



STROLL *on* STATE®



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2022

10th Annual Stroll on State Brings the Community Together, Exceeds 2021 Attendance

70,050 Guests Kickoff Holidays Together, Support Small Businesses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 11, 2022

ROCKFORD, III. – A festive mood after pandemic-induced blues, unseasonably warm weather and special features in honor of the event’s 10th anniversary contributed to a 12.5 percent increase in attendance at ***Stroll on State, presented by Illinois Bank & Trust***, Saturday, November 26. An estimated 70,050 guests were in downtown Rockford.

Rockford area residents and visitors packed the event that included the City’s tree lighting ceremony, fireworks, Santa, live music, and opportunities to shop and support local businesses. The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) produces the annual event with the support, services and donations of many community partners, volunteers and sponsors.

“Stroll on State illustrates year after year what can be accomplished when a community comes together. The economic impact, small businesses support, partnership and welcoming atmosphere all speak to our region’s culture of collaboration and belonging,” said Mayor Thomas McNamara. “I can’t think of a better way for our community to kick off the holiday season each year.”

In the 10 years of Stroll, an estimated 520,800 have attended the kickoff to the holiday season. This figure does not include 2020 in which the event was held virtually because of the global pandemic. RACVB contracts an event analytics firm that uses mobile device data to estimate attendance figures. Along with the overall attendance, the firm estimated that approximately 75% were Winnebago County residents, and more than 5% traveled from outside Illinois.

“Stroll on State is a tradition for Rockford families and visitors,” said **Kristen Paul, RACVB vice president of destination development**. “This year was particularly heart-warming as we celebrated 10 years of Stroll’s impact. During the tree lighting ceremony, I loved seeing our community all together – with folks filling the streets and overflowing to fill the outside stairwells of the BMO Center and looking on from each floor of the adjacent parking lot. It seemed like everyone wanted to be part of that moment and it’s a memory I’ll always cherish.”

Positive impact on business: “We always look forward to Stroll on State at RAD. It’s one of our busiest days of the year, and—despite some unexpected surprises—this year was no different in that regard. Even amidst a power outage, downtown Rockford still showed up with high spirits, happy attitudes, and much appreciated patience. And that’s the 815 that RAD has always been proud to represent,” said **Jarrod Hennis, owner of Rockford Art Deli**.

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New in 2022: This year, in addition to a new Block 5 party, Princess Ball, and 10 selfie stations, there were 10 inflatable balloons in the parade marking the 10th annual event. Two of the balloons were Rockford-themed. One balloon honored the Rockford Peaches, the beloved women's professional baseball team who made Rockford their home. The other balloon was a checkered five-neck guitar, a salute to Rick Nielsen, a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Cheap Trick, all of whom are Rockford natives.

Other numbers that tell the story of Stroll 2022 include:

- 85 sponsors, friends and partners
- Over 2,400 volunteer hours before, during and after the event
- 815 Dasher Dash 5k runners
- 46 outdoor food and retail vendors
- 350 ornaments adorning the official City of Rockford Christmas Tree
- 68 large gift boxes decorating downtown
- 1003 letters by children, 60 from other states and three from other countries
- 10 parade balloons, including two new Rockford-themed inflatable balloons – Rockford Peaches and Rick Nielsen's five-neck guitar
- 82 decorated Jeep® parade entries

Chief among those 85 sponsors is Illinois Bank & Trust, the presenting sponsor of Stroll on State. Noting their support of the event, **Jeff Hultman, chief executive officer** noted, "On behalf of Illinois Bank & Trust I want to thank and congratulate the RACVB and the Rockford community for another successful Stroll. We highly value our role as presenting sponsor. Stroll has become the marquee community event in our annual community calendar. It is due to the hard work of the RACVB, the thousands of volunteers and all the support of sponsors that allow our community to execute on such a world-class event. It continues to represent the best in us as a region. We encourage everyone to return downtown throughout the year to continue to support our local businesses and our local center city. We are already looking forward to next year's event."

What can't be captured in the numbers is the depth of dedication from RACVB staff and volunteers who are inspired to bring our community together for an unforgettable day, a day that extends year-round as guests become repeat patrons of downtown businesses. "We are deeply grateful for our volunteers, sponsors and partners," said Paul. "On behalf of our entire staff and Board of Directors, I thank them for their commitment to Stroll on State and look forward to bringing us all together for the 11th annual event on Nov. 25, 2023."

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About RACVB: RACVB is responsible for promoting the Rockford region as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, RACVB strengthens the economic position of the region and provides opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com

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