

## VOICE COLUMN – April 2017

### Tournaments and Events Help Keep the Economy Humming

By John Groh

The value of tourism to a community can sometimes be hard to grasp if you are just looking at the big picture. What I mean by that is it's easy to get caught up in the numbers – many of which are large-scale such as the \$350 million visitors spent in Winnebago County in 2015, or the 7.6 million people that attended our sites, attractions and events that same year.

The community-wide impact is certainly represented in numbers like these. However, it's tourism on the smaller scale that really showcases the impact on the community. Take for instance the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships held at the BMO Harris Bank Center in February. Bringing in teams from throughout the United States, we had the opportunity to showcase our wonderful community to thousands of visitors.

And, we definitely did put our best foot forward ... Check out this great review from the Starlights Synchronized Skating Club from Skokie, Illinois:

"Thank you [Go Rockford](#). The [2017 U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships](#) was successful because of you. Your whole team supported us from the time we started planning the event through the event itself. The city of Rockford welcomed the skaters and their families with open arms, and a very large pair of skates! Your restaurants and hotels made all of the skaters feel welcome and special. Everywhere you looked, we were the talk of the town. We couldn't have done it without you and we hope we have an opportunity to host another event in Rockford."

Even more important than the glowing review might be the fact that our hotels, restaurants and retail establishments got a nice shot in the arm during the slow winter months. The District Bar & Grill downtown reported having fulfilled more than 700 reservations the week of the event from participants, and another downtown business said that the Friday and Saturday of the event saw sales equal to what they usually see in the entire month of February. And it wasn't just downtown business; Lucha Cantina also reported having one of their busiest weekends in the past year.

So it's the impact of each tournament over the course of the year that leads us to these mega-watt numbers that fuel our economy. Better yet, these mega-watt numbers lead to more jobs as our hospitality industry continues to grow with more than 2,800 jobs directly related to the tourism industry in Rockford!

### **So what's next for Rockford?**

The past few months have been very busy for the RACVB as we have announced several high profile, high attendance tournaments and conferences that are coming to our region this year. Here's a quick sample of what we can look forward to:

- **Amateur Athletic Union Midwest Regional Gymnastics Championships**  
**Date:** May 5-7, 2017 **Location:** UW Health Sports Factory  
**Attendance:** 400-500 athletes traveling from across the region and 1,500 total visitors expected.  
**Economic Impact:** Estimated 485 room nights and \$87,300 in economic impact.
- **Premier SuperCopa Championships**  
**Date:** June 9-12, 2017 **Location:** Mercyhealth Sportscore Two  
**Attendance:** 92 boys teams, 64 girls teams; U9-U12 for both genders, national tournament (invitation only) and 6,000 total visitors expected  
**Economic Impact:** Estimated 10,000 room nights and \$1.8 million in economic impact
- **Elite Clubs National Playoffs**  
**Date:** June 22-27, 2017 **Location:** Mercyhealth Sportscore Two  
**Attendance:** Approximately 240 teams, all girls competitive youth leagues ages 14-18 and 10,000 total visitors expected.  
**Economic Impact:** Estimated 14,000 room nights and \$2,520,000 EEI (Teams will stay in the Rockford region and extend into Chicago, Milwaukee and possibly Madison.)
- **Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses**  
**Date:** July 28-30, August 4-6 and August 11-13 **Location:** BMO Harris Bank Center  
**Attendance:** This big win for the Rockford region will draw approximately **15,000 attendees** who are expected to visit from Milwaukee, Madison, Dubuque, Davenport, Kenosha, Racine and more.  
**Economic Impact:** Estimated \$589,500 and more than 4,500 room nights during the three weekends.

The impact of these events will be a tremendous boost to our local economy this year and we are thankful that these groups have chosen Rockford. Thanks to great cooperation from our local partners like the Rockford Park District, BMO Harris Bank Center and many others, we are able to continue securing events like these for the region. And, the great customer service our hotels, restaurants and retail businesses show these guests keeps them wanting to come back time and time again.