



ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

QUARTERLY REPORT

FY21, Q4
April - June, 2021



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



RACVB MISSION STATEMENT

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau drives quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

PRIORITY RESULTS

CREATE ECONOMIC WEALTH

The Rockford region experiences growth in tourism's leading indicators.

ENHANCE TOURISM PRODUCT

The Rockford region offers unique and marketable experiences and venues that meet or exceed visitor expectations and enhance quality of life for citizens.

ENGAGE CONSTITUENTS ON BEHALF OF TOURISM

RACVB tourism marketing and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



Like so many organizations, the RACVB team has spent this past quarter focused on pandemic recovery – from reenergizing our sports selling efforts, to building new sources of revenue, to expanding our relationship with the City of Rockford.

We have long enjoyed a reputation as the region's experts in tourism strategy and marketing, and now this track record has earned us the opportunity to further serve the City and Winnebago County by expanding our scope of work.

Through a partnership with the City of Rockford and others, we are leading a collaborative effort to aggressively market our region to not only visitors, but prospective residents. Development of this campaign is kicking-off with a strategic working session with key stakeholders toward the goals of attracting new residents, improving our regional reputation, strengthening the sense of local pride, retaining businesses, increasing tourism, and stimulating our housing market.

We look forward to sharing the details of this campaign as the work progresses. In the meantime, take a closer look at this quarterly report for a summary of our activities and accomplishments this past quarter.

Be well,

John Groh
RACVB president/CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

CRE8IV _____	3
CRE8IV Murals _____	4

MARKETING

Media Mentions & Placements _____	5
Earned Media _____	5
Social Media _____	5
Familiarization Tours _____	6
National Travel & Tourism Week _____	6
Rockford to Rockford Promotions _____	6
Website Statistics _____	6
Advertising _____	7

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

Sales Highlights _____	8
Booking Highlights _____	8
Winnebago County Hotel Statistics _____	8

RACVB BOARD & STAFF

RACVB Board of Directors _____	9
RACVB Staff _____	9

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

CRE8IV CONTINUES TO TRANSFORM PUBLIC SPACES

With this summer's CRE8IV mural paintings and sculpture installations spread throughout the summer and the county, our streetscapes have been continually changing. One week, you drive by a blank wall in need of repair and the next week, it's transformed through art into a beautiful community gathering spot. One day, you drive by a bare corner, and the next day it's transformed through art into a provocative sculpture gallery.

The transformative nature of this public art is summed up by Rockford Area Arts Council (RAAC) Executive Director, Mary McNamara Bernsten, "Public art is uniquely accessible in that we experience it in the course of our daily lives, outside of museums or other cultural institutions. There is no admission fee, dress code, or proper reaction to public art—it is a personal experience."

This year, CRE8IV expanded beyond downtown Rockford to Loves Park, Pecatonica, and Rockton. Seeing our beautification efforts stretch north and west is a testament to the power of art, our CRE8IV model, and the RACVB Destination Development team, led by Kristen Paul and in partnership with a myriad of sponsors, workers, artists volunteers, and municipalities.

Like so many programs led by RACVB, CRE8IV: Transformational Art is dependent upon the generosity of local partners and sponsors. This year, CRE8IV murals benefitted from contributions from Brubaker Charitable Trust, City of Loves Park, Collins Aerospace & the National



Mural by Rafael Blanco (1019 S. Main St., Rockford)



"Orange Windswept" by Gary Kulak



"Hesitant" by Ben Pierce



Mural by Yulia Avgustinovich (311 S. Main St., Rockford)

Society of Black Engineers Rockford Chapter, David & Colleen Anderson Family, German-American State Bank, Illinois Lottery, Kjellstrom Family Foundation, Mayor Thomas P. McNamara, Painter's District Council 30 Local 607, Representative Maurice West, Rockford Area Arts Council, Senator Steve Stadelman, UPS, Village of Pecatonica, Village of Rockton, Workplace Staffing.

In addition to murals, the sculpture biennial moved forward with the removal of 13 sculptures that have been on loan for the past three years (original contract was extended one year due to the pandemic) and were replaced with 16 pieces that will remain in place until 2023.

On behalf of all our artists, sponsors, volunteers, and the RACVB team, we invite you to experience the power of public art by visiting a mural or sculpture today. Download a map at gorockford.com/cre8iv, post a photo, and tag it #CRE8IV #gorockford.

2021 CRE8IV MURALS



Fatherless

Jumping Joe's - 603 W. State St., Rockford
Sponsored by Kjellstrom Family Foundation



Stuk One

Jumping Joe's - 603 W. State St., Rockford
Sponsored by Rockford Area Arts Council



Fatherless

Social - 509 E. State St., Rockford
Sponsored by Kjellstrom Family Foundation



Jenny Ustick & Atalie Gagnet

La Chiquita - 1108 S. Main St., Rockford
Sponsored by Workplace



Thomas Agran

Magpie - 126 N. Madison St., Rockford
Sponsored by Kjellstrom Family Foundation



Lisa & Libbie Frost

Rockton Food & Spirits - 121 W. Main St., Rockton
Sponsored by Village of Rockton and Local Supporters



Sam Kirk

Luna Datura's Curious Gifts - 117 S. 3rd St., Rockford
Sponsored by UPS and Illinois Lottery



Brett Whitacre

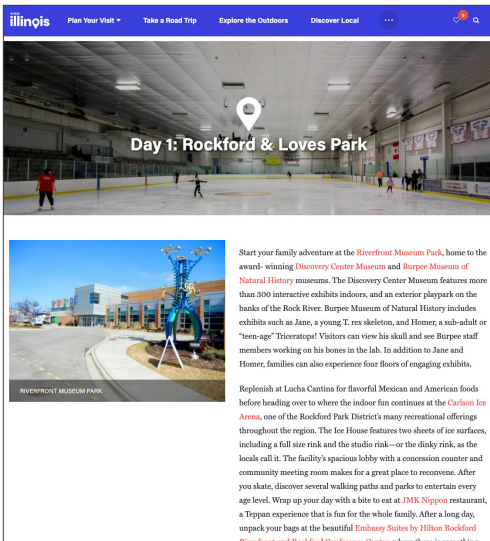
Everything Store - 101 E. 3rd St., Pecatonica
Sponsored by Village of Pecatonica and Local Supporters

MARKETING

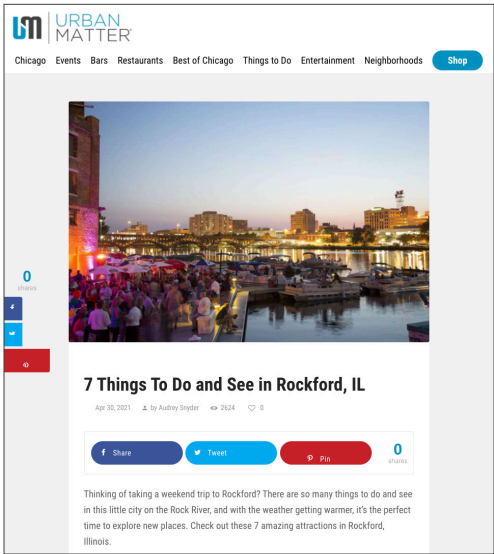
MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

RACVB attracts visitors to the Rockford region by working with regional and national media outlets. Pitches focus on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.

- **Chambanamoms** - "Best Midwest Summer Road Trips for Champaign-Urbana Families"
(Discovery Center Museum, Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Rockford)
- **Chicago Parent** - "38 Chicagoland Museums Families Should Visit at Least Once"
(Discovery Center Museum)
- **Enjoy Illinois** - "Family Fun Never Stops in the Rockford Region" (itinerary)
- **Enjoy Illinois** - "Instant Childhood Memories" (itinerary)
- **Urban Matter** - "7 Things To Do and See in Rockford, IL"

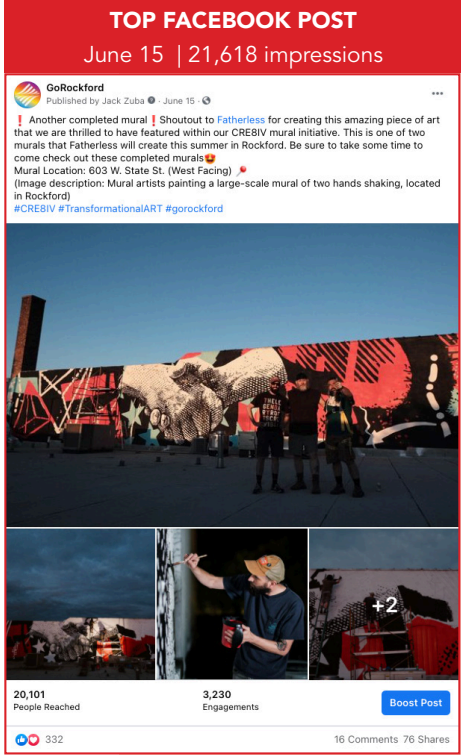


Enjoy Illinois "Family Fun Never Stops in the Rockford Region"



Urban Matter article

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK
 328,275 impressions
 (103 posts)
 30,062 followers

INSTAGRAM
 116,669 impressions
 (37 posts)
 12,874 followers

LINKEDIN
 1,190 followers

TWITTER
 77,992 impressions
 (103 tweets)
 6,504 followers

YOUTUBE
 35,489 video views
 799 subscribers

EARNED MEDIA (April - June, 2021)

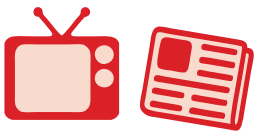
RACVB works to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. We focus pitches on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



\$937,260
Ad equivalency



101,325,573
Total impressions



830
Number of mentions

FAMILIARIZATION TOURS

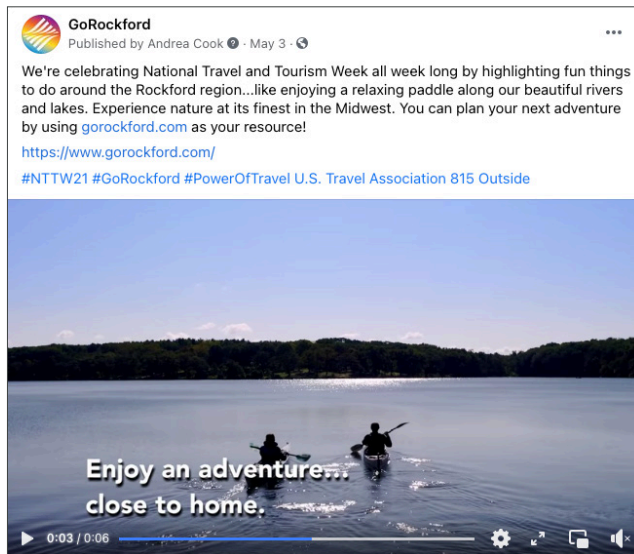
The Rockford region will be featured on an episode of a new PBS travel show called John McGivern's Main Streets. Various local sites were filmed during a site survey in the Rockford region from June 14-17. Their production team and talent traveled around to several locations and met with our locals to learn about who lives here, the history of the region and what makes our region so unique and special. There will be approximately eight storylines featured in the show that will air in January 2022.



NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK

In 2021 National Travel & Tourism Week (May 1 - 7, 2021) highlighted the "Power of Travel" and the RACVB joined in on this weeklong promotion to feature several great reasons to get back to experiencing travel and tourism right here in the Rockford region. A Staycation Break-themed package was given away on social media.

This highlighted Embassy Suites by Hilton Rockford Riverfront and Chicago Rockford International Airport encouraging people to utilize the power of travel by staying in our hotels and utilizing our local airport for travel purposes. A series of videos were also produced showcasing the sites, attractions and fun things that residents and visitors can do here in the region.



National Travel & Tourism Week video social media post

ROCKFORD TO ROCKFORD PROMOTIONS

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 outdoor sites and attractions to visit, great walking paths for exploring, local garden centers, delicious pizza places to visit, Mother's Day itinerary and local gift ideas, CRE8IV murals and sculpture locations, a local food truck rundown and Father's Day itinerary and local gift ideas.



RACVB View page in The Rock River Times

The top events highlighted in the Rock River Times are also mentioned on RACVB's weekly radio and television spots including The Bull, B103, WXRX, WROK, The Eagle, and WIFR TV as well as Soar Radio.

GOROCKFORD.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

- Wine Lifestyle
- Rockford IL
- Pearl Lake

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

- Rockford City Market
- Ski Broncs Water Ski Show
- Laurent House Tours

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

- The Top Rooftop Bar & Lounge at Embassy Suites
- Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Pearl Lake

Website Traffic Sources



ADVERTISING

The RACVB team launched a spring/summer advertising campaign promoting local outdoor adventures in the Rockford region. This was a multi-channel promotion from April through June encompassing a mix of digital (targeting and retargeting), social media and podcast advertising. This outdoor experiential promotion was aimed at targeting visitors in drive markets looking for fun things to do in the Midwest. They specifically reached people in Wisconsin, Missouri, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Elgin, DeKalb, Crystal Lake, Wheaton, St. Charles and McHenry.

ILLINOIS OFFICE OF TOURISM

The Illinois Office of Tourism Co-op Program advertising allowed a minimum of three partners to advertise together to a targeted audience in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Missouri and receive a discounted rate from a list of partnering advertisers. The RACVB chose to work with Meredith and Trip Advisor. Meredith included a geotargeted digital ad, dedicated eblast on Midwest Living and run of travel collection on their webpage. The digital ads ran from June 2 - 31. Trip Advisor included various ads in a targeted and retargeted campaign on their travel/tourism-specific website where people are making buying decisions and exploring vacation and getaway ideas. The Trip Advisor digital ads ran from June 14 - July 14.

MADDEN MEDIA

RACVB worked with Madden Media, one of the nation's leading providers of custom and cooperative destination marketing solutions, specifically for tourism offices. We committed to a three month ad buy with Madden utilizing Facebook targeting/retargeting and Google responsive display ads along with podcast advertising to encourage viewers and listeners to choose the Rockford region for their next outdoor adventure. The digital ads were promoted from April through June 2021. The podcast ad was aired on Pax of Pandora radio (June 4 - 20) and promoted the Rockford region.

Facebook Digital Ads

878,399 impressions
14,854 clicks

Google Responsive Display

4,006,787 impressions
18,502 clicks

Podcast

504,516 impressions

Meredith Digital Ads

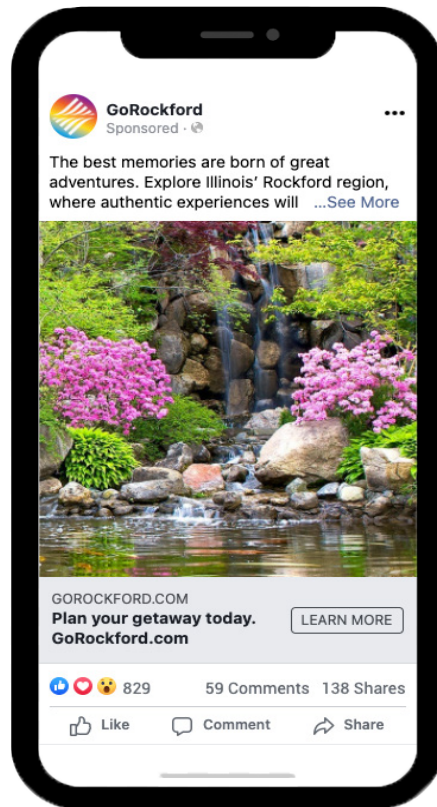
1,537,698 impressions

Midwest Living Eblast

53,496 email recipients



Trip Advisor digital ad



Facebook digital ad

ADDITIONAL ADVERTISING

Sports Advertising

A half page ad was created in Sports Planning Guide, and four digital ad sizes were placed with Sports Events & Tourism Association (SportsETA). All ads featured soccer at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two.



Sports Planning Guide ad

GINESTRAWATSON

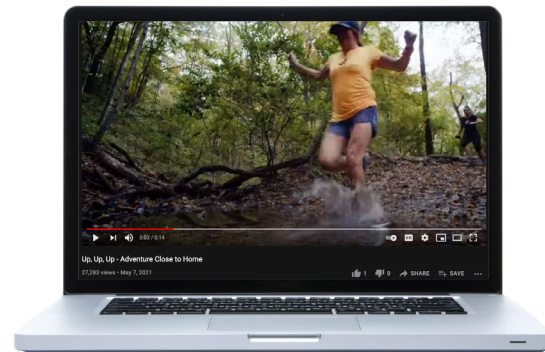
GinestraWatson, in partnership with the RACVB, created a series of short video clips/ads placed into social media feeds and onto OTT streaming video platforms including Xfinity and YouTube. RACVB's Up, Up, Up long form video was repurposed into several shorter second segments, each linking back to the gorockford.com website for statistical tracking. These short videos were then sprinkled into RACVB's social feeds and reshared by partners and were also placed onto streaming video platforms as directed.

Xfinity Ads

19,269 impressions
20,058 completed views

YouTube Ad

27,287 video views



YouTube video

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

SALES HIGHLIGHTS

The Fourth Quarter saw the return of new and existing tournaments to the Rockford Region. Early April, Mercyhealth Sportscore Two hosted the Rockford Raptors largest tournament, The Puri Cup, Sponsored by Puma. This two-weekend tournament brought in 650 teams from across the nation, increasing hotel occupancy to a high of 85% during the second weekend of the tournament.

In May, The RACVB was honored to host our own industry's state association, the Illinois Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Rockford Riverfront. We welcomed more than 65 delegates from destination management bureaus around the state of Illinois to share best practices, discuss trends and provide education. Sessions were hosted at Embassy Suites conference center as well as the UW Health Sports Factory and Anderson Gardens. The RACVB had the chance to spotlight our sporting venues, murals and initiatives in welcoming diversity.

USA BMX Nationals was back again at Searls Park over Father's Day Weekend in June. Rockford has had a stop on the National Series Schedule for years -- an event that attracts more than 1,200 riders from across the country. Rockford BMX



ICCVB Conference at Embassy Suites

serves as long-time host club and track.

The Rockford region hotels and venues have done a great job in welcoming back tournaments and visitors. The RACVB works closely with these partners to make sure guests enjoy their stay while staying safe. As group travel continues to rebound, we look forward to hosting groups such as Tough Mudder, Corrigan Lacrosse, US Youth Soccer Midwest ODP camps, Women In Baseball and so many others this summer!

As we kick-off a new fiscal year, starting July 1, Kara Davis of the RACVB has transitioned to her new role of Group Sales Manager and will concentrate on the meetings market. Kara has a background in hotel sales and the team is excited to welcome her onboard. Along with preparing to attend three sports trade shows and two meeting

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

US Youth Soccer Boys Midwest Region II ODP Camp

July 15 - 18, 2021
4,000 room nights
\$1,000,000 EEI

Tough Mudder

August 14 - 15, 2021
1,000 room nights
\$1,200,000 EEI

All In Volleyball - Opening Weekend Tournament (OWT)

August 20 - 21, 2021
250 room nights
\$135,000 EEI

National Dart Association

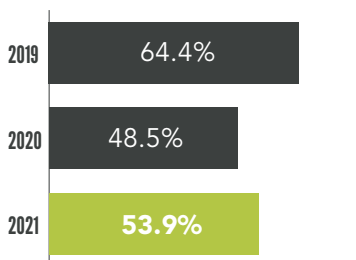
November 5 - 7, 2021
100 room nights
\$110,000 EEI

EEI Total = \$2,445,000

trade shows in FY22, the RACVB sales team is working on four proposals to bring big new business to the region -- we are excited to share more details in the coming months!

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS (January - June 2021)

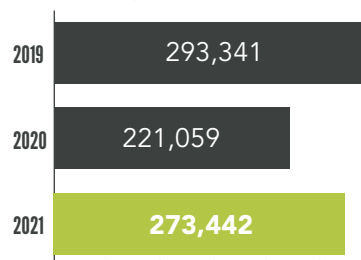
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



RACVB BOARD & STAFF

RACVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Furst (Chair)
FurstStaffing

David Anderson
Anderson Japanese Gardens

Einar Forsman
Rockford Chamber of Commerce

Ricardo Montoya-Picazo
Office of State Representative
Dave Vella

John Penney (Vice Chair)
Painters District Council No. 30,
Local 607

Marcus Bacon
Radisson Hotel & Conference Center

Kevin Frost
City of Rockford

Ted Rehl
City of South Beloit

Carol Schuster (Treasurer)
University of Illinois College of
Medicine Rockford

Nathan Bruck
City of Loves Park

Mick Gronewold
Fehr Graham Engineering
& Environmental

Jay Sandine
Rockford Park District

Tiana McCall (Secretary)

Todd Cagnoni
City of Rockford

Shelton Kay
Crusader Community Health

Darrell Snorek
Lamonica Beverages

Chad Anderson
Anderson Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram

Patricia Diduch
Village of Rockton

Dana Martin
Rosecrance Health Network

Patrick Thompson
Winnebago County

RACVB STAFF



John Groh
President, CEO



Lindsay Arellano
Vice President of Sales & Service



Nicole Blough
Destination Development
Events Manager



Martesha Brown
Director of Advancement



Andrea Cook
Senior Manager of Marketing
& Communications



Kara Davis
Executive Assistant



Janet Jacobs
Marketing Assistant



Elizabeth Miller
Creative Services Manager



Joanne Nold
Director of Finance
& Administration



Dan Obert
Marketing & Communications
Manager



Kristen Paul
Director of Destination
Development

