

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Quarterly Report

FY17, Q2

October – December 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.



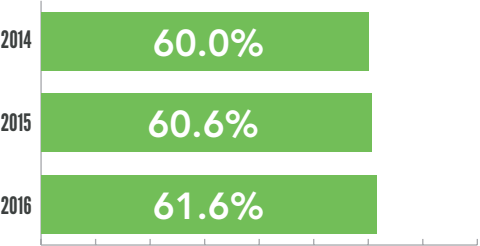
- Roberta Holzwarth** (Chair), Holmstrom & Kennedy PC
David Anderson (Vice Chair), Anderson Japanese Gardens
Bill LaFever (Secretary), Bill Doran & Co.
Gary Strakeljahn (Treasurer), Electroform Company
Marcus Bacon, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center
Stacy Bernardi, Representing Winnebago County
Robert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



- John Groh**, President/CEO
Josh Albrecht, Director of Marketing & Public Affairs
Lindsay Arellano, Director of Sales & Service
Jenny Caiozzo, Group Services Manager
Heidi Gee, Office Coordinator/Receptionist
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 (Jan – Dec 2016)

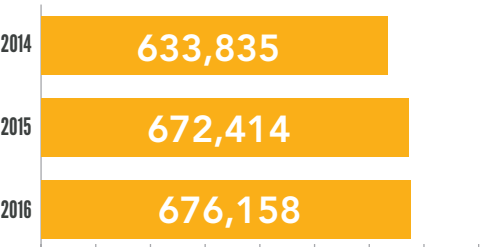
YTD Hotel Occupancy



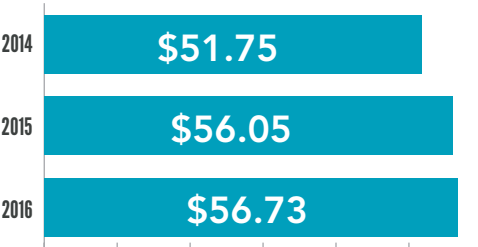
YTD Average Room Rate



YTD Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)

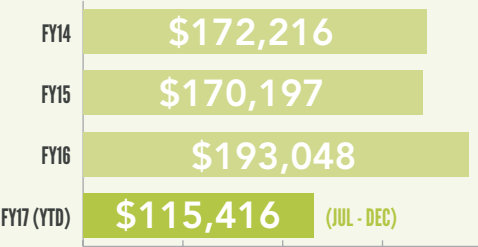


YTD Revenue (in millions)



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

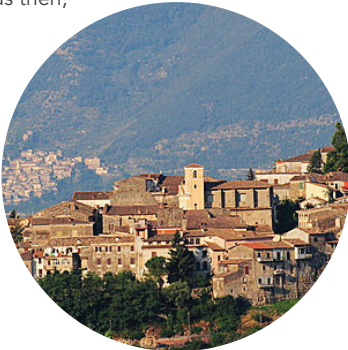
LIDKÖPING, SWEDEN — Five construction students and four instructors from the Construction Program at De la Gardiegymnasiet in Lidköping were in Rockford, giving a helping hand to the renovations of the Swedish Historical Society's **Nordic Cultural Center**.

2016 marked the 10 year anniversary of the **Lidköping-Rockford Industrial Partnership Agreement**. In October, Lidköping's Mayor Kjell Hedvall and Deputy Mayor Bertil Jonsson were in Rockford to celebrate the anniversary.

Gifts from the Mayor in the City of Tidaholm in the County of Skaraborg, Sweden, have been given to Mike Lunde, President of the Swedish Historical Society Board. The gifts are to further strengthen the connection between Rockford and Tidaholm which is the city in Sweden that the late Conrad Johnson emigrated from at the age of 19. Conrad passed away in 2014 and was then, at the age of 110, the oldest living American. Conrad donated **\$1.5 million to the Swedish Historical Society**.

FERENTINO, ITALY — Thirteen students and two teachers from Ferentino visited Rockford in August. They toured Rockford, Chicago, Springfield and other locations. Two of the students are interested in returning to attend **Rockford University**.

In September, Rockford representatives visited Ferentino and presented a **Peace Pole** which is currently in their City offices.



Sports Sales

Sports Sales Highlights

October Highlights

The RACVB sports sales team kicked off the second quarter of FY17 by wrapping up host responsibilities for the **2016 USA Ultimate National Championships**, an ESPN-televised event from September 29 - October 2 at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two. Just days later, GoRockford notched two more banner bookings—the **2017 Elite Clubs National League (ECNL) National Playoffs**, as well as the 2018 and 2020 **National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division III Women's Basketball Championship**. By mid-month, the region welcomed three representatives from Corrigan Sports Enterprises for a site visit in advance of its 2017 IWLCA JUNK Brands Midwest Lacrosse Cup—which will also be held at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two. Under Armour Under the Lights Flag Football also made the trek to Rockford for a venues tour. RACVB's sports sales activities continued when it submitted a bid to host the USA Ultimate National Championships again in Fall



2017, having just hosted a successful "NationalsIL" earlier in the month.

November Highlights

GoRockford Sports shifted its focus toward out-of-market activities in November, traveling to New York City for a sales mission and trade show. RACVB made stops November 8 at Tough Mudder and The Drone Racing League headquarters, where it soft-announced the organization's new sports marketing brand—Bring Your Game 2 Rockford (BYG2RKFD). On November 9-10, GoRockford attended the **2016 Momentum Sports Marketing Symposium**, the first Sports Business Journal-produced trade show that RACVB has attended. Additionally, the team welcomed Chicagoland Speedway to the Forest City for a site visit to establish partnerships and program activations with Rockford area venues.

December Highlights

RACVB formally announced its **BYG2RKFD** sales and marketing concept December 2, a press event at UW Health Sports Factory that included the support of **Fred VanVleet** and **Arachnid 360**. Thanks to a continued partnership with the Loves Park-based global soft-tip dart board producer that next week to Fort Myers, FL, December 4-7 for the **2016 U.S. Sports Congress**. Arachnid 360 outfitted GoRockford's trade show booth with two dart boards for more than 125 sports event attendees to test out during three days of interactive networking.



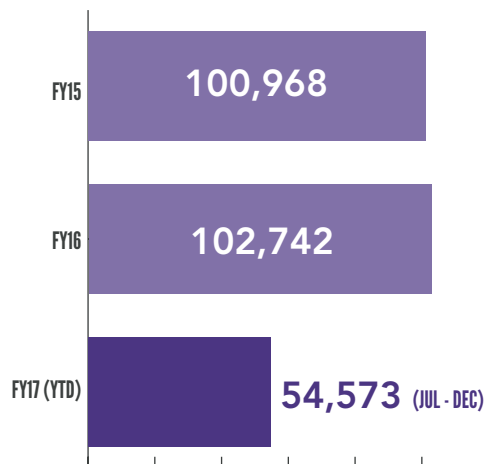
*Arellano
named
40 Under
40*

RACVB Director of Sales **Lindsay Arellano** was named to the **2016 Rockford Chamber of Commerce 40 Under 40**. Arellano was honored for her work at the RACVB, including her role in securing major events such as Tough Mudder for the region. She also leads the international sales efforts for the RACVB, recruiting tour groups and visitors from Sweden, Germany and England, along with working closely with the sales staff on sports tournaments and small conferences.

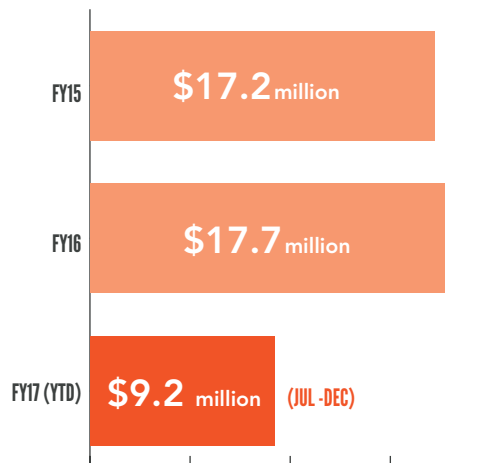


Meetings, Servicing & Bookings

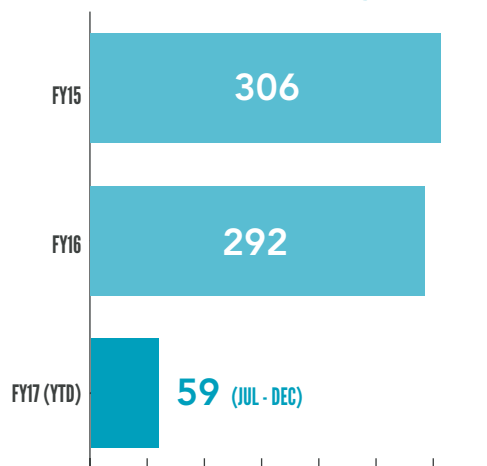
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



Estimated Economic Impact



Number of Event Bookings



Sales Highlights

Morgann Hansen, meeting sales manager, represented RACVB at the **Small Market Meetings Conference (SMMC)** in Huntsville, Alabama, October 2-4, 2016. SMMC is a trade show designed specifically for meeting planners looking to host events in small to medium sized locations. SMMC consists of two days of networking and two sessions of pre-scheduled appointments with meeting planners. Between the two sessions, a total of **27 meeting planners** were introduced to the Rockford area. In addition to attending, RACVB was a proud sponsor of the conference. Sponsorship included 4'x4' floor stickers featuring Rockford local favorites and a booth dedicated to Rockford fully equipped with Rockford literature.



Sponsorship floor stickers

Booking Highlights for the Region

National Junior College Athletic Association
2018 & 2020 NJCAA III Women's Basketball Championships

March 14 - 18, 2018 & March 11 - 17, 2020
 1,300 room nights | \$234,000 EEI

Elite Club National League
2017 ECNL Soccer Playoffs

June 20 - 27, 2017
 14,000 room nights | \$2,520,000 EEI

Lake Shore Lacrosse
2017 Junior LAX Cup

July 7 - 9, 2017
 700 room nights | \$126,000 EEI

Amateur Athletic Union - Track and Field
2017 AAU Indoor Northern Nationals

January 13 - 15, 2017
 700 room nights | \$126,000 EEI

Total Q2 Booked Highlights EEI = \$3,006,000

News & Notes

Managing the Region's Reputation

Talent attraction. Brain gain. Brain drain. These are among the worries that keep business owners, economic development officials and human resource executives tossing and turning at night. During the daylight hours, they wrestle with how to tell prospective recruits just how good life can be in Rockford, IL. To address this challenge, RACVB launched its **newest showcase video** as part of a larger comprehensive effort to enhance the region's profile by providing marketing

tools and materials to local employers, realtors and other influencers. The effort is funded in part by a \$75,000 grant to RACVB from Rockford Area Economic Development Council's Leadership Council. The powerful video, inspired by the In Good Company campaign theme RACVB first introduced in 2014, is designed to maximize use and views across different platforms.

The video is intended to be used by local human resource professionals, Realtors® and other entities as they promote the region. Additional materials are currently in the works and will be launched in the near future.



As the effort continues to unfold in the coming months, visit www.gorockford.com/ingoodcompany for a glimpse into the daily lives of those living and playing in Real. Original. Rockford and be reminded of our accessible little city with a welcoming heart.

Forest City Beautiful Keeps Growing

In partnership with the River District Association, RACVB announced a **\$43,459 grant for the Forest City Beautiful initiative** awarded by the Dr. Louis and Violet Rubin Fund of the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois' **Sustainable Communities Grants Program**. These funds will go towards the installation of **trash receptacles** throughout the River District in **downtown Rockford** to help reduce litter. Forest City Beautiful is a multi-year urban greening program focused on beautifying and revitalizing downtown Rockford, with the goal of improving the city center. As part of the initiative, RACVB has the responsibility to collaborate with local leaders to plan, install and maintain landscaping throughout downtown. This is the foundation's fourth grant for Forest City Beautiful, bringing the total amount awarded to \$152,076.

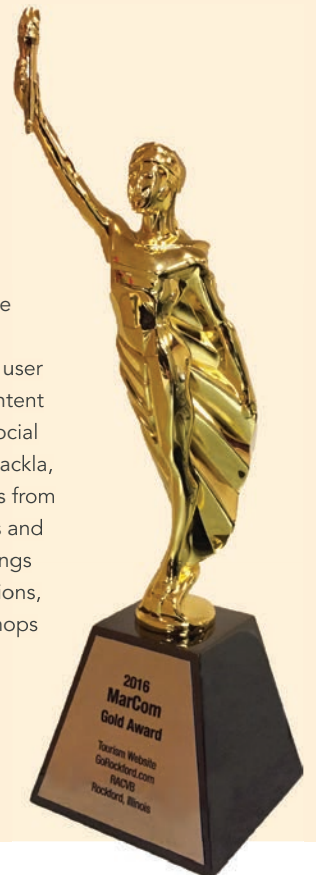


Marcom Award

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau's website GoRockford.com has been awarded a **Gold MarCom Award** for excellence in the category of Tourism Website. The award comes on the heels of the RACVB's redesign of the website which was launched in May 2016.

The MarCom Awards recognize outstanding achievement by creative professionals involved in the concept, direction, design and production of marketing and communication materials and programs. MarCom is one of the oldest, largest and most prestigious creative competitions in the world. MarCom is sponsored and judged by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals (AMCP).

The re-launched www.GoRockford.com features a brand new design that focuses on telling the region's story through dynamic photos, comprehensive calendar and event listings, user generated content through our social media feed Stackla, feature articles from local bloggers and enhanced listings for our attractions, restaurants, shops and hotels.



News & Notes

Stroll on State Sets Record

Rockford's Merry & Bright holiday season kicked off with another record-breaking year as crowds gathered together on November 26 for **Stroll on State**, presented by Illinois

Bank & Trust. Each year the event has grown in both size and scope, with this year's event attendance estimated at **75,000 visitors**.

Aerial photography, feedback from crowd

spotters, shuttle bus ridership and sales/participation numbers for local businesses and attractions throughout the duration of the event help determine the number.

"As we wrap up another record-breaking Stroll on State, our team at RACVB is incredibly inspired by this community and the hard work that so many put in to create this awe-inspiring night. The common theme I've been hearing is that Stroll instills a great sense of love for and pride in our community as well as optimism for the future," said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO.

"Stroll is more than just an event - it's a feeling, it's a memorable moment, it's a tradition that our community shares together."

See Stroll on State by the Numbers at the end of this document for more facts.

Fred VanVleet = Rockford Ambassador

Rockford has been a pioneering sports town since the mid-1980s. Decade after decade, the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau has set the Midwestern standard for sports tournament hosting with excellence, convenience and success.

Now RACVB is taking sports tourism to new heights with the addition of local legend and NBA rookie **Fred VanVleet** as the organization's first-ever **Sports Tourism Ambassador**. VanVleet will be the face of the RACVB's new Bring Your Game 2 Rockford marketing campaign.

VanVleet's story of drive, determination and success is at the center of the newly launched **Bring Your Game 2 Rockford (BYG2RKFD)** marketing push, which launched this fall with a series of ads in sports tourism industry magazine and eblast messages that directly target tournament and event promoters.

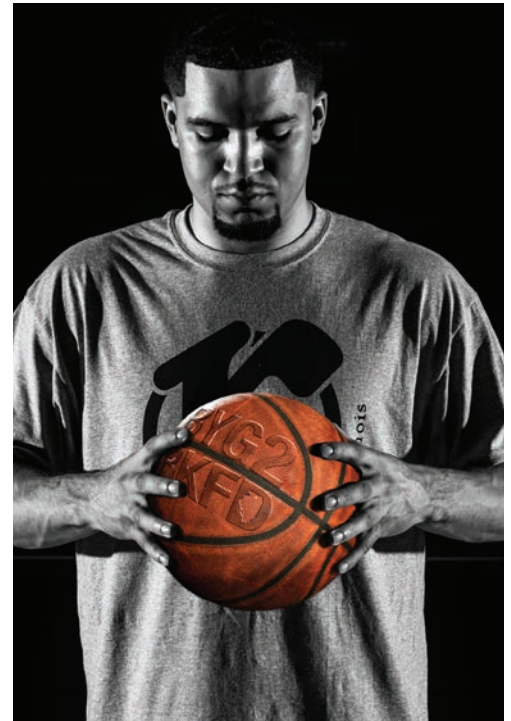
"I'm super excited to be the brand ambassador for the RACVB," VanVleet said. "Something that I take a lot of pride in is carrying the flag for our city and trying to bring positive light to the area."

VanVleet will continue to be featured in the BYG2RKFD campaign over the next year. In addition to a variety of advertisements and promotions featuring VanVleet, RACVB is working with him on creating events for the community including a possible basketball camp and tournament next summer.

The next phase of BYG2RKFD will continue in 2017 as more athletes and sports personalities from the region will be highlighted as part of the campaign.

New Major Events in 2017

In October 2016, the RACVB announced four new major events that will take place in 2017. Collectively, participants, coaches and fans that travel to the region for the tournaments are expected to have an estimated economic impact



“Something that I take a lot of pride in is carrying the flag of our city and trying to bring positive light to the area.”

of **\$5 million** during their stays. These first time events will bring more than **22,500 visitors** to our region.

Major 2017 Tournaments Booked

- 2017 U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships (February 23 – 25, 2017)
- Amateur Athletic Union Midwest Regional Gymnastics Championships (May 5 – 7, 2017)
- Premier SuperCopa Championships (June 9 – 12, 2017)
- Elite Clubs National Playoffs (June 22 – 27, 2017)

Marketing

Advertising & Promotions

Stroll on State continues to greatly impact the Rockford community, while continuing to grow in both size and scope each year. The record-breaking attendance estimated at 75,000 visitors was supported by an extensive media and advertising plan established to invite residents and visitors to participate in this holiday tradition held in Rockford's downtown.

All print ads (magazine, newspaper, billboards) generated a total **5,721,036 of circulation, impressions and readership**. All online ads (static and eblast) generated **2,464 clicks and 1,856 pageviews**. The Plan Your Stroll mobile web application generated 7,129 views, 1,247 sign-ups and 735 text alert subscribers. Five news releases were sent out to our local media partners that helped generate 64 radio spots with Mid-West Family Broadcasting, 85 radio spots with Townsquare Media, 15 live mentions on local TV (WIFR, WREX, WQRF, WTVO) and local radio (WXRJ, WROK). Paid media reach is estimated at **6.9 million circulation/impressions** with earned media reach at **649,300,000 potential views and \$6 million value**.



Rockford Register Star ad

Additional advertising in both the leisure and sports markets was placed in the Chicago Bulls Yearbook, Enjoy Magazine, 815 Magazine and Northwest Quarterly. The total reach from each of these publications combined was **1,658,500 people**.



815 Magazine ad

Website Statistics

Most Searched Terms

Calendar of Events
Rockford, IL
Stroll on State
Shop on State
Crimson Ridge

Most Searched Events

OCT Extreme Halloween - Three Attractions at One Location
NOV Stroll on State
DEC All Aglow Holiday Display at Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens

Website Traffic Sources



Most Searched Attractions/Restaurants

OCT Anderson Japanese Gardens
NOV Discovery Center Museum
DEC Copperstone Inn

New Partner Sponsorship

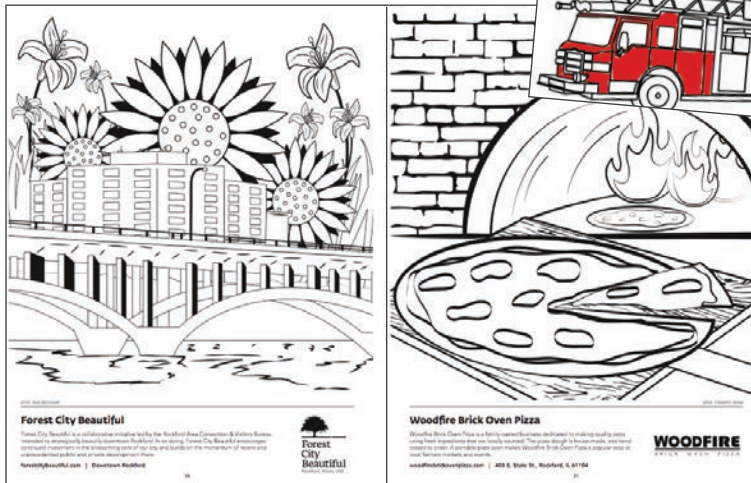
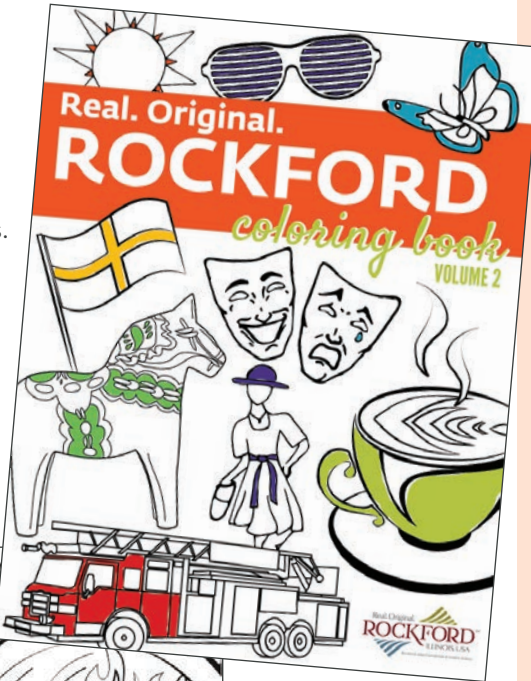
RACVB partnered with the **Rockford IceHogs** to host a Stroll on State "Volunteer Appreciation Night" at the November 19th Rockford IceHogs game at the BMO Harris Bank Center. This included a **custom-designed scarf** given to the first 1,500 attendees at the game, a lighted go-bo displaying a special thank you message to Stroll volunteers on the exterior of the BMO Harris Bank Center, social media giveaway and mentions, discounted tickets for volunteers, a Stroll on State video featured inside the arena and concourse, an RACVB information table featuring a special photo opportunity with Santa Claus, giveaways and information about the event, and a Rockford Register Star Stroll on State insert given to help people plan their night at the event.



Marketing

Promoting Rockford to Rockford

RACVB launched **Volume 2 of the GoRockford Coloring Book** during Fall ArtScene in October. This 32-page activity book was sponsored by several local sites, attractions, eateries and businesses and designed by RACVB's Creative Services Manager with the help of several local artists. Each coloring page includes a description and contact information for that particular drawing. The book is a fun learning tool that helps to showcase our amazing community and the people that make it a Real. Original. destination. Proceeds go towards the Forest City Beautiful initiative to help beautify downtown Rockford.



The RACVB's monthly **Marketing Partnership meeting** brings together several local businesses and organizations to find ways to help each collectively advertise and promote the Rockford region together. As a benefit to our partners, the RACVB now offers **digital advertising opportunities** in our monthly and weekly leisure market eblasts. In addition, partners also get social media exposure on the GoRockford Facebook and Twitter pages. These low-cost advertising options are great for partners to reach a larger targeted audience when promoting fun things to do in the region.



Eblast ad example

Social Media



Facebook
22,998 followers
(1,854 increase)



Instagram
7,170 followers
(416 increase)



YouTube
297,730 video views
(10,131 increase)



Twitter
5,976 followers
(138 increase)

Earned Media

(Oct - Dec, 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.



703,104,000

Total impressions



\$6,319,097

Average ad value

Share of Voice

Total mentions by outlet type

