

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Visitor Spending Sets New Record in Winnebago County, Reaching \$350 Million Last Year Local tourism/hospitality industry supports 2,800 jobs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ROCKFORD, IL – Rockford and Winnebago County continues to see an increase in tourism spending expenditures – the total amount of money travelers spend during their time in the region – **reaching \$349.91 million in 2015, a 3 percent increase over the prior year’s record setting numbers**, according to data released by the Illinois Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism.

“Bolstered by the continued success of our sports tourism industry and the continued growth we are seeing from our leisure tourism partners such as Discovery Center Museum and Anderson Japanese Gardens, I am pleased to see visitor spending continue to rise,” said John Groh, president/CEO of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau – the region’s destination marketing and management organization.

Locally, tax revenue from tourism – funds that help local governments pay for services residents rely on – reached \$5.9 million, a 6 percent increase over the prior year. In addition, the local tourism and hospitality industry **employment increased 4 percent to 2,810 jobs**.

“We are delighted to see such strong results again this year for the tourism economy in Winnebago County,” said RACVB Board Chair Roberta Holzwarth. “Sustained economic growth is crucial as we transform our region. The RACVB Board knows that the more we invest in our community to make it a dynamic destination, and the more we work to promote and market our destination, the greater our returns will be.”

The Illinois Office of Tourism announced that the tourism industry as a whole in Illinois achieved continued growth in 2015, with expenditures topping \$37 billion, a 2.6 percent increase from 2014. In addition, the industry created over 10,000 new jobs in 2015, a 3.5 percent increase from 2014. The jobs and revenue generated by Illinois tourism industry supports local communities and the growth of Illinois’ economy.

“Illinois has something for everyone to enjoy, from world-class museums and galleries, historic sites, a rich cultural arts community to professional sports, outdoor recreation and beautiful vistas,” said Cory M. Jobe, Director of the Office of Tourism. “Our tourism and hospitality industry are Illinois’ greatest champions, drawing not only new visitors, but repeat travelers as well, in order to support and grow our local economies.”

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“With the UW Health Sports Factory now online and the advancements that have been made at Mercy Sportscore 2, the local tourism industry is poised for continued success in the years to come,” said Groh. “In addition, we continue to see the reinvestments being made in Rockford’s downtown core and the ripple effect that is having on our local events and attractions such as Rockford City Market, which is seeing record breaking numbers of its own this summer.”

These numbers, provided by the U.S. Travel Association, are preliminary numbers only. Final visitor statistics will be available later this year.

The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. www.gorockford.com

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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