josh Albrecht**, Director of Marketing & Public Affairs
- Lindsay Arellano**, Director of Sales and Service
- Jenny Caiozzo**, Group Services Manager
- Jennie Hahn**, Group Service Specialist
- Fred Harris**, Brochure Distribution Assistant
- Janet Jacobs**, Marketing Assistant
- Lori Johnson**, Executive Assistant to President/CEO
- Andrea Mandala**, Marketing & Communications Manager
- Joanne Nold**, Director of Finance & Administration
- Katrina Peterson**, Receptionist & Office Coordinator
- Nick Povalitis**, Sports Destination & Sales Manager
- Greta Spencer**, Sales Manager
- Tana Vettore**, Director of Destination Development
- Elizabeth Wood**, Creative Services Manager

Winnebago County Hotel Statistics (Jan – Mar 2016)

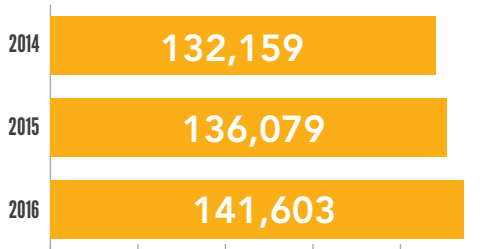
YTD Hotel Occupancy



YTD Average Room Rate



YTD Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)



YTD Revenue (in millions)



Regional Challenge Grant

RACVB continues its efforts to grow relationships with local municipalities outside the City of Rockford by increasing targeted communications and initiating individual meetings in those communities. Funds received by municipalities other than the City of Rockford are matched by the city's Regional Challenge Grant.



Sister City Reports

SWEDEN — Borgholm, Sweden is celebrating its 200th birthday. There will be a large celebration in August. Rockford's Kids Around the World plan to install a playground in Borgholm for immigrant/refugee children as part of the celebration.

In Lidkoping, Sweden, Linnea Bengtsson will host more delegations this fall, including a construction team for the Erlander Home and a nursing delegation. The 10th Anniversary of the Industrial Agreement between Rockford and Lidkoping will be celebrated.

ROMANIA — Ramona Cornea is planning a trip to Romania with a June 14 departure. She hopes to have 16 people for the trip.

ITALY — Holly Mathur will work with Anne O'Keefe on the Young Artist & Author Showcase, which is an art show "Peace through Mutual Respect." Holly reminded everyone of the "Rockford Plate" event at Midway Village on July 7 (adults only). Holly will try to feature the event in the National Sister City magazine.

KYRGYZSTAN — There are currently about a dozen students in Rockford from Tokmok, Kyrgyzstan. Several have received their MBAs and one just received employment. Chuck Howard is searching for internships to help the students.



Sports

Sports Sales Highlights

January Highlights

In the third quarter of FY16, GoRockford's sports sales team turned a new calendar year and quickly welcomed a new event to the region, when the **2016 National Dart Association (NDA) Regional** came to the Forest City on Jan. 8-10. This first-time NDA event in the state of Illinois drew more than 200 players for three straight days at Cliffbreakers Riverside Resort and Conference Center. Other January highlights included two site visits (**Fusion Volleyball** on Jan. 5 and **USA Sports Production** on Jan. 25), RACVB's bid for the 2016/17 NDA Regional cycle, an Illinois High School Association (IHSA) sales mission to Bloomington on Jan. 29, and two critical repeat rugby bookings: the **2016 Rugby Illinois High School & Middle School State Series** and the **2016 USA Rugby Midwest Challenge Cup**.

February Highlights

In early February, GoRockford booked the region's first 7v7 football tournament when it confirmed the 2016 **IMG7v7 Midwest Regional** for the new artificial turf fields at Mercy Sportscore 2. RACVB continued to expand its sports footprint in mid-February, when it collaborated with Rockford Public Schools District 205 in developing a **Midwest eSports concept proposal** with the High School Starleague (HSL), the national governing body for high school eSports. For the 24th-straight year, the RACVB welcomed the **IHSA Girls Bowling State Finals** back to The Cherry Bowl on Feb. 19-20, when more than 2,500 total visitors descended upon Rockford with state championship dreams. By month's end, GoRockford had begun finalizing a partnership with



the Skokie Valley Starlights and IBHC Bookings to bid on hosting the **2017 U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships** at the BMO Harris Bank Center.

March Highlights

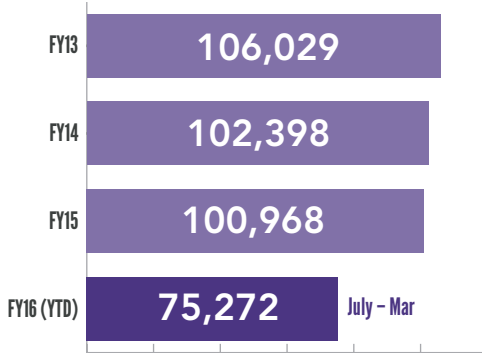
GoRockford kicked off March with another prestigious event at the BMO

Harris Bank Center. The 2016 **Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation (IKWF) State Finals** returned to downtown Rockford where more than 1,000 youth wrestlers competed for a 14th-consecutive year. A little bit of sports creativity in Fall 2015 culminated into a significant industry win March 22. On that day in the midst of the 2016 Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism in Springfield, IL, the RACVB had successfully co-created and sponsored the first-ever **sports session** at our state's annual tourism conference—an expert session that featured Don Schumacher of the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC), Jeff Jarnecke of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and Don Flynn of Game Day USA. RACVB then wrapped up the month and quarter with another sales trip to Bloomington on March 29, when it delivered its bid for the **2016-20 IHSA Class 1A Boys Soccer State Finals**.

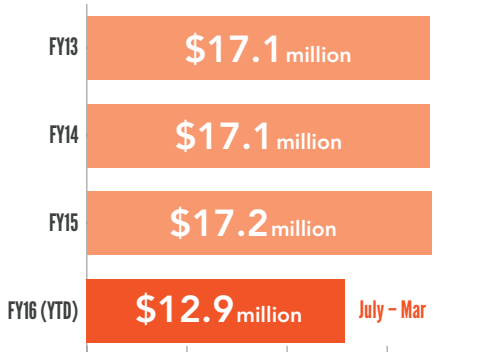


Meetings, Servicing & Bookings

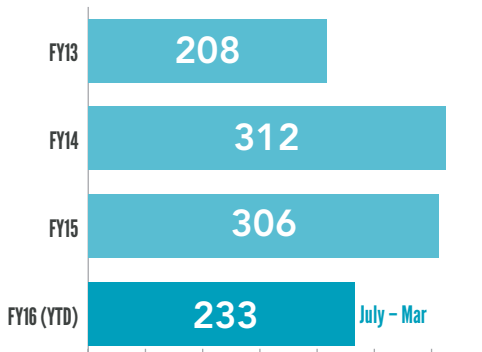
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



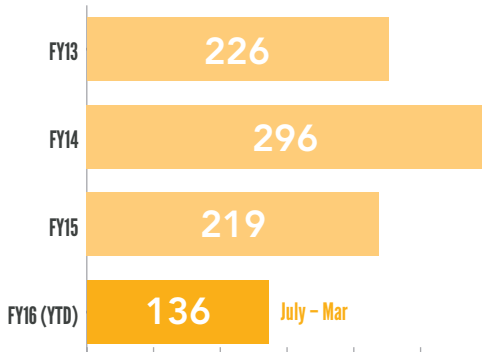
Estimated Economic Impact



Number of Event Bookings



Events Serviced by RACVB



Meetings Sales Highlights

Greta Spencer, Sales Manager, had the pleasure of hosting multiple site visits this quarter, all of which resulted in meeting or event bookings for the Rockford region. In January, Rick Woods of the **Chicago & Northwestern Railroads Historical Society** joined Spencer and visited a variety of hotels and venues in Rockford searching for the perfect location for the 2017 Annual Meet that will attract over 200 railroad history enthusiasts to Rockford in May 2017. Two additional site visits took place for families who made plans to host **large family reunions** throughout this summer. The Rockford region is looking forward to hosting these families, who will have attendees coming from all around the country, in July and August of 2016.



Meetings Bookings



Forest City Comic Con (FC3) is growing rapidly and looks forward to keeping their annual event in Rockford again for 2016 and beyond. The **Illinois Rural Water Association** announced plans to bring their Northern Conference back to Rockford in November 2016. Additionally, the **VW Club of America** has selected Rockford to be the host community for their 2016 National Convention, which will take place in July, and will feature a "Photoscenic" photo scavenger hunt throughout the community.

Booking Highlights for the Region

American Amateur Baseball Congress 11U/13U World Series

August 5, 2016
1,250 room nights | \$225,000 EEI

AABC Willie Mays 10U World Series

July 29, 2016
875 room nights | \$157,500 EEI

2016 IMG 7v7 Midwest Regional

April 15, 2016
250 room nights | \$45,000 EEI

2016 National Dart Association Regional

January 7, 2016
325 room nights | \$58,500 EEI

2016 Rugby Illinois High School/Middle School State Series

May 28, 2016
250 room nights | \$45,000 EEI

2016 USA Rugby RTC/Midwest Challenge Cup

June 16, 2016
550 room nights | \$99,000 EEI

Total Q3 Booked Highlights EEI = \$630,000

News & Notes

RACVB Nets Top Awards at State and National Levels

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) is thrilled to take home top honors at the state and national levels for excellence in the travel and tourism industry. The National Association of Sports Commissions named the RACVB “**Sports Tourism Organization of the Year**” at the annual conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The RACVB also took home two awards at the **2016 Illinois Governor’s Conference on Travel & Tourism** held in Springfield, Illinois. Recognition was given for “Best Social Media Marketing” during Stroll on State, which attracted over 60,000 attendees, and for “Best Visitor Guide Publication.”

The Sports Tourism Organization of the Year award is given to an active member of the National Association of Sports Commissions who has had the most outstanding impact on their local community through marketing and sales efforts, the growth of sporting events, community events and generating results and economic impact. In giving the award, the NASC judging panel said of the Rockford CVB: “The diversity of events hosted impressed us, along with the fact they hosted 200 events for 79,000 room nights.”

The **Best Social Media Marketing** award honors the top tourism experience best promoted through online videos, viral promotions, blogs, e-mail marketing or creative use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat. The **Best Visitor Guide Publication** award honors the best visitor’s guide used to promote a tourism destination and incorporating more editorial story content with high quality photos.



Real. Original. Lovely Showcases Area Attractions and Events



In February, the RACVB launched its spring-time promotional theme **Real. Original. Lovely**. From family-friendly activities to **fantastic date night ideas** to some of the best places in Illinois to see the snow melting and the flowers blooming, the Rockford region in Illinois has the perfect recipe to help you fall in love with all the local sites, attractions, shops and eateries.

“We are fortunate to have such a variety of events each spring that are fun and have a long tradition in our community,” said Josh Albrecht, RACVB Director of Marketing & Public Affairs. “It’s great to see events like Burpee Museum of Natural History’s Paleofest, which began in 1997, and the many dino

enthusiasts flocking to the museum to listen and interact with some of the world’s most famous paleontologists. Longevity like that is a testament to how great the event is and how much the community enjoys it each year.”

The promotion highlighted **places in the region to grab a glass of wine** with your significant other or a group of friends. The other seasonal highlight was places to **get back outside** to enjoy the natural landscapes that are found throughout the region.

News & Notes

Bowling Strikes *in Rockford*

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau announced the booking of **four "Big Win" bowling tournaments** that will take place in the Rockford region beginning in 2016 through 2021. Collectively, participants, coaches and fans that travel to the region for the tournaments will impact the region to an estimated tune of **\$842,000** during their stays.



The announcement was made at a press conference at Don Carter Lanes in Rockford, which will host the 2017 Illinois USBC BA Men's State Tournament in the Spring of 2017.

Rockford USBC Youth Association President and USBC Youth Director Ann Buja said, "I am passionate about our local bowling centers having the opportunity to host some of the most prestigious youth bowling events in the state right here in the Rock River Valley. The partnership we have created with the RACVB has allowed us to bring so many more youth bowlers and families into the Rockford area."



Forest City Beautiful

The RACVB held its second annual **Paint the Down(town) Green** event on March 18. The former Rockford Morning Star building at 127 North Wyman Street was turned into an urban garden filled with unique and Real. Original. experiences to raise awareness for the **Forest City Beautiful** program. More than 150 people came to show their support for the initiative that focuses on beautification efforts primarily in downtown Rockford, including enhanced landscaping, public art and much more. Learn more about FCB at www.forestcitybeautiful.com.



Sponsors

Forest City Beautiful is supported by the generous donations of individuals and organizations in the community. Funders and supporters to date include:

Forest City Green Sponsor

- City of Rockford
- Community Foundation of Northern Illinois
- David & Colleen Anderson Family
- HolmstromKennedy, PC
- Rockford Park District
- Rockford Sharefest

Red Maple Sponsor

- LaMonica Beverages with Darrell & Bobbie Snorek

Blue Oat Grass Sponsor

- Bill & Sue LaFever
- CoyleKiley Insurance Agency, Inc.
- Illinois Bank & Trust
- Mary Ann Smith
- Reno & Zahm LLP
- Rockford Housing Authority

Purple Coneflower Sponsor

- B&B Properties
- LawnCare by Walter
- Rockford Bank & Trust
- Williams McCarthy LLP
- Wipfli LLP
- Urban Equity Properties

Marketing

Advertising & Promotions

A digital edition online promotion ran on **SportsTravelMagazine.com** receiving an average of 50,000 pageviews and targeting all sports markets, specifically basketball. This was placed to continue building awareness for the UW Health Sports Factory facility set to open June 2016. A half page print ad was placed in the **SportsEvents Special Site Selection Guide on Illinois** in February reaching 16,910 readers reaching key decision-makers and planners interested in booking tournaments with a destination known for its long track record for hosting a variety of quality sporting events. A three page advertorial spread including one full page advertisement was placed with Collinson Media for their **Connect Sports Facilities Guide** (Winter Edition.) This four page spread highlights the region's multi-use facilities, the locals who provide



quality customer service, testimonials regarding previously hosted tournaments and contact information to book future sporting tournaments and events. This guide is distributed to 5,500 key sports planners and directors.

The **Northwest Quarterly** editorial team worked with the RACVB's Marketing Manager to include travel-related content in their Fall and Spring 2016 publications. The stories focused on what it means to be a Young Professional working to help transform the Rockford community and a guide to the top local sites and attractions that residents and visitors can enjoy. Northwest Quarterly has a circulation of 21,500 copies with a readership of 92,450 (4.3 readers per magazine).



Website Statistics

Most Searched Terms

- Calendar of Events
- Things to Do
- Dining
- Get Married in Rockford
- Rockford History

Most Searched Events

- JAN** Rockford Winter Market
- FEB** Nicholas Conservatory - In Full Bloom Orchid Exhibit
- MAR** St. Patrick's Day Parade & Party

Most Searched Attractions/Restaurants

- JAN** Discovery Center Museum
- FEB** Coral Cove Family Fun Center
- MAR** Rocktown Adventures

Website Traffic Sources



98,274
Total Website Visitors

Rockford in the News

The RACVB marketing team works to publicize positive tourism news in the Rockford region to the Chicagoland market. **Sock Monkey Madness** (March 5-6), an annual event that honors the legendary sock monkey at Midway Village Museum in Rockford, was featured on the **ABC 7 Morning Show** during Roz Varon's 'Around Town' segment that aired on Friday, March 4. Rockford was also recently celebrated as the first community in the nation to effectively end homelessness among local veterans. Media Pros 24/7 helped the RACVB pitch this story to the Chicagoland market. Roe Conn and Anna Davlantes with **WGN-radio in Chicago** covered the story that included interviews with our local dignitaries, including the Mayor of Rockford.



Marketing

Promoting Rockford to Rockford

RACVB's marketing team presented to the monthly **Marketing Partnership Group** in February on how to effectively utilize **Snapchat** on all platforms. This tutorial and presentation encouraged local area partners to add this live story streaming platform into their social media marketing efforts. Snapchat offers cost-effective strategies to help carry promotional messages to new audiences, while keeping the content fresh and engaging and keeping our partners on the forefront of technology advancements and trends to help connect us and promote our region world-wide.



RACVB partnered with **Mulvain Woodworks** in Durand, IL to repurpose the 50 foot Norway Spruce Rockford Christmas tree displayed in downtown Rockford. Local media covered the lumber process over several weeks until the tree was introduced as a **custom-designed wood table**, including two benches, that was later auctioned off as a featured item at the RACVB's **Paint the (Down)town Green** event to support Forest City Beautiful initiatives. This was a great community partnership that raised \$1,600 to help support beautification efforts in downtown Rockford.

As part of an overall marketing effort to help promote Paint the (Down)town Green and our Forest City Beautiful initiative the RACVB marketing team created a **30 second static video** displayed at the **BMO Harris Bank Center** inside the concourse and arena. These ads ran for four IceHogs games in March and were in front of approximately 12,128 guests attending these games.

International Market

Between January and March of 2016, Rockford was represented at **seven trade shows in Germany, Austria and Switzerland**. An overnight in Rockford has also been included in the newest fly/drive itinerary with **Travelplanners**. In Sweden, a representative for Rockford attended **Swanson's Travel** consumer day in Osby, Sweden with 1,465 consumers in attendance. Rockford continues to be featured in Swanson's Heritage tour. In Germany, public relations continues to elevate Rockford's profile with 89 placements for the third quarter totalling **636,000 impressions**.



Earned Media

RACVB uses **Cision**, a public relations management software, to track and report the effectiveness of media mentions and their ad value through various outlets, e.g., television, online, print, radio and social media.

44,418,894

Total impressions by media type (TV, newspaper, online, magazine, other publications)



January

894 news results

10,268,395 circulation



February

844 news results

15,764,353 circulation



March

1,192 news results

19,469,775 circulation

Earned Media

(Jan. – Mar. 2016)

2,930 news results

45,502,523 circulation

Social Media



Facebook
18,657 followers
(2,517 increase)



Instagram
4,922 followers
(751 increase)



YouTube
267,359 video views
(3,105 increase)



Twitter
5,458 followers
(96 increase)