

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Quarterly Report

FY17, Q1
July – September 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.

RACVB Board of Directors

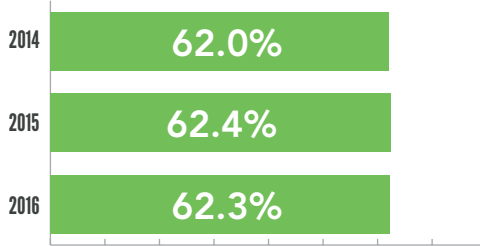
- Roberta Holzwarth** (Chair), Holmstrom & Kennedy PC
- David Anderson** (Vice Chair), Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Bill LaFever** (Secretary), Bill Doran & Co.
- Gary Strakeljahn** (Treasurer), Electroform Company
- Marcus Bacon**, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center
- Stacy Bernardi**, Representing Winnebago 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
- Kevin Frost**, 4th Ward Alderman, 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.

RACVB Staff

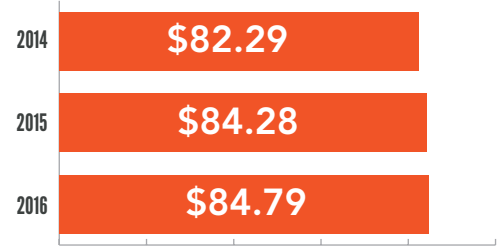
- John Groh**, President/CEO
- Josh Albrecht**, Director of Marketing & Public Affairs
- Lindsay Arellano**, Director of Sales and Service
- Jenny Caiozzo**, Group Services Manager
- Jennie Hahn**, Group Services Specialist
- Morgann Hansen**, Sales Manager
- Fred Harris**, Brochure Distribution Assistant
- Janet Jacobs**, Marketing Assistant
- Lindsey Kromm**, Accounting Assistant
- Andrea Mandala**, Marketing & Communications Manager
- Bea Miller**, Destination Development Assistant
- Joanne Nold**, Director of Finance & Administration
- Kristen Paul**, Executive Assistant
- Nick Povalitis**, Sports Destination & Sales Manager
- Tana Vettore**, Director of Destination Development
- Elizabeth Wood**, Creative Services Manager

Winnebago County Hotel Statistics (July – Sept 2016)

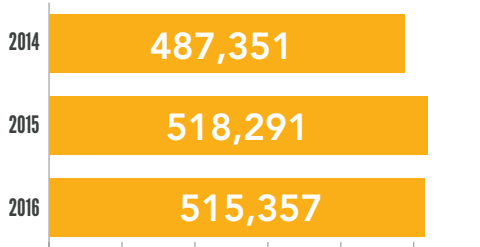
YTD Hotel Occupancy



YTD Average Room Rate



YTD Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)

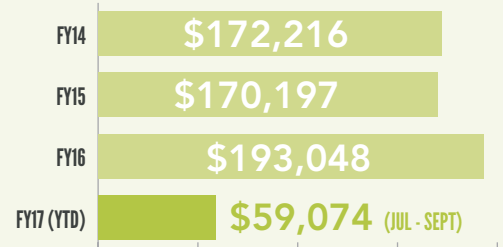


YTD Revenue (in millions)



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

From September 6 – 26, Swedish journalist **Andreas Jemn** was in Rockford to write about Swedish-Americans in Rockford. The Swedish Historical Society assisted Jemn during his stay.

From September 22 – October 7, eight nursing students and four instructors from **De la Gardiegymnasiet**, Lidkoping, Sweden, were at SwedishAmerican Hospital as well as making school and cultural visits throughout the community. This is the sixth round of Swedish nursing students coming to Rockford as part of the Industrial Partnership Agreement.

On September 16, the **International Peace Day** celebration was held at the Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza. The ceremony included more than 800 elementary school kids as well as representatives from Germany and France.



Sports Sales

Sports Sales Highlights

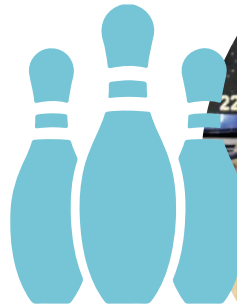
July Highlights

On the heels of a banner and award-winning FY16, RACVB's sports sales team opened the first quarter of FY17 in July with a national lacrosse tournament booking. Based in Eldridge, MD, Corrigan Sports awarded the Rockford region the **2017 IWLCA JUNK Brands Midwest Cup**, which is projected to bring more than 100 girls showcase teams to the Forest City next July. RACVB also partnered with Ski Broncs to produce our region's bid for the **2018 IWWF World Water Ski Show Tournament**.



August Highlights

The bidding continued in August, when GoRockford completed the process for the 2018-19 through 2021-22 NCAA Championships cycle. Earlier in the year, RACVB traveled to Indianapolis with Rockford University Athletics for the NCAA Championships Symposium, and the duo decided to bid for the rights to host the **2018-21 NCAA Division III Men's and Women's Cross Country Championships** and the **2019-22 National Collegiate Bowling Championship**. In the middle of the month, RACVB welcomed USA Ultimate for a site visit to Mercyhealth Sportscore Two as planning continued for the 2016 USA Ultimate National Championships (held September 29 – October 2). GoRockford wrapped up the month in Grapevine, TX, where it attended the industry-leading 2016 Connect Sports Marketplace.



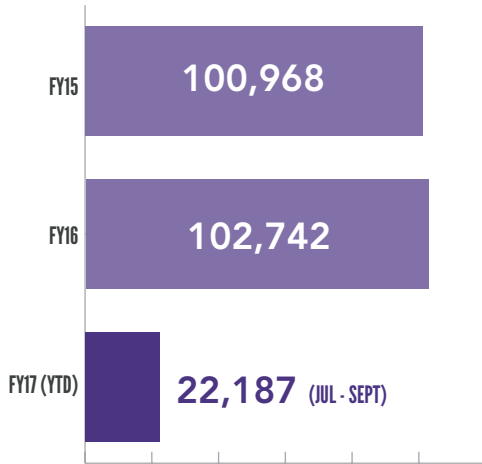
September Highlights

In September, RACVB solidified the return of football at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two with the **2017 IMG/NFA7v7 Midwest Regional**. A busy site visit schedule resumed September 7 with Game Day USA, September 14 with U90C Management Group, LLC, and September 21 with USA Volleyball Great Lakes Region. And on the last day of the month and quarter, U90C announced that the Rockford region won the rights—edging out Dallas and Denver—to host **Premier SuperCopa 2017**. This four-day boys and girls showcase invitational totals 192 teams and carries a track record of 16,000-plus attendees who yield approximately 10,000 room nights.

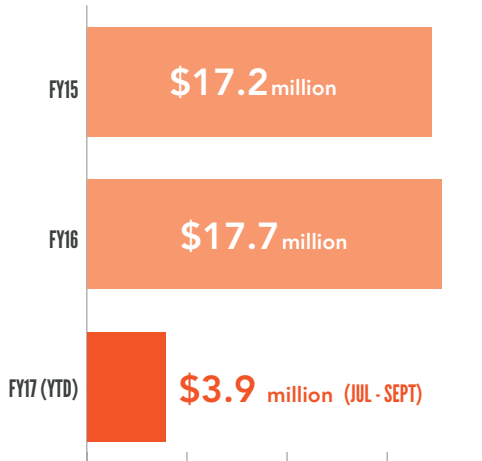


Meetings, Servicing & Bookings

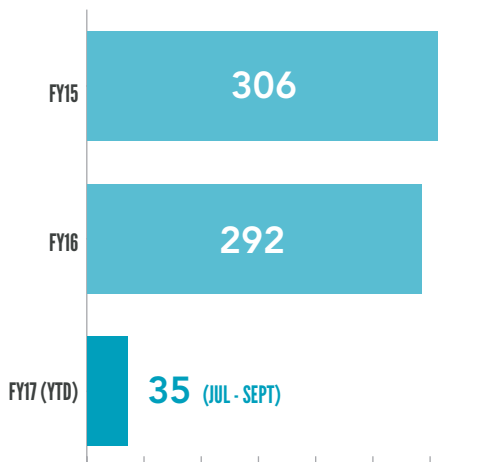
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



Estimated Economic Impact



Number of Event Bookings



Sales Highlights

Morgann Hansen joined the staff at the RACVB as **Sales Manager**, focusing on small meetings and convention recruitment, as well as sports tournament bookings in the region. Born and raised in Rockford, Hansen attended both Rock Valley College and Rockford University, receiving a B.A. in Business Administration with a marketing emphasis and minored in Economics. During college, Hansen interned at both the Rockford Park District and the Discovery Center Museum and most recently was employed at Alpine Bank & Trust.

RACVB president/CEO John Groh and Destination Development Director Tana Vettore were asked to give a special presentation at the annual **Destination Marketing Association International Conference** in Minneapolis, MN, in August. The presentation focused on how developing a destination's assets is important for visitors and residents alike. Destination promotion is vital to raising the quality of life in a region, which raises a destination's profile that helps to attract strategic events and businesses. This style of destination development greatly influences the economic vibrancy of a destination.



Booking Highlights for the Region

Puma Cup Championship and Showcase Tournaments
 March 30 - April 1 & April 6 - 8, 2017
 10,500 room nights
 \$1,890,000 EEI

IMG Academy 2017 7v7 Midwest Regionals (Football)
 April 13 - 14, 2017
 450 room nights
 \$81,000 EEI

Corrigan Sports, 2017 Midwest LAX Girls Showcase (Lacrosse)
 July 7 - 9, 2017
 2,250 room nights
 \$549,000 EEI

USA Waterski 2017 Central Regional Show Ski Championships
 July 7 - 9, 2017
 450 room nights
 \$58,950 EEI

Total Q1 Booked Highlights EEI = \$2,578,950

News & Notes

Record Setting Numbers for Tourism in Winnebago County

Rockford and Winnebago County continue 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.

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, local tourism and hospitality industry employment increased 4 percent to **2,810 jobs**.

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.



RACVB Board Members

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors announces the recent addition of two new board members. The board has added **Alderman Kevin Frost**, 4th Ward Alderman with the City of Rockford and **Marcus Bacon**, General Manager at Radisson Hotel & Conference Center, as voting board members each serving for a three-year term.

RACVB board changes officially went into effect during the August 24, 2016, board meeting. RACVB President/CEO John Groh said that Alderman Kevin Frost and Marcus Bacon are outstanding additions to the RACVB board and he is confident their collective expertise and vested interest in bettering our community will lead the travel and tourism industry to new heights in the coming years.

R.A.D. Featured in Illinois Made Program

The Illinois Department of Commerce's Office of Tourism launched **Illinois Made**, a new program featuring makers, creators and artisans from across the state. Rockford's own **Rockford Art Deli** is among a select group of Illinois makers

to be chosen for this unique designation. The IOT will feature these makers within a series of in-depth videos, exclusive web content, and Illinois Made-inspired travel ideas at www.EnjoyIllinois.com/Illinoismade.



Rockford Art Deli (R.A.D.), a creative collective located in downtown Rockford, has a main mission to help business owners with marketing and screen printing needs through a variety of unique art and web design, urban graphic design and screen printing – everything from t-shirts to posters. Amidst the vintage deli decor, R.A.D. holds

screen printing classes and hosts art gallery showings and other events for the public. The store also sells t-shirts, signature artist series goods and gift items.

Experiential travel continues to be a defining factor in trip planning. According to a special 2014 report by Skift and Peak DMC, a global travel expert network, more than 72 percent of consumers would rather spend money on experiences than things. With Illinois Made, the IOT aims to bring the best of Illinois' unique, creative and on-trend experiences to travelers of all backgrounds, encouraging people to extend their experiences beyond a day trip by exploring the local businesses and great attractions nearby.

News & Notes

Georama

Live Video Tours

For the first time, the Illinois Office of Tourism and Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau brought a series of live tours featuring various sites, attractions and eateries in the Rockford region to travelers. This series of virtual travel experiences was created in partnership with **Georama**, the world's first real-time virtual tour platform. Visitors can find the links to the live and interactive videos by visiting GoRockford.com/georama.

Live tours highlighted Rockford City Market, Riverfront Museum Park, Anderson Japanese Gardens, downtown Rockford, Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens and Coronado Performing Arts Center and Cheap Trick.



Forest City Beautiful Continues to Bloom

RACVB and the River District Association announced that the **Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL)** continued their ongoing support of Forest City Beautiful by contributing **\$38,614 from the Bengt & Mary Kuller Endowment fund**. The grant will help to offset the costs of purchasing and installing 5 benches, 5 bistro tables, 13 chairs and installing way-finding signs (directional signage) throughout the downtown. This is the third consecutive year that the CFNIL has granted money to the initiative. In addition to the funding support this year, they also contributed a total of \$70,000 in 2014 and 2015.

Several of the newly funded features will begin to appear throughout downtown

Rockford in the coming months. **Two bistro tables and chairs** will be placed at the southwest corner of State and First Streets and three will be placed on the north side of State Street between First and Madison Streets (one will be handicap accessible.) **Five benches** will be strategically placed between Third and Water Streets. Additional **trash receptacles** will be placed along State Street along with **directional way-finding signage** for added conveniences.



Sculpture Stroll Continues Until Summer 2017

Eight of the original nine sculptures

(as part of the Forest City Beautiful Sculpture Stroll featuring Boaz Vaadia and Hans Van de Bovenkamp) will remain in Rockford through May 2017.

Originally schedule to be on display from June 2015 – May 2016, the RACVB worked with the artists to extend the stay because of the overwhelming response from the community.



Marketing

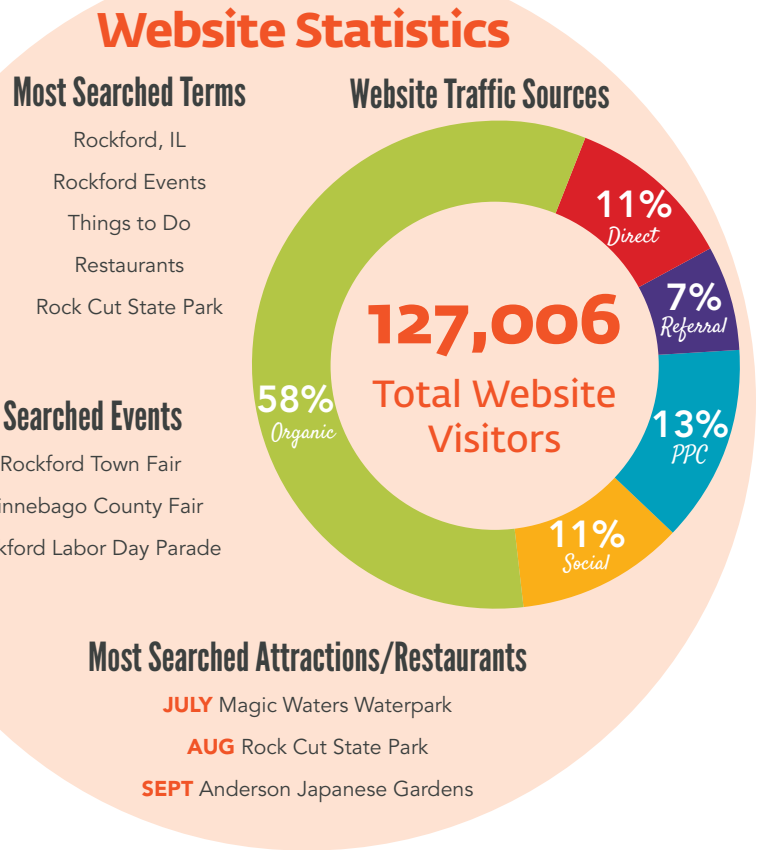
Advertising & Promotions

RACVB placed several digital and print advertisements for consistent brand awareness to promote the Rockford region as a leading destination for the leisure and sports markets. A search and site retargeting digital campaign launched to promote our fall seasonal campaign that took place from September to August and received approximately 1,428,571 impressions. A half page print ad titled "Real. Original. Getaway." was placed in **American Road's Autumn** publication reaching 60,000 readers. The **Northwest Quarterly** (NWQ) also ran a half page print ad that reached 92,450 readers (4.3 readers per magazine) and was complemented by a feature story in their Recreation & Destination Fall Getaway Guide titled, "Making the Most of Our Region – A Memorable Visit to Rockford." The NWQ editor worked with RACVB's Marketing & Communications Manager to include a list of recommended seasonal activities and 'must see' places to experience in the region.



American Road half page ad

To highlight the region as a leading sports destination, full page ads were placed in the **Packers, Cubs and Brewers Yearbooks** reaching approximately 930,000 combined targeted readers. A "Bring Your Game" dedicated eblast was placed with the **National Association of Sports Commissions** in July to promote the various multi-use sports facilities that can accommodate a variety of amateur sports tournaments. RACVB's Creative Services Manager designed a targeted geofilter to use during the **Rockford Robotics Competition** on July 30. During the event, teams and spectators were encouraged to take a picture and include the geofilter to help brand this event in our region.



Cubs Yearbook full page ad

Snapchat Geofilter

Marketing

Promoting Rockford to Rockford



The RACVB staff continues to coordinate and facilitate **Marketing Partnership Meetings** each month. A key topic discussed this quarter was the benefit of advertising in the RACVB's e-newsletters reaching up to 14,590 active users monthly and 482 weekly and on the gorockford.com website averaging 43,000 visitors per month. These strategic digital advertising platforms allow our partners to take advantage of low-cost efforts to share their message with a new targeted audience.



A **"Fall Into Fun"** digital and print marketing campaign promoted the activities, fun things to do, places to go and events that people can enjoy in the Rockford region during the fall season. This list was promoted through e-marketing and on the gorockford.com website.



As part of a commitment to assist with marketing the Rockford region as a destination the RACVB Marketing team helped several community partners promote their events; **Rock River Anything That Floats Race** (August 21), **Midtown Ethnic Parade and Festival** (August 28) and the **Rockford Community Partners' Rockford Day events** (August 15). The RACVB helped coordinate news conferences, assisted with writing news advisories and releases leading up to each event and social media efforts to share the announcements with media, residents and visitors.



Earned Media

(July - Sept, 2016)

RACVB uses **Meltwater**, 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.



39,009,000

Total impressions

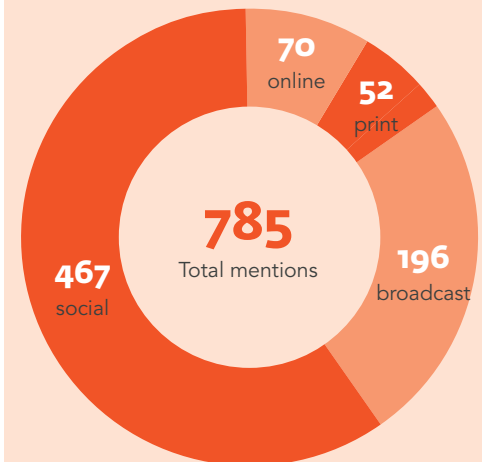


\$361,620

Average ad value

Share of Voice

Total mentions by outlet type



Social Media



Facebook
21,144 followers
(879 increase)



Instagram
6,760 followers
(603 increase)



YouTube
287,599 video views
(2,915 increase)



Twitter
5,838 followers
(200 increase)