



Creativity Thrives in Rockford with Return of RACVB's CRE8IV Mural Festival

New ART ALLEY, Sculpture, pARTy, Signal Box Murals Announced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 31, 2023

Rockford, IL – The **Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau**, together with community leaders from Rockford and Rockton, participating artists and sponsors announced details of the fourth annual CRE8IV: transformational ART festival. In addition to announcing details of nine new murals, RACVB and partners announced details of a new 'ART ALLEY', new sculptures, signal box murals and a ART ALLEY pARTy.

From **June 1 - 14**, local and visiting artists will create nine large-scale, vibrant murals in the Rockford region – bringing the total number of CRE8IV murals to 42. In Rockford, artists will create murals for the first time on Auburn St., along E. State St. east of Alpine Rd., and in a newly designated **ART ALLEY** with a large-scale mural, series of smaller murals and new overhead lighting.

Additional projects are planned in Rockford for North 2nd St. across from Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens, at the Main/Auburn Roundabout and in downtown Rockford on E. and W. State Streets. In addition, the Village of Rockton is adding a 2nd CRE8IV mural to launch the creation of a park and small music stage.

"Thriving cities have thriving art scenes; you really can't have one without the other, said **John Groh, RACVB president/CEO**." Visitors are drawn to cities that have unique public spaces, authentic character and a story to tell. Interestingly, people want the same things when deciding where to live. That's why CRE8IV is so important and impactful. These large museum-quality murals transform our neighborhoods and public spaces into engaging places and enhances our quality of life while making our community an even more appealing destination for visitors."

BOX IT UP: The second announcement was made in partnership with the **Rockford Area Arts Council** and the **City of Rockford**. Led by the Arts Council and its ARTFORIMPACT program, this summer a total of 55 signal boxes will be wrapped to feature a series of mini murals. The projects will be located throughout the city and will be featured along roadways in all 14 of the city's wards. "We are thrilled to bring a new way to view public art to Rockford," said **Mary McNamara Bernsten, RAAC executive director**.

"Having art publicly available in all 14 wards has been a long-time goal for the Arts Council. Partnering with RACVB and the City of Rockford to create these unique displays allowed for further collaboration and expanded how many we could do." Artwork was selected following a call for proposals from local and past CRE8IV artists.

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NEW SCULPTURE: In addition to murals, RACVB announced that **Matthias Neumann**, a sculpture artist and architect based out in New York City will create a new piece as part of his “Xabana” series. This series is featured in international venues in Portugal and Italy. Rockford’s “Xabana” will be completely built, painted and installed onsite at the corner of E. State & N. Third St from June 6-11. Once completed it will be approximately 10 ft. x 10 ft. x 10 ft. and will remain on display for two years before being dismantled by the artist. Also in June, two new sculptures will be installed along North Main St. between W. State and Mulberry Streets. Another 13 CRE8IV sculptures currently on display will remain in place until 2024.

pARTy ON: The fourth and final announcement is for a **CRE8IV ART ALLEY pARTy** taking place **Thursday, June 8 from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.** The pARTy will feature live mural paintings, interaction with CRE8IV artists, a DJ, food trucks, artful games, prizes and more. The ‘can’t miss’ celebration will take place rain or shine at the new ART ALLEY adjacent to 316 W. State St. and in the parking lot at the SE corner of S. Church and W. State Streets in downtown Rockford. Hosted by RACVB and the River District Association, all are invited to attend this free event.

Partnerships Key to Success

CRE8IV murals are made possible because of the support, help and funding of the partners who recognize the long-term impact of this community-building, arts-infused collaboration. For the fourth year, **Painters Union District 30, Local 607** has joined together with RACVB to make CRE8IV possible with their efforts to prep and prime all walls prior to artists arriving. Without their support, CRE8IV would not be possible. Sponsors to date include:

Painters Union District 30, Local 607
River District Association
RACVB Board & Foundation board members
Brubaker Family Foundation
Collins Aerospace
Winnebago County
Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois
Kjellstrom Family Foundation
Dean Alan Olson Foundation

Rockford Area Arts Council
Village of Rockton
City of Rockford
Bill Doran & Company
Becky Morris
Wintrust Community Banks
The Harding Family Foundation

Mural Locations and Artists

Artists were selected through an open Call for Artists process and a local committee-led selection process. **In total, 192 local and visiting artists from around the country**, including a few international, submitted proposals. A curatorial review committee comprised of partner organization representatives, neighborhood representatives and residents reviewed the proposals and concepts, considered the artists’ experiences with similar projects, and then selected the artists for this year’s CRE8IV projects. The selected artists represent a diverse group of local and visiting artists with varied backgrounds and artistic approaches.

This year, murals will spotlight scenes and imagery portraying the area’s natural beauty including plants, florals, animals and butterflies native to the region, themes of belonging, hope, peace and love; diversity and inclusion; youth education, and support for our nation’s veterans.

“Every year we are excited when applications start coming in. We end up totally blown away by how many artists want to come to Rockford for the first time and how many want to return because they had a great experience,” said **Kristen Paul, RACVB vice president of destination development.** “It truly is our incredible community that makes this possible. I remember our first year; we hoped to find support for five projects but ended up with support for nine—now we are on year four and will be completing our 42nd mural. That doesn’t happen without an amazing community that supports art and dreams big.”

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The list of mural locations, artists, concepts, and sponsors includes:

MIRACLE MILE

1. Mural Address: 4618 E. State St.
Artist: [Jesse Melanson](#)
Concept: A Forest City inspired mural, supporting Goodwill's efforts to save the Monarch butterflies
Sponsor: Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois

THE NORTH END

2. Mural Address: 1436 N. Main St. (N. Main/Auburn roundabout)
Artist: [AJ Davis](#)
Concept: In honor of veterans and active military serving our nation in the Armed Forces
Sponsors: Collins Aerospace and Winnebago County

NORTH SECOND STREET

3. Mural Address: 1125 N. 2nd St.
Artist: [Anón](#) - Jhonattan Arango
Concept: Florals with geometric design and tile-like appearance
Sponsors: Bill Doran & Company, Becky Morris, Wintrust Community Banks, The Harding Family Foundation

AUBURN STREET

4. Mural Address: retaining wall at 4802 Auburn St. (near Auburn High School) and 3117 Auburn St. (two guard rails on bridge over Kent Creek)
Artists: [Anthony Lewellen](#)
Concept: Bet on Yourself, positive inspiration
Sponsor: Kjellstrom Family Foundation

DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD

5. Mural Address: 810 E. State St.
Artists: [OhYa Studio](#) – Ray Mawst & Brian Kehoe
Concept: Inspirational/welcoming message
Sponsor: RACVB Board and RACVB Foundation Board Members
6. Mural Address: 202 W. State St.
Artist: Ouizi – [Louise Jones](#)
Concept: Bold native floral and butterflies
Sponsors: Brubaker Family Foundation, Dean Alan Olson Foundation

ART ALLEY – DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD

7. Mural Address: 308 W. State St.
Artist: [Chase Melendez](#)
Concept: Vibrant line work with local artist projects on adjacent wall
Sponsor: River District Association

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8. Mural Address: 316 W. State St.
Artists: [Dustin Eckhardt](#), [Brett Whitaker](#), [Jenny Mathews](#)
Concept: individual small murals painted within the space confines of bricked in windows
Sponsor: River District Association

ROCKTON

9. Mural Address: 122 S. Prairie St., Rockton (will be a part of a new pocket park!)
Artist: [Dustin Eckhardt](#)
Concept: A combination of pelicans and native flora done in a playful, fun manner
Sponsor: Village of Rockton

Mural Sponsors and Supporters

This RACVB-led initiative is made possible with the help of the aforementioned CRE8IV sponsors and funding partners and in collaboration with the City of Rockford and Painters District Council 30, Local 607.

RACVB would also like to recognize and thank all artists, local and visiting, for their creativity and days of hard work to help elevate and beautify our region.

Businesses, organizations and individuals interested in sponsoring this initiative or a specific mural are invited to contact Kristen Paul, RACVB Vice President of Destination Development, at 815.489.1661 or kpaul@gorockford.com.

For more information about CRE8IV - including upcoming announcements, a public art map and other resources - visit www.gorockford.com/cre8iv or follow @GoRockford on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

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. gorockford.com

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Kristen Paul, RACVB Vice President of Destination Development: 815.489.1661, kpaul@gorockford.com