

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Holiday Events Light Up Downtown Rockford this Season

River Lights, Shop on State, 12 Bars of Christmas return better than ever

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2016

Rockford, IL – The holidays are in full swing and the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau wants the community to continue celebrating with the return of three festive events. Rockford's River Lights, Shop on State and 12 Bars of Christmas are each in their second year and offer several opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy unique public art entertainment, local shopping and lots of fun in downtown Rockford for the Merry & Bright season.

Rockford's River Lights

This illuminating light show is located on the banks of the Rock River between State Street and Jefferson Street bridges. River Lights will have featured holiday shows every **Friday and Saturday night** throughout the month of December. Shows will run **every 15 minutes from 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.** On non-show nights, Rockford's River Lights will stay on and illuminate the riverbanks from dusk until dawn year-round.

Designed to be viewed from afar as well as up close, residents are invited to walk along the Esplanade on the west bank of the river and the Millennium Fountain and Joe Marino Park path on the east side, between the State and Jefferson Street bridges. This year, the installation features new designs and an interactive feature which allows viewers to activate lights in different zones located in Joe Marino Park. For more information, go to www.rockfordriverlights.com.

"The River Lights installation has added vibrancy to the banks of the Rock River in downtown Rockford. It's attractive to visitors and complements the locally-owned businesses that add to the vitality of our community, said Josh Albrecht, RACVB director of marketing & public affairs. "With the addition of a new interactive component, families will soon be able to control the light show with the touch of a button. It will be great to see peoples' reactions when they try this out for the first time this year."

Shop on State

Shop, sip and snack during Shop on State, a hometown holiday experience, featuring great shopping, delicious food, carolers and a visit from Santa at City Hall on **Thursday, December 8 from 5 - 9 p.m.** The RACVB and the River District Association have partnered to create this fun and magical evening where guests are invited to explore the unique local establishments in downtown Rockford. More than 14 stores will be open with specials and free treats throughout the evening. Guests attending the event this year will also have a chance to win a one-of-a-kind gift basket (valued at \$500) filled with various items from several local shops and eateries.

"Our downtown shop owners continuously invest in our community by participating in events like Shop on State. They see the value in coming together to support efforts encouraging people to shop local this holiday season," said Leah Tuneberg, River District Association executive director. "Their commitment to developing a special plan for the evening of Shop of State leads us to increasing vibrancy and energy on

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our blocks. Dedication and event participation by our shop owners helps drive our economy and keeps dollars in our downtown.”

More information about the event can be found at www.gorockford.com/merryandbright.

12 Bars of Christmas Pub Crawl

Holiday cheer and revelry will take place during the 2nd Annual 12 Bars of Christmas Pub Crawl on **December 17 from 3 – 9 p.m.** The event, programmed by the RACVB and sponsored by Illinois Bank & Trust, begins with a 3 p.m. kick-off party at BMO Harris Bank Center, which includes a DJ, food & drink, prizes and enjoying a great time with friends! At 5 p.m., the event crawls on to some of the most popular local Rockford establishments. Each participating location will offer a \$5 Holiday Drink and complimentary, non-alcoholic hot cocoa and/or coffee. Entertainment includes holiday music, unique giveaways, food specials and other exciting surprises.

Participating venues include CJ's Lounge, Vintage @ 501, Blue Line Sports Pub, J Bears Place, District Bar & Grill, Prairie Street Brewhouse, Owly Oop Sports Pub, Der Rathskeller Restaurant & Bar, The Olympic Tavern and Carlyle Brewing Company.

“After a sold-out event last year and the great feedback we received from participants and local business owners, we knew we needed to host the 12 Bars of Christmas again. We're very excited about the new additions and surprises that are in store for the community this year,” said Jenny Caiozzo, RACVB group services manager. “It's so rewarding to see the droves of people having a great time together, the moments being shared and memories being made. That's truly what it's all about.”

Admission is \$28 and includes an event t-shirt, one drink ticket at the kick-off party and goodie bag of surprises. Bag pick-up will take place on Thursday, December 15 and Friday, December 16 at the RACVB office between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., located at 102 N Main Street, and at the kick-off party on event day. Attendees must be 21 years or older and a photo ID is required for all bag pick-ups. Photo ID's will be checked at the kick-off party entrance. The deadline to purchase tickets is Thursday, December 8 in order to assure participants' desired shirt sizes. Tickets are non-refundable. To purchase tickets visit www.gorockford.com/12bars.

For more information to help you plan your itinerary or to download the complete schedule of our recommended Merry & Bright events and activities, go online to <http://www.gorockford.com/merryandbright>.

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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