



ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

QUARTERLY REPORT

FY19, Q3

January - March, 2019



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.

gorockford.com

SALES & INTERNATIONAL

SPORTS SALES HIGHLIGHTS



RACVB's sports sales team entered the third quarter focused on event hosting, as it prepped to welcome back legacy accounts in the **2019 IHSA Girls Bowling State Finals** (1,500 attendees, \$103,500 EEI) at The Cherry Bowl and the **2019 Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation (IKWF) State Finals** (5,000 attendees, \$513,000 EEI) at BMO Harris Bank Center. Moreover, two major second-year clients returned to the Forest City and experienced strong growth to further bolster the month of March.

The **2019 Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Rockin' Rockford Grand Prix** drew more than 150 teams—25% growth year over year—and 3,000 attendees to the UW Health Sports Factory (UWHSF), Harlem High School and Byron High School for the region's largest two-day volleyball tournament. Just five days after volleyball players and families flooded the Rockford region, the **2019 Illinois State Basketball Championship** (grades 4-8) returned and grew 20% to 120 teams, utilizing UWHSF and East High School as host sites. Collectively, the two events yielded \$360,000 of tourism economic impact.

Successful efforts for future business also continued in the third quarter. Thanks to the long-standing partnership of IKWF, RACVB, the City of Rockford and the

BMO Harris Bank Center, IKWF's board of directors inked a five-year extension with BMO Harris Bank Center to secure the IKWF State Finals in Rockford through 2025. Over the course of that five year extension alone, projected economic impact figures include more than 25,000 total visitors and more than \$1.8 million in visitor spending.

RACVB's other highlight event bookings continued when it came on board as a partner to the Rockford Park District in negotiating an agreement to move the country's largest junior college volleyball jamboree, the 32-team **2019 McHenry College Invitational**, to UWHSF this August. Additionally, RACVB helped secure the region's fourth USA Ultimate national event since 2015. This time, a partnership with Great Lakes Ultimate Events (GLUE) delivered a winning bid to host the **2019 USA Ultimate Elite-Select Challenge**—part of USA Ultimate's Triple Crown Tour featuring 48 teams and 1,500 total attendees—at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two.



INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

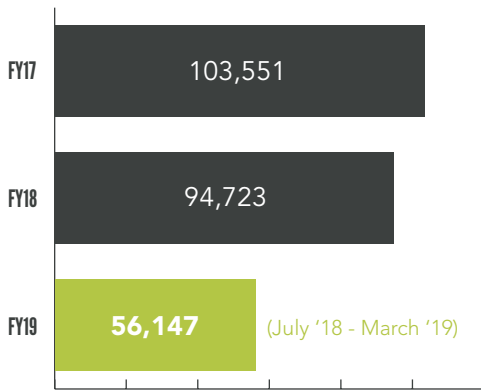
RACVB participated in two travel trade shows this quarter. From February 13 - 14, RACVB took part in the **RTO Summit West** in Marina Del Rey, California. This summit helps bring together suppliers and destinations with west coast receptive tour operators with a series of seminars and one-on-one appointments. Rockford had 21 appointments with international receptive tour operators. The Illinois Office of Tourism also sponsored a luncheon where all participating Illinois locations highlighted their destinations.



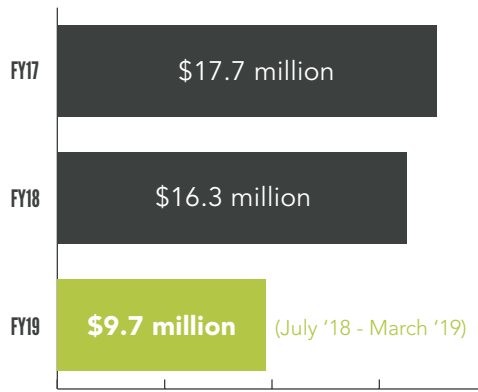
Active America China

The second trade show RACVB participated in was **Active America China**, held from March 26 - 28 in Anchorage, Alaska. Active America China is the only show in North America fully dedicated to building inbound Chinese tourism. During the travel trade show, over 70 Chinese tour operators and wholesalers and US suppliers held one-on-one appointments. Rockford had 21 appointments and also spoke about the destination at a breakfast sponsored by the Illinois Office of Tourism.

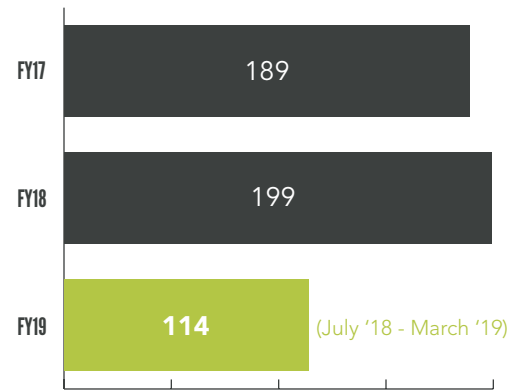
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



Estimated Economic Impact



Number of Event Bookings



MEETINGS MARKET UPDATES

RACVB welcomed the **SOAR Gospel Radio Awards** to Rockford on April 1, 2019. The event, which brings in elite performers from within the gospel music industry, produced 300+ room nights. The award show was recorded and will be aired on television on The WORD Network, a national broadcast station, on June 21 at 7 p.m. Central Standard Time. It will also re-air on local TV station 23 WIFR during the week of June 24.



RACVB welcomed back **Celebration Talent Competition** to the Coronado Performing Arts Center from February 23 - 24, 2019. There were 300 participants and generated 80 total room nights. RACVB also looks forward to working with the **Pathfinders Bible Bowl** competition on April 26 - 27, 2019 held at the RVC Physical Education Center. There are 3,000 people participating and/or attending the event and the event is generating 536 room nights.

The **WWII Special Forces Reunion** has confirmed their reunion in Rockford to coincide with the WWII Days at Midway Village Museum for 2019. The reunion will result in 400 room nights and bring visitors from all over the country and Canada. The Illinois State Dental Society Foundation has also confirmed their **Mission of Mercy** charitable dental event for June 24 - 27, 2020 to be held at the RVC Physical Education Center and result in 370 room nights. RACVB is working on other groups to confirm their events in Rockford including Wire Fabricators Association, Central States VHF Society 2020 Conference, American Junior Golf Association, Scholastic Chess Tournament and more.

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

SOAR Gospel Radio Awards

March 31 - April 1, 2019
300 room nights
\$39,399 EEI

2019 USA Ultimate Elite-Select Challenge

August 15 - 18, 2019
1,050 room nights
\$189,000 EEI

2019 McHenry College Volleyball Invitational

August 22 - 23, 2019
300 room nights
\$54,000 EEI

Illinois State Dental Society Foundation

June 24 - 27, 2020
370 room nights
\$48,470 EEI

2021 - 2025 IKWF State Finals

March 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 & 2025 (5 year extension deal)
1,950 room nights per year (9,750 room nights total)
\$351,000 EEI per year (\$1.8 million EEI for 5 years)

Estimated Economic Impact Total = **\$2,085,869**

MARKETING

MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

In January, Rockford was highlighted in the **Chicago Tribune** in a "Best of the Midwest" article highlighting "9 must-see destinations worth a visit in 2019." Illinois' Frank Lloyd Wright Trail was a main feature including Rockford's "little gem" the Laurent House. The article stated, "Fill up the tank for a road trip built around some of the

famed architect's [Frank Lloyd Wright] greatest hits on a journey spanning from Rockford, a city on the rise, down to the state capital of Springfield. The print article, published on January 8, received 238,103 impressions, while the online article resulted in 598,463 unique visitors.

Reader's Digest included the Copperstone Inn in an article posted in February about the "50 Most Romantic Hotels in Every State." The article highlighted Rockton's unique bed and breakfast, highlighting its rustic sophistication and impeccable hospitality. The online article received 87,851 unique visitors.

RACVB and the Rockford Area Economic Development Council jointly contributed in March to a special section profiling Illinois in the **United Airline's inflight magazine, "Hemispheres"** in the special "Dossier" insert. The Rockford region is prominently featured on several pages of the publication and highlights businesses and attractions like Woodward, Laurent House, and Anderson Japanese Gardens. The magazine reaches 11.5 million passengers each month on 5,600 flights per day.



EARNED MEDIA (January - March, 2019)

RACVB works with **Development Counsellors International (DCI)** to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. They focus pitches on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



\$368,501

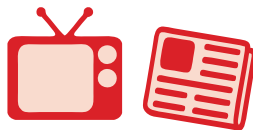
Ad equivalency

Marketing



8,890,563

Total impressions



31

Strategic media mentions

3

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

25,506 followers
(87 increase)

TOP FACEBOOK POST

Jan. 22 | 33,106 people reached



INSTAGRAM

9,350 followers
(360 increase)



TWITTER

6,439 followers
(40 increase)



YOUTUBE

403,841 video views
(12,408 increase)

PROMOTING ROCKFORD TO ROCKFORD

RACVB continues to provide two pages of content to **The Rock River Times** each week for the "RACVB View" section. Topics of the pages' content in this quarter included the "Thomas & Friends: Explore the Rails" temporary exhibit at Discovery Center Museum, local restaurants to grab the best, warm coffee drinks in the area, and tips to surviving the last of the cold weather days in the region by visiting some local sites and attractions. The weekly pages also highlight four local events occurring in the upcoming weekend. These four events are also mentioned on RACVB's weekly radio and television spots including **The Bull**, **WXRX**, **WROK**, **The Eagle**, and **WIFR TV**.

This quarter, **ten news releases and advisories** were sent to our local media partners and stakeholders to keep them informed of what RACVB is working on and involved in. Subjects of the releases included sports tournaments in the region (IHSA girls bowling, IKWF wrestling, quad rugby national championships) as well as RACVB accomplishments (Illinois Governor's Conference awards, United inflight magazine coverage).

GOROCKFORD.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

- Things to do in Rockford IL
- Rockford IL
- Go Rockford

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

- St. Patrick's Day Parade and PaddyFest
- 39th Annual Rockford Home Show
- Vintage Shop Hop

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

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

Website Traffic Sources



83,145 total website visitors

ADVERTISING

Connect Sports Publication

Highlighting Rockford region native, Nicole Briscoe (current ESPN *SportsCenter* anchor)

Hemispheres United Airline Magazine

Highlighting the Rockford region's aerospace and manufacturing industries



IHSA Girls State Bowling Program

Highlighting the region's culinary scene with Woodfire Brick Oven Pizza showcased

Illinois Office of Tourism Digital Ads

Highlighting Rock Cut State Park as a place to adventure in the region

NASC Program (event sponsorship)

Highlighting Rockford region native, Nicole Briscoe (current ESPN *SportsCenter* anchor)

Rockford St. Patrick's Day Program

Highlighting places to gather for good beer in the region with Rockford City Market and Screw City Beer Festival featured

Travel Illinois - Fall/Winter Issue

Highlighting outdoor winter activities including Rock Cut State Park for cross country skiing

NEWS & NOTES

RACVB WINS AWARDS AT STATE TOURISM CONFERENCE



The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) earned two awards from the Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism honoring excellence in the **Best Branding Initiative** category for the **BYG2RKFD sports marketing campaign**, and **Best Cooperative Partnership** category for the **Rockford Peaches 75th Anniversary events and promotions**. Over 500 individuals gathered at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago to recognize best practices and strategies in Illinois' travel & tourism industry.

"We are honored to accept these awards on behalf of the great communities we serve and would like to thank our area partners for their support and commitment when working on community-wide events and program. With these invaluable partnerships, we are able to produce award-winning work and results," said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO. "We will continue to put a bright spotlight on the Rockford region in the year ahead."

The Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism is an annual reminder of the power of the industry on the economy of Illinois. Tourism continues to have a vital impact on communities at the local and state level. Over the course of 2017, an additional 1.6 million travelers visited Illinois, bringing an increase in visitor spending, tax revenue and local jobs. When announcing the numbers in May 2018, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Tourism noted that 2017 marked the seventh consecutive year of record-breaking tourism in the state. Visitors to Illinois hit an all-time high in 2017. Nearly 114 million people traveled to the state last year to "Enjoy Illinois" and give a \$1.1 billion boost to the state's economy. Last year's visitor totals were 1.4% higher than 2016, which also was a record year. Travelers

came from all over the world for business (17%) and pleasure (83%). In the past 10 years, travelers visiting Illinois increased by more than 22 million, and tourism has become one of the state's most important industries.

The Illinois tourism industry supported 335,500 jobs in 2017, an increase of 18,600 jobs since 2015. Visitors spent \$39.5 billion in Illinois in 2017, according to the U.S. Travel Association. That's an increase of \$1.1 billion or 3 percent from 2016. Visitor outlays for goods and services generated \$2.95 billion in state and local tax revenue, up \$75 million from 2016. Tourist spending saves the average Illinois household over \$1,300 in taxes each year.

ILLINOIS EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM AWARDS



Best Branding Initiative for RACVB's Bring Your Game 2 Rockford (BYG2RKFD) sports marketing campaign. This campaign features the Rockford region's local multi-use facilities and local notables including Fred VanVleet, Kenny Gould, Corey Anderson and Nicole Briscoe.



Best Cooperative Partnership for the Rockford Peaches 75th Anniversary events that took place during summer 2018 throughout the Rockford region. RACVB was proud to be part of planning, promoting and executing along with the lead partners at the International Women's Baseball Center and Friends of Beyer Stadium.

About the Awards: Illinois tourism-related organizations are invited to enter the Illinois Excellence in Tourism Awards. The awards honor innovative tourism marketing initiatives that promote the outstanding destinations, attractions and events throughout Illinois. The winning entries were announced at the Awards Ceremony dinner on Monday night, February 4, 2019 during the 2019 Illinois Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism in Chicago, IL. The winning entries will also be recognized in media releases, as well as in Illinois Office of Tourism and Illinois Council of Convention and Visitor Bureaus newsletters.

2-STATE WIN: ROCKORD REGION AND БЕЛОIT TO WELCOME LARGE, NATIONAL SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT TO THE STATELINE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB), Visit Beloit and other area partners announced a sports tourism win for the Stateline region. The **2019 National Softball Association (NSA) North-Central "B" & "C" Girls Fast Pitch World Series** will be hosted in the Stateline for the first time **Wednesday, July 17** through **Sunday, July 21**. This is also the first time the Rockford region and Visit Beloit have officially entered into a partnership to co-host a national sports tournament.

The NSA World Series is the **largest girls fast pitch softball tournament** that each community has ever hosted. It is expected to generate over **\$2,102,494 in estimated economic impact**, draw **5,000 or more athletes and attendees** and utilize approximately **4,000 room nights** in the Rockford region and an **additional 1,600 room nights** in Beloit, Wisconsin and Elgin, Hoffman Estates and Freeport, Illinois.

Visitors will travel from 12 US states and Canadian provinces including Illinois, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ontario.

Numerous softball games will be played at the Rockford Park District's **Mercyhealth Sportscore One** (Rockford, IL), **Harlem Community Center** (Machesney Park, IL), **Davis Junction Community Park Softball Fields** (Davis Junction, IL) and the **Youth Sports Complex – Stateline Family YMCA** (Beloit, WI). The tournament will drive tourism by bringing in top youth female softball players from nearly 200 teams (8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 16U and 18U age groups), tournament directors and spectators to the area.

"The RACVB, Visit Beloit and other partners like the Rockford Park District saw an opportunity to leverage our combined resources to bring this

large-scale tournament to our region – which happens to be the largest softball tournament the Rockford region has ever hosted. We have a great relationship with our neighbors at Visit Beloit and are confident we will provide the best fields, facilities and accommodations to over 5,000 visitors expected to be here in July," said Lindsay Arellano, RACVB vice president of sales & servicing. "We are grateful to the NSA tournament organizers for making the decision to bring this tournament here and look forward to

The NSA tournament games are open to the public and there is no admission fee to spectate.

"We selected the Rockford region and Beloit, Wisconsin communities based on the great relationship that has been getting developed over a few years with NSA Illinois Girls Fast Pitch State Director Bob Biehl, plus the relationship we have forged from just a meeting at a NASC Conference with the RACVB. We feel these relationships have set the foundation for a great



proving to them that they made the right choice."

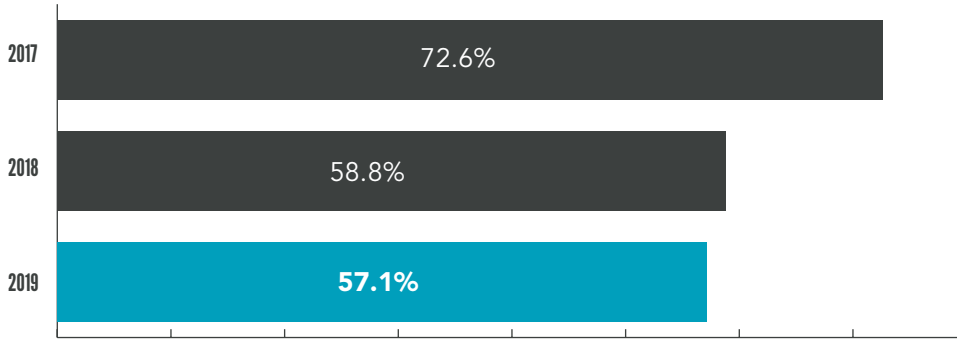
It was also announced that the Rockford region and Beloit will be included in the rotation to host future NSA World Series tournaments. Tournament organizers say they hope to be able to work with both destinations every two to four years. More information about this will be provided at a later time.

partnership between NSA, RACVB, Visit Beloit, Rockford Park District and other community partners," said Bill Horton, NSA-BPA president/CEO. "NSA will continue to build on our partnership with not just NSA Girls Fast Pitch Worlds but Adult Slow Pitch and our BPA Baseball programs."

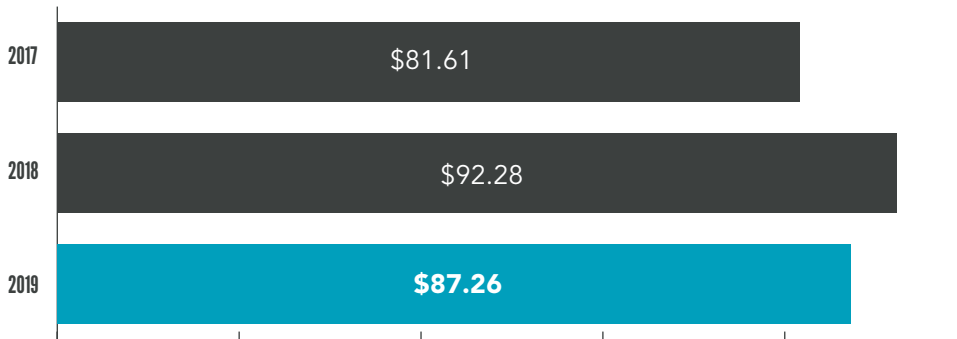
Additional details about the organization and tournament can be found at nsafastpitchworldseries.com.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS (January - March 2019)

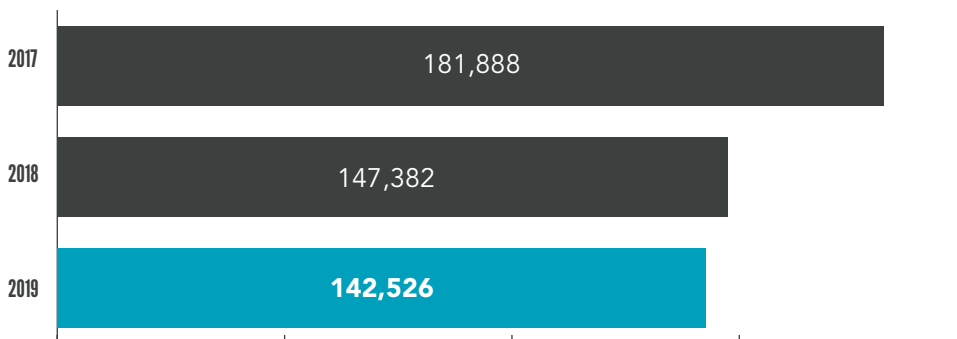
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



RACVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- David Anderson** (Chair), *Anderson Japanese Gardens*
- Bill LaFever** (Vice Chair), *Bill Doran & Co.*
- Tim Myers** (Treasurer), *WIFR-TV*
- Jennifer Furst** (Secretary), *FurstStaffing*
- Chad Anderson**, *Anderson Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram*
- Marcus Bacon**, *Radisson Hotel & Conference Center*
- Nathan Bruck**, *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*
- Roberta Holzwarth**, *HolmstromKennedy PC*
- Marco Lenis**, *Vocational Rehabilitation Management*
- Tiana McCall**, *Winnebago County*
- Ted Rehl**, *City of South Beloit*
- Jay Sandine**, *Rockford Park District*

RACVB STAFF

- John Groh**, *President/CEO*
- Lindsay Arellano**, *Vice President of Sales & Service*
- Martasha Brown**, *Director of Advancement*
- Jenny Caiozzo**, *Destination Development Events Manager*
- Andrea Cook**, *Associate Director of Marketing & Communications*
- Phil Elsbree**, *Senior Sales 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**, *Destination Development Operations Manager*
- Nick Povalitis**, *Director of Sports Development*
- Tana Vettore**, *Director of Destination Development*