

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Quarterly Report

FY17, Q3

January – March 2017



Sports

Meetings

Bookings

**News &
Notes**

Marketing

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
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- Tim Myers**, WIFR-TV
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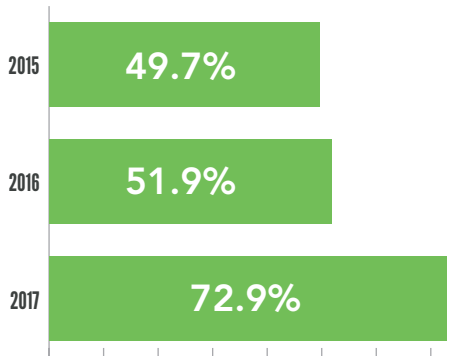
RACVB Staff

- 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
- 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

(January – March 2017)

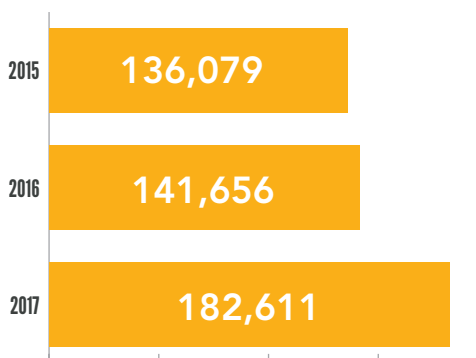
YTD Hotel Occupancy



YTD Average Room Rate



YTD Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)



YTD Revenue (in millions)

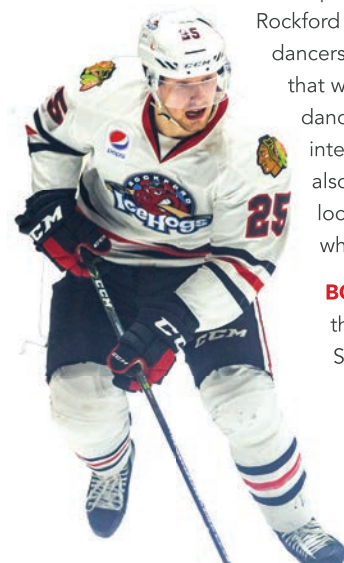


Sister City Reports

LIDKÖPING, SWEDEN — The Industrial Partnership Agreement in place between the City of Lidköping, County of Skaraborg (Sweden) and the Rockford region, aims for both regions to grow locally by working globally. The original agreement was signed in 2006 and keeps growing and gaining recognition.

Unique genealogy research travel package trips are being developed in the County of Skaraborg and will soon be presented to individuals in Rockford that have Swedish ties to the County of Skaraborg and surrounding areas.

CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA — A group of 18 professional dancers plan on making a trip to Rockford at the end of May. The dancers will put on a free show that will feature one hour of dancing and one hour of interactive teaching. They are also interested in meeting with local dance groups and museums while in town.



BORGHOLM, SWEDEN — A Swedish celebration night was held at the Rockford IceHogs game on Friday, March 31. There are currently 8 Swedish players and 1 Finnish player on the team.

Sports Sales

Sports Sales Highlights

January Highlights

RACVB's sports sales team jumped out of the gates in January with another site visit from **Baylor Youth Basketball**. Then, after working alongside the Boys & Girls Club of Rockford in 2015 and 2016 in supporting the American Amateur Baseball Congress (AABC) World Series, the organizations collaborated again on solidifying the BGC's bid to expand the event at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two to four age groups (9U, 10U, 11U and 13U) in 2017. The 16-team fields draw visitors from as far as New York and Puerto Rico and are expected to total 4,000 room nights. RACVB wrapped up a busy first month by submitting bids for the **2017 MultiGP Drone Racing Regionals** and the **2017-19 Netball America U.S. Open**.



February Highlights

In early February, RACVB continued to position the region as a go-to market for national governing body for the sport of ultimate, booking the **2018 USA Ultimate Division III College Championships**. Our team also successfully hosted this event in 2015, as well as the 2016 USA Ultimate National Championships. By mid-month, RACVB had welcomed back the **IHSA Girls Bowling State Finals** to The Cherry Bowl in addition to the North Tartan (MN) Girls Basketball club to the region for a site visit to scout venues for NCAA certified basketball tournaments. Our team then took a sales trip with RPS 205 Athletics to meet with the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) and the Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) in Bloomington, as well as a visit to the University of Illinois Division of Intercollegiate Athletics in Urbana-Champaign. To close out the month, the Rockford region welcomed the **2017 U.S. Figure Skating Synchronized Skating Championships** to the BMO Harris Bank Center, an event that received rave reviews from residents, businesses, competitors and operations staff alike.

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March Highlights

Two more site visits kicked off another busy month in March, highlighted by two headquarter staffers from Colorado Springs-based **USA Wrestling**. During the visit, the reps toured Rockford's venues and experienced first-hand the region's event expertise by attending the **2017 Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation State Finals**—the 15th straight year the event was held at the BMO Harris Bank Center. Another Colorado Springs-based national governing body then helped highlight another major event booking for Rockford, as the **America's Team Table Tennis Championships** (sanctioned by



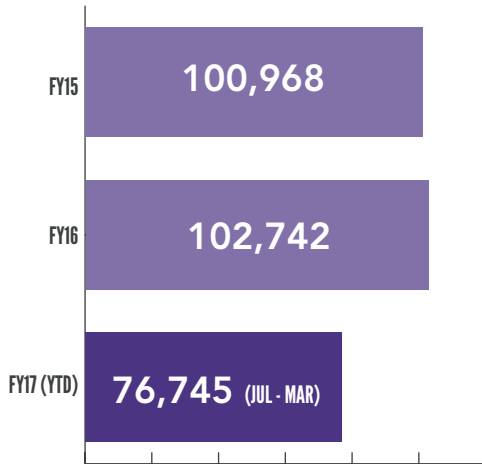
USA Table Tennis) announced its 2017 return to the Forest City. The Memorial Day weekend tournament will draw some of table tennis' best athletes to the UW Health Sports Factory after a one-year hiatus. RACVB conducted another sales mission, this time returning to the Empire State to shadow the 2017 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division III Women's Basketball Championship staff in Utica, NY, as part of Rockford's host responsibilities in 2018. The sports sales team closed out Q3 by attending both

the **2017 Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism** in Springfield, IL (March 20-22), and the **2017 National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) Symposium** in Sacramento, CA (March 27-31).

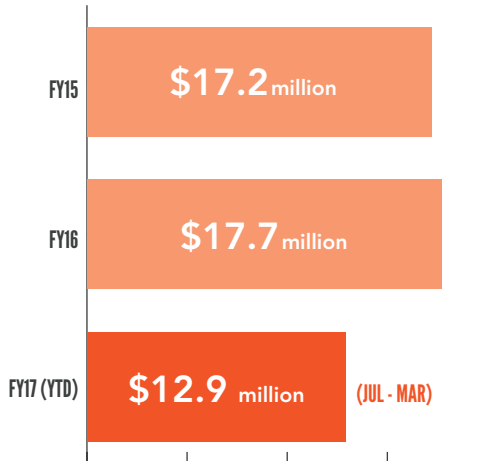


Meetings, Servicing & Bookings

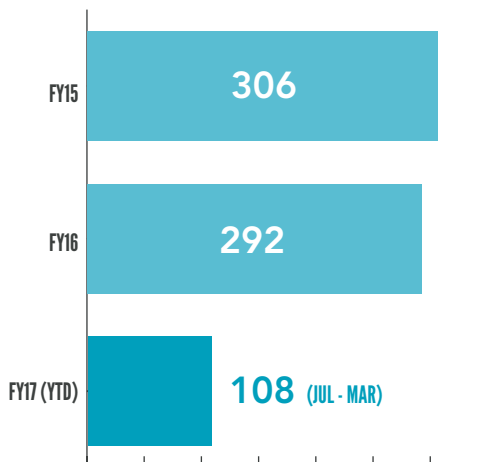
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



Estimated Economic Impact



Number of Event Bookings



Sales Highlights

The RACVB Meetings sales team opened the calendar year by bringing back—for the first time in 11 years—the **2017 Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses**. RACVB worked directly with the BMO Harris Bank Center in securing this three-weekend event that is slated for this July and August, during which time **15,000 attendees** are expected to visit the region.

In February, the team maintained that momentum after a site visit to the Holiday Inn led to the booking of the **2018 Illinois Association of Snowmobile Clubs Annual Meeting**. The meeting sales and marketing activities then continued at the **2017 Emerge Conference in Chicago**. A production of the Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA), RACVB met with more than 30 event planners in the Windy City to position the region as a future host for faith-based planners.



Emerge Conference in Chicago

Booking Highlights for the Region

2017 America's Team Table Tennis Championships

May 27 - 28, 2017
425 room nights
\$76,500 EEI

2017 AABC World Series (9U, 10U, 11U, 13U)

July 21 - August 9, 2017
4,000 room nights
\$720,000 EEI

2017 Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses

July 28 - 30, August 4 - 6, August 11 - 13, 2017
4,050 room nights
\$530,550 EEI

2018 USA Ultimate Division III College Championships

May 19 - 20, 2018
900 room nights
\$162,000 EEI

Total Q3 Booked Highlights EEI = \$1,489,050

News & Notes

RACVB Nabs Two Top State Awards

RACVB was honored during the **Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism** with two of the top destination marketing awards in the state. Hosted by Enjoy Illinois, the annual conference was held in Springfield, Illinois March 20 - 22, 2017.

Recognition to the RACVB was given for **"Best Tourism Marketing Campaign"** featuring Cheap Trick's induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The campaign featured a wide variety of integrated advertising including:

- Creating the website www.GoTrickford.com highlighting all things Cheap Trick and Rockford.
- A video with Chad Smith of the Red Hot Chili Peppers talking about Cheap Trick and their connection to their hometown of Rockford. The video has been viewed more than 120,000 times between Facebook and YouTube and reached more than 260,000 people.
- Each band member's childhood street was renamed in their honor and special "Dream Police" welcome signs were installed at key roads entering the city.
- A mayoral proclamation stated: "Rockford (unofficially renamed **Trickford**."
- Streetlight banners and billboards were displayed throughout the community.
- A comprehensive digital advertising campaign received more than 1.4 million impressions.
- Featured on WGN-TV's **"Around Town"** segment with a live remote from the Coronado Theatre and other downtown Rockford attractions and an on-air interview with Rick Nielsen.



Recognition was also given for **"Best Branding Initiative"** featuring the **Bring Your Game 2 Rockford** (#BYG2RKFD) sports tourism brand and RACVB sports tourism ambassador Fred VanVleet of the Toronto Raptors. The campaign was launched in November 2016 during a press conference at the UW Health Sports Factory. Other highlights of the campaign include:

- Announcing local basketball favorite **Fred VanVleet** as the RACVB's first Sports Tourism Ambassador.
- More than 2 million earned media impressions.
- Advertising with industry publications like Sports Planning Guide and Sports Travel.
- Branding at industry trade shows such as US Sports Congress.
- Branded merchandise direct marketed to industry professionals, including shirts, socks, clocks, darts and mini basketball hoops.
- An all-new Bring Your Game 2 Rockford sports tourism showcase video.
- The **FVV All-Star Party** fundraiser at District Bar & Grill.
- Billboards erected in Rockford featuring Fred VanVleet.

News & Notes

FVV All-Star Party

The first joint event with Toronto Raptors rookie and Rockford native Fred VanVleet, the FVV All-Star Party, was held on Feb. 19 at District Bar & Grill in downtown Rockford. The event was a fundraising party to help bring additional sports tournaments and events to the Rockford region. Following the event a \$550 donation was made to Rockford 5-0 Youth Basketball. RACVB aims to help VanVleet establish a new basketball camp and tournament at the UW Health Sports Factory this summer. The FVV All-Star Party included musical performances sponsored by Urban Equity Properties from local musicians Ashleye Armelin and RAJU.



Forest City Beautiful Grows

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, in partnership with the River District Association, is proud to announce that they have received a **\$43,459 grant for the Forest City Beautiful initiative**. These funds will go towards the installation of **trash receptacles** throughout the River District in downtown Rockford to help reduce litter. The grant was awarded by the Dr. Louis and Violet Rubin Fund of the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois' Sustainable Communities Grants Program. Forest City Beautiful is a multi-year urban greening program focused on beautifying and revitalizing downtown Rockford, with the goal of improving the quality within 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 fourth grant approved for Forest City Beautiful, bringing the total amount awarded to \$152,076.



RACVB Celebrates National Plan for Vacation Day

To help fulfill America's vacation resolutions this year, the RACVB supported **National Plan For Vacation Day** by hosting a planning event on January 31. The event was open to the public and RACVB staff helped residents build itineraries with an assortment of "Where to Explore" informational sheets and the RACVB Visitors Guide. All participants who stopped by the event were eligible to enter a drawing to win a Rockford-themed staycation giveaway basket valued at over \$500. Fifty-nine percent of Illinois workers leave vacation time unused (more than the national average). More than half (55%) of Americans do not use all the time off they earn, leading to **658 million unused vacation days a year**. If Americans used the 658 million unused vacation days, it would be a \$4.1 billion boost for the Illinois travel economy. National Plan for Vacation Day, launched by **Project: Time Off**, is a call-to-action for Americans to take back their calendars and plan their time off.



Marketing

Advertising & Promotions

Eleven news releases were sent out to our local media partners that helped generate content shared through regular weekly radio spots with Mid-West Family Broadcasting (WXRX, The Bull) radio spots with Townsquare Media (WROK) and live mentions with local TV (WIFR, WREX, WQRF, WTVO). Through our Meltwater media software we tracked **1,164 media mentions** through broadcast, print, online and social media sources. Our messaging reached an estimated **160,200,000 people** across all major platforms with approximately **\$1.5 million in average ad value**. The top online sources were RRStar.com, MilwaukeeJournalSentinal.com and CNN.com International. The top broadcast sources were WREX (NBC), WTVO (ABC), and WQRF (FOX).

Ads were placed with the following organizations and publications this quarter: National Association of Sports Commissions, Connect Facilities Guide, Cherry Valley Sign Company, Lamar billboards, Cubs, Valuchic, American Road and Northwest Quarterly.

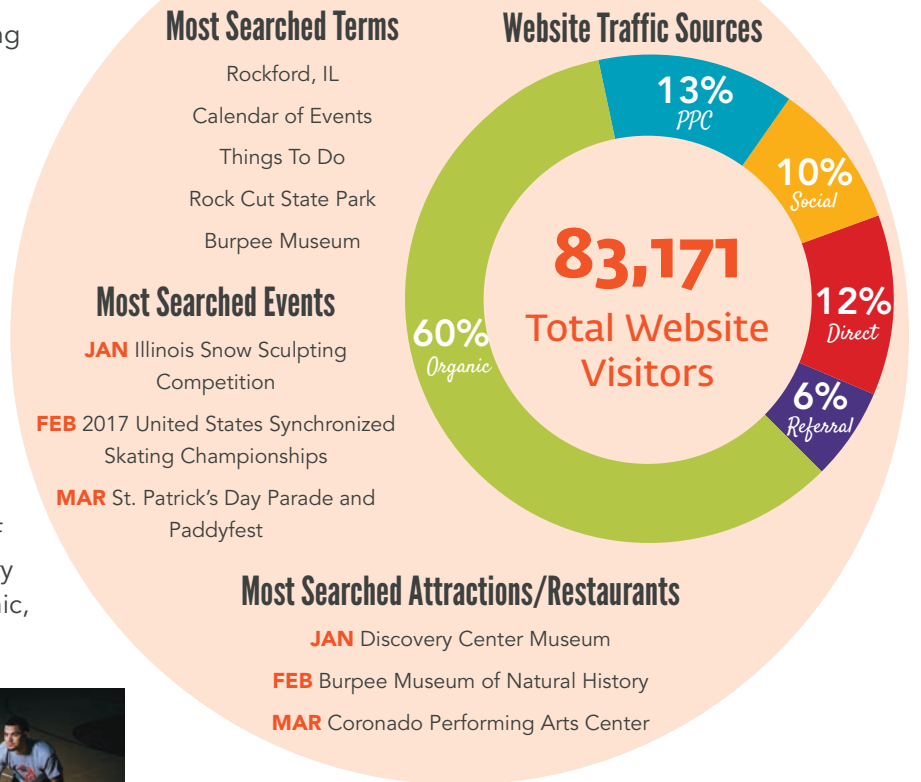


BYG2RKFD billboard



Cubs Yearbook ad

Website Statistics



International Marketing

Rockford partnered with the Illinois Office of Tourism at **ITB**, one of the largest travel trade shows held annually in Berlin.

Rockford was joined by five other partners to promote Illinois to the German market. Illinois' German offices scheduled more than 30 media appointments for Cory Jobe, more than 32 trade and airline appointments and Rockford's PR partner scheduled thirteen media appointments.

Rockford was included on a state-wide familiarization tour for Graham McKenzie with **TravelMole**, an online website for travel agents and tour operators in the UK. The theme of the fam was "Illinois Made" and Rockford Art Deli was featured as one of Rockford's own. TravelMole has over 110,000 subscribers.

Claasen Communications, Rockford's media relations firm in Germany, continues to pitch unique events to the German press – both print and online. A press release on the Sock Monkey Madness Festival was carried in 16 different outlets. **Schleswig-Holstein am Sonntag** highlighted the Festival and garnered 605,500 impressions.



Marketing

Promoting Rockford to Rockford

Weekly Media Spots

RACVB's marketing & communications manager joins local radio stations **104.9 WXRX** and **1440 WROK** and television station **WIFR** channel 23 each week to talk about "What's Happening in the Rockford Region." She recently started a new morning segment on **95.3 The Bull** to talk with their morning hosts about bureau initiatives, sports tournament bookings, local happenings and things to do in the Rockford region. These local public service announcements are also promoted through social media and shared as podcasts on our local media's websites.



Real. Original. LOVELY

There are lots of fun events, activities and things to do in the Rockford region all year long – especially during the spring months – so the RACVB team put together a list of recommended activities, events and places to visit as part of the **Real. Original. LOVELY calendar of events**. This quarterly themed list was featured on the grockford.com website, social media sites, blog posts, eblasts and in advertisements locally and regionally.

The marketing team also created eight original, **Rockford-themed valentines** for people to download for free and distribute. The valentines included images of West Rock Wake Park, Rockford IceHogs, Magic Waters Waterpark, and more.



Earned Media

(Jan - March, 2017)

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.



160,200,000

Total impressions

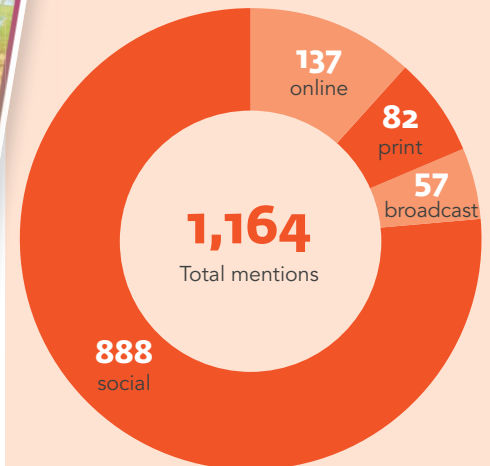


\$1,500,000

Average ad value

Share of Voice

Total mentions by outlet type



Social Media



Facebook

23,481 followers
(483 increase)



Instagram

7,634 followers
(464 increase)



YouTube

325,390 video views
(27,660 increase)



Twitter

6,089 followers
(113 increase)