

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Forest City Beautiful

RACVB Announces Winners of Business is Blooming

*Program continues to honor community for innovation
and beautification efforts*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2018

ROCKFORD, IL — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) announced the 2018 **Business is Blooming** program winners who further the efforts of Forest City Beautiful and aim to enhance the Rockford region by beautifying their storefronts and entrances to their businesses. Business is Blooming exists to build a culture of community involvement and visually appealing environments for our city. The program supports and acknowledges the positive values and efforts displayed by our business owners to make Rockford a beautiful and enjoyable place to live, work and play. Activities that strengthen civic pride and the customer experience are vital links to long-term success in the Rockford region. Rewarding beautification efforts acknowledges this value.

Now in its second year, the Business is Blooming program expanded the boundaries by more than doubling the geographic area of businesses who could participate to include south of Riverside, west of Alpine, north of Broadway and east of Rockton Avenue. A team of eight judges visited the exterior grounds of selected businesses to be considered for this designation. Out of 54 businesses, seven were chosen in select categories: Small Business (1-10 employees) **Trove** (2410 Jackson St, Rockford, IL 61107); Large Business (26+ employees) **UIC Health Sciences Campus – Rockford** (1601 Parkview Ave, Rockford, IL 61107); Restaurant Outdoor Dining **Sisters Thai Café** (514 E State St, Rockford, IL 61104); Downtown Business **Restoration Café** (625 W State St, Rockford, IL 61102); Returning Champion **Community Foundation of Northern Illinois** (946 N 2nd St, Rockford, IL 61107); Public Garden **Anderson Japanese Gardens** (318 Spring Creek Rd, Rockford, IL 61107); and Attraction **Erlander/Nordic Cultural Center** (327 S Third St, Rockford, IL 61104).

Judging is based on the following criteria:

- Well-maintained landscaping – trimmed and weed-free
- No litter around entire perimeter (fence line, tree line, sidewalk, parking lot)
- Well-maintained façade, and graffiti-free exteriors
- Well-maintained hardscape – lighting, benches, walkways, signage, fences, etc.
- WOW factor – impressive overall first impression or impact
 - Overall cleanliness
 - Neat, tidy walkways and parking lot
 - Clean windows
 - Attractiveness, e.g. flowers, plants, fresh paint, etc.
 - Inviting signage
 - Creative exterior, e.g. colors, design, signage
 - Exterior music, if applicable

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Winners receive a prize package including a trophy, an RACVB online promotions prize package valued at \$1,850 and a Business of Distinction window cling.

“Last year, it was our hope that this program would inspire business owners, operators and property owners to think about the ways they can beautify their business. We are overjoyed with the number of businesses who participated this year and are encouraged by their mindfulness and attention to detail making their entrances, facades and landscapes a welcoming experience,” said Tana Vettore, RACVB director of destination development. “The Businesses of Distinction that we honored today have invested in this concept of beautification and are excellent models within our community. They have taken their standard to the next level by incorporating elements like appealing and well-placed signage, awnings that are professionally designed and installed, and beautiful outdoor patios which incorporate lighting, flowers and appealing landscapes.”

This annual program aims to develop and maintain a partnership among RACVB, businesses, neighborhood advocacy groups, schools, non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, etc. to share in the vision and maintenance of this program. As a result, they will serve as exemplary models to inspire more people to do the same. The program will recognize and incentivize businesses, organizations and property owners to improve the landscaping and facades of their buildings and properties; promote the goal of year-round activity/maintenance such as proper snow removal at businesses for customer access as well as lush summer landscapes and weed-free, litter-free environments; and selecting and rewarding outstanding or innovative beautification achievements.

“Maintaining the park-like atmosphere of the 20-acre campus from when it was a TB sanitarium in the early 1900s to when it became the College of Medicine in 1971 to today when it is a health sciences campus with multiple colleges and programs takes dedication and planning,” says Chris Berndt, director of physical plant, IT and facility planning for the UIC Health Sciences Campus - Rockford. “We were honored to be nominated for this recognition and credit our maintenance staff, Crimson Valley Landscaping and our campus Garden Club members for the work they did to earn us this award.”

The 2019 Business is Blooming program will again expand city-wide and will become a nomination-based contest. Registration for the 2019 contest is open and all applications are due by June 14, 2019, with judging on July 16, 2019 and the awards ceremony on July 25, 2019. Business owners are encouraged to visit forestcitybeautiful.com/bloom to get more information about the program and to register to participate. There is no cost to nominate a business.

Forest City Beautiful is a multi-year initiative aimed at creating and maintaining beautiful landscapes in downtown Rockford. RACVB leads the effort in collaboration with the City of Rockford. As part of the initiative, RACVB has the responsibility to plan, install and maintain landscaping in public spaces. More information can be found at forestcitybeautiful.com.

RACVB exists to drive quality of life and economic growth for the citizens of Rockford and Winnebago County through tourism marketing and destination development. gorockford.com

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