

*Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau*

# Quarterly Report

**FY18, Q3**

**January – March 2018**



**News &  
Notes**

**Marketing**

**Sports**

**Bookings**

**Meetings**

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.



- David Anderson** (Chairman), Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Bill LaFever** (Vice Chairman), Bill Doran & Co.
- Tim Meyers** (Treasurer/Secretary), WIFR-TV
- Chad Anderson**, Anderson Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram
- Marcus Bacon**, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center
- Bob Burden**, City of Loves Park
- Nathan Bryant**, Rockford Area Economic Development Council
- Todd Cagnoni**, City of Rockford
- Bryan Davis**, SupplyCore
- Patricia Diduch**, Village of Rockton
- Einar Forsman**, Rockford Chamber of Commerce
- Kevin Frost**, City of Rockford
- Jennifer Furst**, FurstStaffing
- Ben Holmstrom**, William Charles Construction
- Roberta Holzwarth**, HolmstromKennedy PC
- Marco Lenis**, Vocational Rehabilitation Management
- Carla Paschall**, Winnebago County
- Ted Rehl**, City of South Beloit
- Jay Sandine**, Rockford Park District

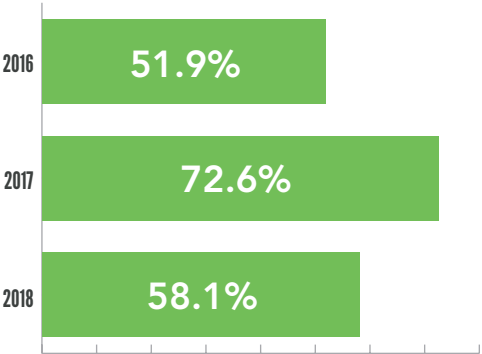


- John Groh**, President/CEO
- Lindsay Arellano**, Director of Sales & Service
- Jenny Caiozzo**, Destination Development Manager
- Andrea Cook**, Marketing & Communications Manager
- Mary French**, Group Services Manager
- Heidi Gee**, Office Coordinator/Receptionist
- Jennie Hahn**, Group Services Specialist
- Fred Harris**, Visitor Services Assistant
- Janet Jacobs**, Marketing Assistant
- Lindsey Kromm**, Accounting Assistant
- Elizabeth Miller**, Creative Services Manager
- Joanne Nold**, Director of Finance & Administration
- Kristen Paul**, Executive Assistant
- Nick Povalitis**, Director of Sports Development
- Tana Vettore**, Director of Destination Development

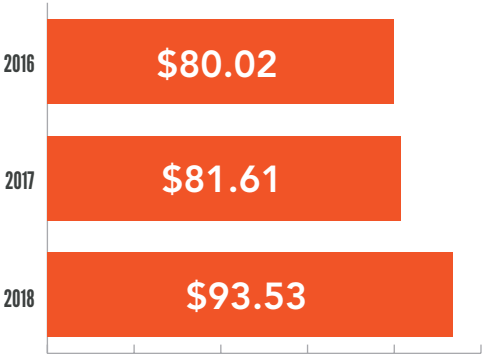
# Winnebago County Hotel Statistics

(January – March 2018)

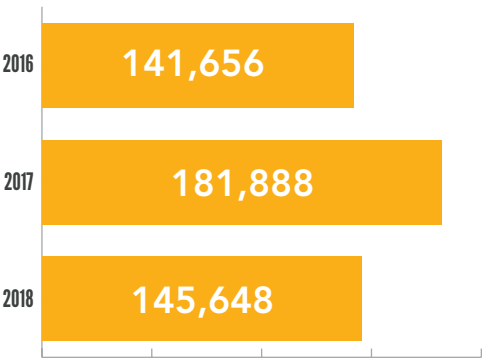
## YTD Hotel Occupancy



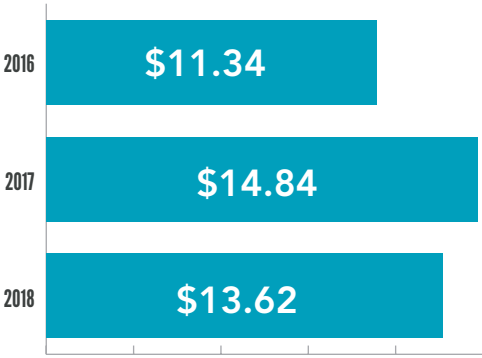
## YTD Average Room Rate



## YTD Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)



## YTD Revenue (in millions)



# Rockford Sister City Reports

**BORGHOLM, SWEDEN** — The Swedish Historical Society's Nordic Cultural Center in Rockford continues to offer new opportunities for the organization. The meeting space can hold groups of 50 - 70 people. A grant was received to continue the museum's work, and this will allow more opportunities for additional grants in the future.



**LIDKÖPING, SWEDEN** — A group of ten nursing students and three instructors from De la Gardie upper secondary school in Lidköping came to Rockford March 8 - 22, 2018. The students learned about the U.S. healthcare system by being placed at SwedishAmerican. They also participated in classes at Guilford High School.

**CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA** — A group from Romania will be in Rockford on September 8 as part of the 100-year celebration. This group is still in the early planning stages, but would consist of 15 - 19 kids to dance at several locations around the city.

**TOKMOK, KYRGYZSTAN** — Four students received Visas to visit the United States and are currently studying at Rockford University and North Park.



# News & Notes



## Illinois Office of Tourism Recognizes Rockford Area Locations

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) is pleased to announce the Illinois Department of Commerce's Office of Tourism's spring/summer 2018 **Travel Illinois Magazine** highlights Rockford's **Anderson Japanese Gardens** on the cover and as a feature story within the magazine. This bold recognition comes in time to celebrate Anderson Japanese Garden's 40th anniversary in 2018.

The Illinois Office of Tourism also named Rockford area businesses, **MainFraiM - Habitat for Art** and **Rockford Roasting Company**, as **Illinois Made Makers**. Both businesses will be featured in a series of in-depth editorial videos, exclusive web content and social media posts. These collective marketing initiatives will position the Rockford region as a travel destination throughout the upcoming spring and summer travel season.

"We are extremely grateful that the Illinois Office of Tourism is shining a spotlight on our local partners and our community. I'm constantly inspired by the entrepreneurial spirit of our makers and attraction leaders who work so hard and help ensure our region is a fun and vibrant place to live, work and play," said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO. "RACVB is proud to work alongside each of you and we look forward to seeing what you have in store in the years to come."

### Travel Illinois Magazine

As Anderson Japanese Gardens celebrates its 40th anniversary, it is also celebrated in the magazine as one of Illinois' Hot Destinations to experience in the Midwest. The Travel Illinois magazine's latest cover photo depicts garden visitors practicing yoga amid the garden's lush trees and foliage. This amazing destination comes highly recommended by IOT and a four-page spread attests to this with additional details on pages 34 - 37.

The Travel Illinois Magazine feature story also promotes other popular Rockford attractions including Rockford Art Museum, Burpee Museum of Natural History and Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens and its 85-year-old rose garden. The magazine will be distributed to nearly **700,000 potential visitors** in nine Midwest markets and it is also available for download from IOT's website ([enjoyillinois.com](http://enjoyillinois.com)).

“ I’m constantly inspired by the entrepreneurial spirit of our makers and attraction leaders who work so hard and help ensure our region is a fun and vibrant place to live, work and play. ”

### Illinois Made

Illinois continues to team with craftspeople from across the Land of Lincoln to spotlight their creativity and uniqueness with the **Illinois Made Program**.

This program celebrates hand-selected independent inventors, designers and craftspeople that have the ingenuity and skills to help make Illinois thrive. Visitors can get an intimate glimpse into the lives of these makers through a video series available on the website. In addition, in-depth editorial features allow visitors to explore the unique stories behind each maker's establishment. The program's aim is to introduce new featured craftspeople throughout the summer months. MainFraiM - Habitat for Art and Rockford Roasting Company join Rockford Art Deli as Illinois Made Makers. Rockford Art Deli earned the Illinois Made designation in 2016.



# News & Notes

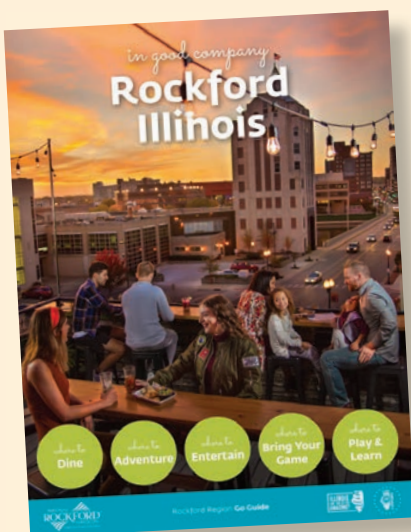
## Rockford Region Go Guide

RACVB released its new **Go Guide for the Rockford region** in January 2018. The guide utilizes an editorial-style layout including vivid imagery and stylized pages to help inspire the reader. The emphasis on a more visual interpretation of the region showcases the community as a destination filled with great people and fun things to do.

The guide is divided into sections highlighting where to Dine (food/beverage), Adventure (outdoor activities), Shop, Entertain (art/theater), Bring Your Game (sports), Play & Learn (museums/attractions), Festival, and Stay (hotels).

Guides are available at the RACVB office located at 102 N. Main Street, Rockford; at area sites, hotels, attractions and government offices throughout Winnebago County; and in response to visitor inquiries. The guides are also distributed at seven Tourist Information Centers throughout Illinois.

RACVB staff also take the guides throughout the country to trade shows, conventions and sales missions, along with providing copies to the visitors who come to the region as part of sports tournaments, familiarization tours, conventions and events.



## Fred VanVleet Returns as RACVB's Sports Tourism Ambassador for Second Year

RACVB is proud to have Toronto Raptors guard and Rockford native **Fred VanVleet** represent the Rockford region as a **Sports Tourism Ambassador** for a second straight year. VanVleet will continue to be featured in RACVB's **Bring Your Game 2 Rockford (BYG2RKFD) marketing campaign**, which will include a variety of advertisements, promotions and events.

"This past year, Fred has proven himself on the court for the Raptors while also contributing and giving back to Rockford and its youth. We're excited to partner with him for another year, we know the benefits will be mutual and many," said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO. "Fred is known for his drive, skill and commitment to being the best he can be - on and off the court. Those attributes align well with Rockford and our sports tourism capabilities and partners. His role as our ambassador amplifies those characteristics with potential customers and also with local kids who look up to Fred."

The 2018 event lineup began with the **"Fred VanVleet Bobblehead Night"** at the Rockford IceHogs game on Saturday, February 17 at the BMO Harris Bank Center. The first 2,500 people in attendance received their very own Fred VanVleet bobblehead, and the RACVB had an information booth at the game to answer questions about the partnership as well as plans for the BYG2RKFD campaign.



"This sports tourism partnership is really about celebrating Rockford's sports heroes and to ensure we are integrating their stories into our sports marketing and sales programs," said Nick Povalitis, RACVB director of sports development. "The more we do that the more our residents and visitors will benefit from the success of our outreach."

In addition, RACVB and VanVleet will team up to host other sports-related events including the return of the **FVV Fan Fest** in Summer 2018, which will coincide with VanVleet's summer basketball camp.

The Bring Your Game 2 Rockford (BYG2RKFD) marketing campaign also includes a series of ads in sports tourism industry magazines and e-blast messages that directly target tournament and event promoters.

# Marketing

## Promoting Rockford to Rockford

RACVB contributes to the Rockford Chamber of Commerce's **The Voice** publication each month. Topics from January through March highlighted **Stroll on State's** impact in the Rockford region, the RACVB's participation in the **National Project Time Off initiative** which encourages folks to plan their vacation time off in advance so these days don't go unused and the **Our City Our Story** video series highlighting the people in the Rockford region who we are In Good Company with. The RACVB co-sponsors this project along with Woodward. In addition, the weekly "RACVB View" section of **The Rock River Times** highlighted various local attractions, businesses, organizations and initiatives working to make the community a better place to live, work and play in. This quarter, various topics focused on events that drew large crowds such as the Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition. Stories also promoted several local bakeries, eateries, parks, preserves, shops, museums and other attractions that make Rockford a great place to explore.



The impact of sports tourism was recognized with the Bring Your Game 2 Rockford campaign and the announcement of Fred VanVleet signing on to be Rockford's sports brand ambassador for another year. Programs such as the Illinois Made Maker Program and events such as Sports Huddle were also mentioned to promote all the great projects happening throughout the region. These Rockford to Rockford initiatives are also shared through social media and in local news broadcasts.

**Twelve news releases** were sent to our local media partners to keep them informed about what RACVB is working on and involved in. Content from these releases as well as weekly event promotions helped generate content shared through regular **weekly radio spots** with Mid-west Family Broadcasting (WXR, The Bull and B103) and Townsquare Media (WROK, The Eagle), live mentions with **local TV** (WIFR, WREX, WQRF, WTOV) and through **print publications** Rockford Register Star and The Rock River Times.

## Advertising

The RACVB committed to sponsorships with three local area organizations that included advertising opportunities. These ads were placed to targeted groups participating in the **St. Patrick's Day Parade and Paddyfest** event, **Illinois High School Association's Bowling Tournament** and the **2018 National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Division III Women's Basketball National Championship** held in the Rockford region.



## Website Statistics

### Website Traffic Sources



### Most Searched Terms

Rockford St. Patrick's Day Parade  
IceHogs Schedule 2018  
Things to do in Rockford, IL

### Most Searched Events

2018 St. Patrick's Day Parade & Paddyfest  
The Studio Presents: Disney's The Little Mermaid  
First Fridays

### Most Searched Attractions/Restaurants

Discovery Center Museum  
Burpee Museum of Natural History  
Coronado Performing Arts Center

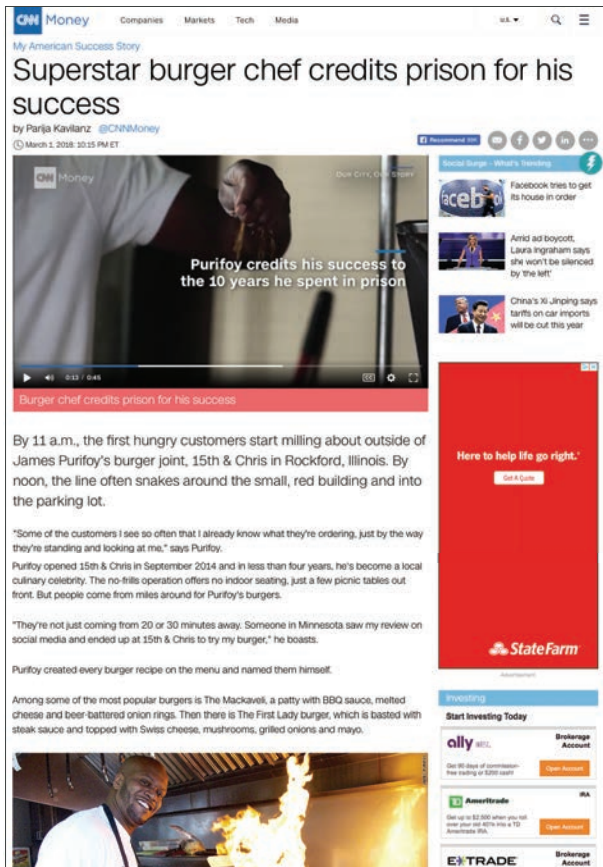


# Marketing

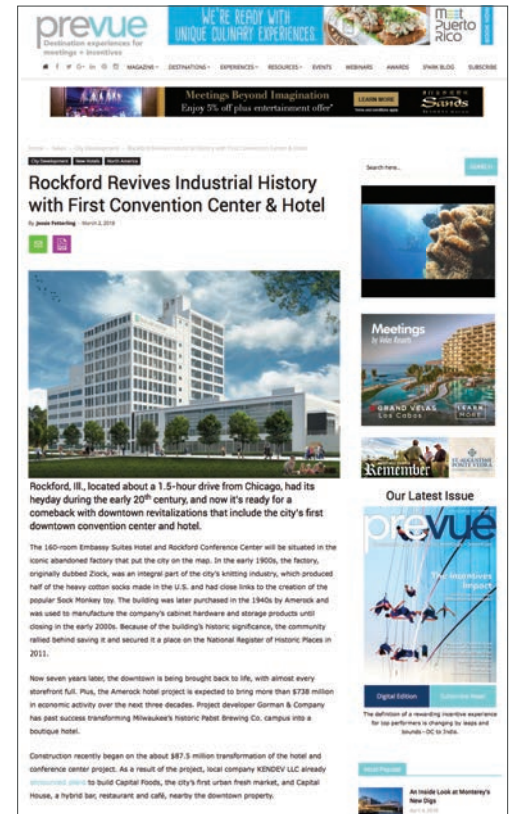
## Media Partnerships & Earned Media

There were several earned media stories and articles that the RACVB and public relations partner DCI (Development Counsellors International) secured jointly this

quarter. Highlights include a story about local eatery 15th & Chris and owner James Purifoy's legacy to succeed covered by **CNN Money** and **MSN News**.



**Prevue Magazine** covered Rockford's Revival and industrial history with the Embassy Suites Hotel and Rockford Conference Center development project underway. Additional coverage included RACVB's sports brand ambassador, Fred VanVleet, in the **Toronto Post** and **National Sun Times** in Canada, several mentions in the **Chicago Tribune's** Travel section and Bicentennial Bucket List. Partners included in these mentions are Friends of Beyer Stadium and the International Women's Baseball Center for the Rockford Peaches 75th Anniversary Celebration, the Coronado Performing Arts Center, the Riverfront Museum Park, Meltfest and the Rockford Area Arts Council's



Spring ArtScene. Rockford was also featured in the **2018 Illinois Group Tour Planner**, **Backroad Planet's** website and social media pages, and a **Way 2 a Good Life's** website and social media pages.

## Earned Media (January - March, 2018)

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.



**\$122,445**

Average ad value



**13,238,223**

Total impressions



**2,279**

Total mentions

## Media Mentions

**2,019** social

**136** broadcast

**90** online

**34** print

## Social Media



**Facebook**

24,847 followers  
(399 increase)



**Instagram**

8,259 followers  
(78 increase)



**YouTube**

371,721 video views  
(3,844 increase)



**Twitter**

6,367 followers  
(60 increase)

# Sports & International Sales

## Sports Sales Highlights

RACVB's sports sales team opened the third quarter by bidding on the rights for Rockford to serve as the Team Base Camp partner for Chicago's bid for the **2026 FIFA World Cup**. The sales outreach continued later in the month by welcoming the **National Dart Association (NDA)** to the Forest City for a site visit. GoRockford again bid on the rights to host the 2018/19 NDA Regional series alongside local partner Arachnid 360. The team wrapped up the month by booking the **2018 Teenmasters Rockford Open** at Don Carter Lanes.

GoRockford's sports activities were highlighted in February by the return of the **IHSA Girls Bowling State Finals** at The Cherry Bowl, where Machesney Park Harlem repeated as state champion. Prep work would then continue to support what was one of the busiest months of March in RACVB's history. The region opened the month March 9-10 with the **2018 IKWF State Finals**—the 16th-straight year that grade and middle school wrestlers have competed at BMO Harris Bank Center for state title supremacy. That same weekend, the region also welcomed the **Rockin' Rockford AAU Grand Prix** to the UW Health Sports Factory where more than 100 volleyball teams competed for two days.



While IKWF and AAU volleyball continued in the Forest City, GoRockford led its latest sales mission to the Sunshine State from March 10-12. The trip included event partner scouting of Tampa-based JVC Tournaments, an acclaimed volleyball organization that produces multi-day events around the country. RACVB also made a visit to current client IMG Academy, a sports campus based in Bradenton, FL.

After the Florida trip, GoRockford jumped right back into event production as a major partner of the **2018**

### NJCAA Division III Women's

**Basketball Championship.** Host institution Rock Valley College served as the event lead as the region successfully hosted for the first time ever a junior college national championship—an event that has already been contracted to return to RVC in 2020. Moreover, the **2018 Illinois State Basketball Championships** (grades 4-8 boys and girls) made its Midwest and state debut the same week, bringing 100-plus teams to the UW Health Sports Factory. The team also continued to book events, including the return of fastpitch with **2018 USSSA 14-18U State Championships**.



## International Efforts

From March 7-11, RACVB attended ITB in Berlin as part of the Illinois Office of Tourism booth. **ITB Berlin Convention** is the Leading Travel Industry Think Tank – it has established itself as the industry's main knowledge platform. Top-notch presentations on global trends and innovation make the convention a path-breaking event for the tourism industry. The Illinois Office of Tourism booth had 34 appointments with tour operators and media.



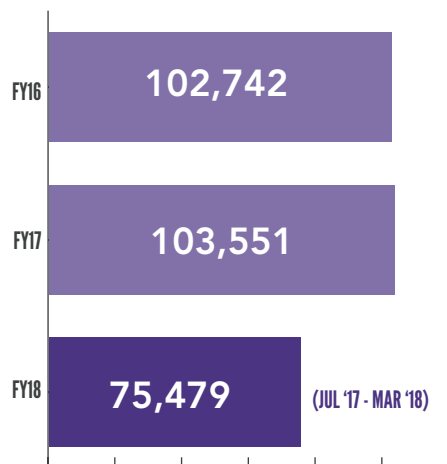
In this quarter, three press releases were sent out to various German media groups. The press releases were about PaleoFest at Burpee Museum of Natural History, the Rockford Peaches 75th Anniversary celebration events, and various spring activities in the Rockford region. Through these three press releases, **155 stories** were created, reaching an audience of **609,882 people**.



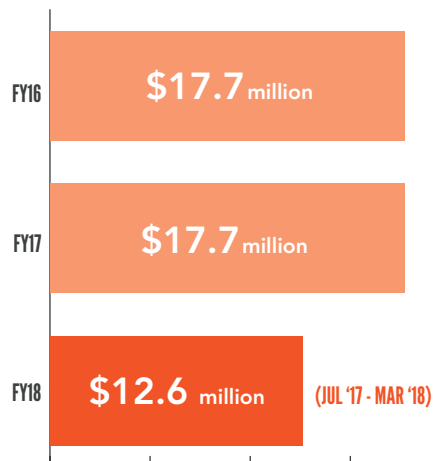


# Meetings, Servicing & Bookings

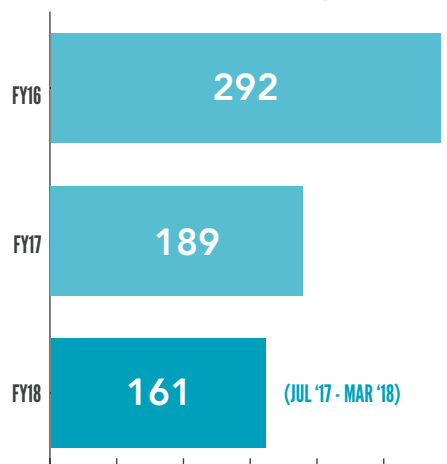
## Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



## Estimated Economic Impact



## Number of Event Bookings



## Meetings Market Updates

The Meetings market saw the return of the 20th annual **PaleoFest**, an annual event that hosts paleo workshops, cutting edge research talks, family friendly science activities and of course dinosaurs. PaleoFest was hosted March 3 & 4 at the Burpee Museum of Natural History. The keynote speaker was Steve Brusatte, an attendee of early PaleoFests and now a paleontologist and evolutionary biologist.

The RACVB was also pleased to assist the **Montford Marines** in securing their historic event at the Hoffman House on Saturday, April 28 as they welcome keynote speaker Major General Marcia M. Anderson. The Montford Point Marine Association has 36 chapters throughout the United States and reunions are held to affirm their bonds to United States Marine Corps, and to present awards and testimonials to expand its interest and service.

Another booking highlight from the last quarter was The **American Cat Fanciers Association** who booked their Annual Meeting and Banquet August 16-19, 2018 at the UW Health Sports Factory.



The goal of ACFA is to promote the welfare, education, knowledge and interest in all domesticated, purebred and non-purebred cats, to breeders, owners, exhibitors of cats and the general public.

## Booking Highlights for the Region

### Montford Marines

April 28, 2018  
25 room nights  
\$3,275 EEI

### Rockford Razorbacks LAX, LAX ROX 18

April 28 - 29, 2018  
250 room nights  
\$45,000 EEI

### IMG Academy, 7 vs 7 Midwest Tournament

April 28 - 29, 2018  
600 room nights  
\$108,000 EEI

### USSSA Girls Fastpitch State Tournament

June 15 - 17, 2018  
600 room nights  
\$108,000 EEI

### American Cribbage Rockford Tournament

July 13 - 14, 2018  
50 room nights  
\$9,000 EEI

### The American Cat Fancier Association

August 16 - 19, 2018  
100 room nights  
\$31,440 EEI

**Total Q3 Booked Highlights EEI = \$304,715**