



ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

# QUARTERLY REPORT

## FY22, Q3-Q4

### January - June, 2022



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](http://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



Many know RACVB for our role in attracting visitors to our outdoor amenities and amateur sports venues. While promoting our region to leisure visitors and sports teams is at the core of our mission, RACVB's

responsibilities are more expansive.

Over time, the role of CVBs including the RACVB, have become more complex. Most bureaus, often called destination marketing organizations, put resources toward attracting multi-day conferences, large events and sports tournaments that fill hotel rooms and fill the coffers of local restaurants and attractions.

To ensure a robust offering, RACVB plays a role in partnering in the development of tourism assets and has done that with projects like the UW Health Sports Factory, Mercyhealth Sportscore One and Two, the downtown Embassy Suites and more.

This commitment to planning and advocating for the development of experiences, venues and attractions ensures our area is a great place to visit and even more so, a great place to live.

I continue to be in awe of all we have accomplished together - as an organization and as a community. I am encouraged by the possibilities of what we all have yet to achieve.

Be well,

John Groh  
RACVB president/CEO

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# RACVB NEWS



In February, Lindsay Arellano, RACVB vice president of Sales, announced a multi-year commitment with the internationally known Gran Fondo New York cycling marathon.



## CYCLING MARATHON COMING TO ROCKFORD

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) and community partners from throughout Winnebago County announced in February that the internationally-known Gran Fondo New York (GFNY) cycling marathon will take place in our community.

Gran Fondo rides (loosely translated from Italian as Big Ride) are generally at least 75 miles in length. GFNY is considered the premier global cycling marathon series and consists of 25 races in 17 countries. The Rockford region is one of five destinations to host this event in the United States.

GFNY Rockford is expected to draw at least 750 cyclists and additional spectators to the region. While here, these visitors will fill more than 1,000 hotel room nights and spend more than \$1.3 million.

GFNY's large-scale cycling races are a personal endurance challenge where participants compete against others, the clock and themselves. Racers participating in GFNY Rockford can choose between two distances: a long route of 93.6 miles and a medium route of 63 miles. The medium course is a non-competitive, recreational ride. The participant's individual total time is provided, but there are no rankings. The long route riders are taking part in a competitive race. All finishers are ranked overall and in their age group.

The 2022 race was rescheduled to Aug. 6, 2023. To register, visit <https://rockford.gfny.com>.

## IN BRIEF

- In February, the RACVB staff participated in a **two-day diversity, equity, inclusion workshop with trainer Jessica Oladapo**. Oladapo is the owner and operator of Diversity to Inclusion, Inc.
- The Destination Development staff, in charge of Stroll on State, attended a **Special Event Safety Seminar** in May.
- The RACVB staff participated in a cultural training with **"Fired Up! Culture"** in June. The two-day training led the team through various tasks and exercises in an effort to work better together.
- The Destination Development staff is busy preparing for the **10th annual Stroll on State set for Nov. 26, 2022**. New this year, RACVB acquired, through gifts and donations, a building to house Santa's Workshop. The purchase of the workshop, located at 310 S. Winnebago St., Rockford, was finalized in June and is a gathering place for volunteers to plan and prepare for upcoming events.



From left; Mayor Tom McNamara, John Groh, RACVB president/CEO, Kristen Paul, RACVB director of destination development, Joe Chiarella, Winnebago County Chairman, and Mary McNamara Bernsten, RAAC executive director.

## RACVB RECOGNIZED FOR PLACEMAKING

The RACVB was recognized as a 2022 Rockford Area Arts Awards recipient for its part in offering transformative artwork across our community. Being honored with the **RAAC Rockford Area Arts Council's Placemaking/ Spacemaking Award** is a testament to the contributions from all our local and visiting artists, partners, donors, and dedication from staff that helped make our public arts projects achievable.

To learn more about the RACVB's efforts please visit [gorockford.com/CRE8IV](http://gorockford.com/CRE8IV).

# DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

## MORE THAN 30 CRE8IV PROJECTS ADORN THE AREA

CRE8IV (pronounced "Creative") is a community-building, arts-infused event launched in 2019 as part of RACVB's placemaking and public art efforts. Designed to enhance the region for residents and visitors, CRE8IV has grown to include more than 30 projects with 10 to be completed in the spring/summer of 2022. This year projects were expanded to include 7th St., South Main, North Main/Auburn Roundabout, W Jefferson St., Loves Park and, for the first time, Roscoe! **Location details can be found at <https://www.gorockford.com/cre8iv/>.**

Bringing mural art to the region presents a unique opportunity to engage visitors to the area which helps create revenue for businesses. Murals create an identity for the Rockford region and have the ability to add to the transformational pride of this area. Each project is fully funded by generous sponsors and made possible with the support of the Painters District Council 30, Local 607.

The planning for CRE8IV starts in early January with a call for artists and selection of walls. In 2022 over 90 artist applications were received from around the country (and even a few from around the world). A community group was gathered to help narrow down the list of prospects and the process of pairing artists with walls and donors continues from there. Walls are selected based on the overall condition, willingness of owner, ability to take selfies/interact with wall and being highly visible.

This year, like most years, was an eclectic mix of artists, styles and concepts. Each mural was custom created for the space and neighborhood.

[Learn about the artists and murals at gorockford.com.](https://www.gorockford.com)

## Thank you to the 2022 CRE8IV Sponsors!

Collins Aerospace

Kjellstrom Family Foundation

Painters District Council 30,  
Local 607

Brubaker Charitable Trust

Workplace

Rockford Area Arts Council

Bill Doran Company

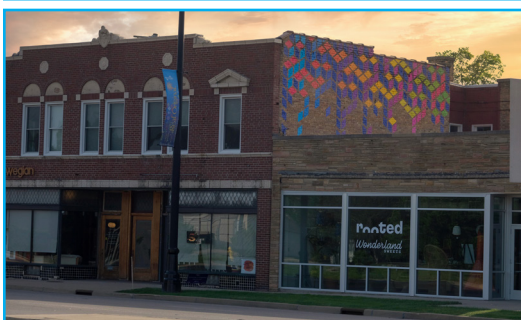
City of Loves Park

City of Rockford

Amazon

William Charles Construction

Village of Roscoe



# 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.

**Forbes**  
FORBES > LIFESTYLE > TRAVEL  
**How Rockford, Illinois Is Reinventing Itself**  
Roger Sands Contributor @  
I write about travel, design and culinary trends.  
May 2, 2022, 06:49am EDT  
Listen to article 5 minutes  
Rockford, Illinois is undergoing a major revitalization. TYLER YOMANTAS  
There's no slowing down the revitalization of Rockford, Illinois. A vibrant, low-cost-of-living city with over 20,000 of acres of public green space, all within a stone's throw of Chicago, Madison and Milwaukee, Rockford is a diverse community that is capitalizing on its many assets. The city is undergoing a major reinvention along its downtown riverfront, and public investments within the city center have reached

**Travel Noire** - "8 Cities Black Americans Should Consider for Career Growth in 2022" (2/22/2022)  
497,133 Impressions and \$4,598 Earned Media

**Yahoo News** - "The New Migration': What's Behind Black People Leaving Traditional Urban Cities" (3/25/2022)  
64,622,544 Impressions and \$239,103 Earned Media

**Our Community Now** - "'You need friends when you're struggling the most' - How 2 U.S. Cities are Helping Ukrainian Sister Cities" (4/25/2022)  
326,893 Impressions and \$3,025 Earned Media

**Forbes** - "How Rockford, Illinois Is Reinventing Itself" (5/2/2022)  
61,979,256 Impressions and \$229,323 Earned Media

**Forbes** - "Run On The Banks: Cities Growing With Riverfront Development" (5/20/2022)  
61,979,256 Impressions and \$229,323 Earned Media

**Livability** - "Can't Afford to Live in Chicago? Live Here Instead." (6/15/2022) 253,505 Impressions and \$2,345 Earned Media

**Livability** - "Go There: An Easy Breezy Weekend in Rockford, IL" (6/30/2022) 253,505 Impressions and \$2,345 Earned Media

## SOCIAL MEDIA

**TOP FACEBOOK POST**  
May 22, 2022 | Reach 20,910

**GoRockford** is at **Barnstormer Distillery**.  
May 22, 2022 · Rockford · 🌐  
If you're looking for an "out-of-the-box" experience in the Rockford region, then head to **Barnstormer Distillery!** Think 22-acre property that features a distillery, tasting room hangar, outdoor seating area and gardens growing veggies, fruits, berries and herbs. 🍷 🍷  
Take a tour, sit outside and enjoy a libation or simply take in the beautiful wooded views. You can enjoy **everything outdoors** in the Rockford region!  
📍 **Barnstormer Distillery**  
📍 6969 S Main St, Ro... See more

👤 Katryna Kirby and 202 others  
💬 50 comments 64 shares

- FACEBOOK**  
81,688 page reach  
30,262 followers
- INSTAGRAM**  
19,395 page reach  
13,967 followers
- LINKEDIN**  
1,414 followers
- TWITTER**  
7,036 impressions  
6,584 followers

## EARNED MEDIA (January - June, 2022)

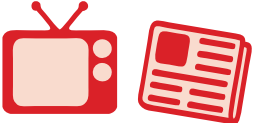
RACVB works to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. We focus pitches on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



**\$7,737,271**  
Ad equivalency



**728,000,000**  
Total impressions



**1,560**  
Number of mentions

## TOP TikTok

Verizon 4:47 PM 71%  
Find content like this Search  
gorockford 2022-4-13  
What an amazing sport to watch!  
Wheelchair Rugby! 🏏 T... See more  
🎵 original sound - gorockford  
gorockford  
@gorockford

# ROCKFORD REGIONAL PROMOTIONS



Residents and visitors showed great support of local restaurants, bars, and food establishments throughout the week (January 24-30) by visiting participating restaurants and voting for Restaurant Week's "best of" awards during the 2nd annual **Rockford Region Restaurant Week**, sponsored by the **City of Rockford**. Over 40 businesses participated, which is double the number of local eateries that participated the previous year. The restaurants in our region give us all much to be proud of!

## Rockford's Charm Unveiled



John McGivern, five-time Emmy Award Winner, showcases Rockford.

Rockford got a sneak peek of a new tv series, **John McGivern's Main Streets** at the **RPL Nordlof Center** in downtown Rockford. McGivern, a five-time Emmy Award winning actor and host, uncovers the uniqueness and charm of the Rockford region through lively interviews with local residents and civic leaders. The half-hour episode featuring the Rockford region and surrounding local attractions is part of Season One which showcases 13 Midwestern towns or cities. The show is a destination travel show that aims to build goodwill and strengthen communities through intentional storytelling of diverse locals who dedicate themselves to their main streets.

## GOROCKFORD.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

### MOST SEARCHED TERMS

- Things to Do in Rockford, IL
- Rockford, IL
- Events in Rockford, IL

### MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

- Juneteenth Celebration
- Old Settlers Days
- Rockford City Market

### MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

- Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden
- Pearl Lake

## Website Traffic Sources



157,310 total website visitors

# SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

## MEETING SALES HIGHLIGHTS

In January, RACVB staff attended **Connect Meetings Chicago** at the Swissotel in downtown Chicago.

This show is for event planners and suppliers focused on national association, corporate and international meetings and events. RACVB had 30 prescheduled appointments and was able to host a site visit with a planner as an outcome of the show.

RACVB has continued to work with the **Jehovah's Witnesses Convention** to extend their contract in Rockford for an additional 5 years. This convention has been hosted at the BMO Center in downtown Rockford and brings over 4,000 attendees per weekend.

In March we attended **Circle Wisconsin**



Rockford Casino - A Hard Rock Opening Act opens temporary location.

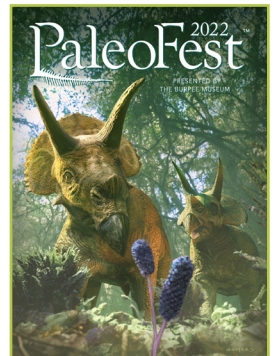
**in Madison, WI.** Circle Wisconsin is a group travel/ motorcoach show. We believe Rockford is a great motorcoach destination and we met with over 50 operators. RACVB was able to book motorcoach groups from the show!

In April the sales team attended the Simpleview Summit in Phoenix, AZ to learn more about the products and features of our customer relationship management (CRM) software.

In May we hosted our **quarterly hotel meeting at the Hard Rock Casino** and were able to take a backstage tour of the casino. The casino is a great addition to the Rockford tourism product.

Rockford hosted some unique events this past quarter including the **Rockford Power Squadron, The Rock Valley Cat Club, Paleofest, Stateline Nurses Association and more.**

PaleoFest 2022 continues the tradition, presented by The Burpee Museum.



# SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

## SPORTS SALES HIGHLIGHTS

In March 2022 the Rockford region hosted the **2022 Rockin' Rockford AAU Grand Prix Volleyball Tournament** at the UW Health Sports Factory. This large tournament brought 160 Teams, 1,900 athletes and approximately 4,500 total attendees.

RACVB worked with the tournament director to coordinate the coaches' reception at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two, Sky Box Restaurant and Bar. The partnership between the tournament, the park district and the CVB has meant this tournament grows each year!

The region was the host of the **USA Wheelchair Rugby Association** in April which included 16 teams and 500 attendees at the UW Health Sports Factory. This was the second year of a three-year contract.

In May, the region welcomed **America's Team Challenge Table Tennis Tournament** which had approximately



50 table tennis teams including two with former US Open Champions filled Mercyhealth Sportscore Two in May.



Competitors in the USA Wrestling 16U National Dual Championships at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two.

50 teams including two former US Open Champions. Across town at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two, a volleyball court was laid on top of the indoor turf to host the **Mizuno Showcase** which brought in over 1,000 athletes!

Representatives from the **RACVB and the Rockford Park District attended Connect Sports Trade Show** in May. The team had 30 prescheduled appointments with new and repeat tournament directors. Two in-person site visits have already resulted from new customers met at the show.

In June, **USA Wrestling 16U National Dual Championships** hosted its first tournament of a two-year contract at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two.

Eighteen wrestling mats were placed over the turf for 68 teams from 28 different states. **NXT Lacrosse** hosted a 225-team lacrosse tournament at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two. The Grail/Mid-America tournament brought 4,500 athletes and hosted approximately 500 lacrosse games!

## BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

### USA BMX Nationals

June 16-18, 2022  
2,900 room nights  
Economic Impact \$1.3M

### Rockford Power Squadron

August 19-21, 2022  
100 room nights  
Economic Impact \$41,000

### Everyone Loves Table Tennis

May 27-29, 2022  
130 Room nights  
Economic Impact \$96,000

### NAFA Midwest Nationals

July 14-18, 2022  
1000 Room nights  
Economic Impact \$473,000

### IL High School Association Women's Bowling Finals

2023 - 2027 (5 year contract)  
1900 Room nights (5 year total)  
Economic Impact \$890,000

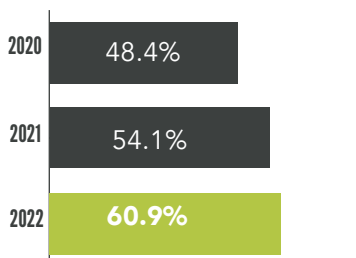
### GYNY Cycling Marathon

August 2022  
(rescheduled to August 2023)  
250 room nights  
Economic Impact \$359,000

Future Hotel Room Nights Booked:  
45,863 with Economic Impact of  
\$21,848,110  
Number of Bookings - 85

## WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS January - June 2022

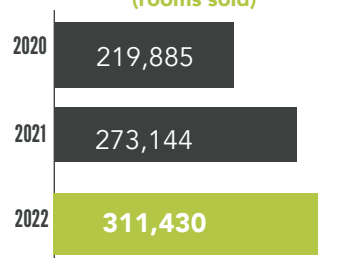
### Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



### 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*

**John Penney (Vice Chair)**

*Painters District Council No. 30,  
Local 607*

**Carol Schuster (Treasurer)**

*University of Illinois College of  
Medicine Rockford*

**Tiana McCall (Secretary)**

*State of Illinois / DCEO*

**Chad Anderson**

*Anderson Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram*

**David Anderson**

*Anderson Japanese Gardens*

**Marcus Bacon**

*Radisson Hotel & Conference  
Center*

**Nathan Bruck**

*City of Loves Park*

**Todd Cagnoni**

*City of Rockford*

**Patricia Diduch**

*Village of Rockton*

**Einar Forsman**

*Rockford Chamber of Commerce*

**Kevin Frost**

*City of Rockford*

**Mick Gronewold**

*Fehr Graham Engineering  
& Environmental*

**Shelton Kay**

*Crusader Community Health*

**Dana Martin**

*Rush Oak Park Hospital*

**Ricardo Montoya-Picazo**

*Office of State Representative  
Dave Vella*

**Ted Rehl**

*City of South Beloit*

**Jay Sandine**

*Rockford Park District*

**Darrell Snorek**

*Lamonica Beverages*

**Patrick Thompson**

*Winnebago County*

## RACVB STAFF



**John Groh**

President, CEO



**Lindsay Arellano**

Vice President of Sales &  
Service



**Joanne Nold**

Director of Finance



**Kristen Paul**

Director of Destination  
Development



**Chenaire Barmore**

Community Engagement  
Coordinator



**Nicole Blough**

Destination Development Events  
Manager



**Kara Davis**

Group Sales Manager



**Julie Huber**

Destination Development  
Operations Manager



**Janet Jacobs**

Marketing Assistant



**Lindsey Kromm**

Accounting Assistant



**Rachel Larson**

Sales & Servicing Manager

