



STROLL on STATE®



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2023

Festive Crowds Celebrated 11th Annual Stroll Attendance for 2023 Stroll on State: 81,825 Guests

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 11, 2024

ROCKFORD, IL – There are so many things Rockford does really well – and the holidays are one of them. **Stroll on State, presented by Illinois Bank & Trust**, is downtown Rockford's epic kickoff to the holiday season – a free event that transforms the city's downtown into a winter wonderland of experiences right out of holiday movies.

On November 25, 2023 – the Saturday after Thanksgiving – **an estimated 81,825 guests** enjoyed s'mores and hot cocoa stations, bonfires inside of ice sculptures, a parade with floats and giant balloons, fireworks and the lighting of a multistory tree. Horse and wagon rides, carolers, music stages, character dance parties and appearances by Santa all brought out the kid in everyone who attended. As guests wandered around the larger-than-life sculptures of presents, lollipops, nutcrackers and toy soldiers dotting the streets they discovered, shopped and dined at downtown stores and restaurants.

The **Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau produces the event** with the support, services and donations of many community partners, volunteers and sponsors.

"Back in 2013, we introduced Stroll to give people new, fun reasons to come to and experience downtown Rockford and to gather as a community. Rockford was in comeback mode then. Our once-dismissed Midwestern city has pulled through, continues to make strides, and is developing at an impressive pace. Our board of directors and staff are proud this event has become an example of how we can build our confidence when we work together as community," said **John Groh**, RACVB president/CEO.

In Stroll on State's 11 years, an estimated 637,000 guests have attended the event. The event was not held in 2020 because of the global pandemic. RACVB contracts an event analytics firm that uses mobile device data provided by [Placer.ai](https://www.placer.ai) to estimate attendance figures and demographics.

Five-Year Lookback on Attendance:

2023 – 81,825 guests
2022 – 70,050 guests
2021 – 62,500 guests
2019 – 21,875 guests
2018 – 87,500 guests

Made possible by dozens of corporate sponsors and dedicated teams of local volunteers, Stroll on State is Rockford's annual reminder of what big, memory-making things can happen when a community works together. **Illinois Bank & Trust** is a key supporter and the longtime presenting sponsor of Stroll on State. **Jeff Hultman**, CEO, expressed gratitude, stating, "Being the presenting sponsor of this citywide holiday event is an honor for our entire team at Illinois Bank & Trust. Supporting this celebration is more than sponsorship for us – it demonstrates our commitment to fostering community togetherness. We're proud to contribute to this time-honored and cherished tradition for the wonderful residents and visitors of the Rockford area."

– MORE –

— SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2023 —

STROLL ON STATE/PAGE 2 of 3

Who Attends Stroll?

“It’s always been important to us that Stroll is a celebration where everyone feels welcome and that residents and visitors love to attend,” said Groh. “This year, guests came from over the river and through the woods to celebrate the start of the holiday season.”

- 64% of guests live within 7 miles of the event
- 74% of guests live in Winnebago County
- 42% of guests live in the City of Rockford
- 24% of guests live outside of Winnebago County
- 11% of guests traveled from more than 50 miles
- 8% of guests live outside of Illinois

Busiest time of the day at Stroll:

Attendance fluctuates throughout the day of the event based on activities. According to Placer.ai data, the largest crowds continue to gather for the tree lighting ceremony with more than 25,000 guests downtown at 6 p.m. The second most popular time is 2 p.m. for the Stroll on State parade. This year, the largest crowd on record gathered for the parade, with more 17,500 guests. The event also kept the party going longer; the 8 p.m. crowd for the fireworks was the largest on record, at 15,600 guests. People still downtown at 10 p.m. matched the highest total for the end of the event: 2,800 guests.

Stroll on State means business:

“Attending Stroll on State has been a meaningful holiday tradition for my family since the very first year. Now, as a business owner in downtown Rockford, it’s exciting to be a part of the event in a whole new way, especially on Small Business Saturday,” said **Sarah Reed McNamara**, owner of **SRM Prints Studio + Gift Shop**. “It was a very busy Saturday and was nice to see so many people shopping locally for the holidays. Choosing a storefront in downtown Rockford’s River District has been a great decision given the support from other neighboring and like-minded businesses and because of events like Stroll that help to support and bring customers to our doorsteps.”

Santa has lots of helpers:

“Each year I’m inspired looking back on the success of Stroll on State and what our team, sponsors, supporters, partners and volunteers have been able to accomplish by working together. They say it takes a village and we are immensely grateful to ours for helping in so many ways,” said **Kristen Paul**, **RACVB executive vice president**. “We are thankful to all our guests who helped us to ring in the holidays and we are already gathering our lists and checking them twice to bring another incredible Stroll to downtown Rockford in 2024.”

Other numbers that tell the story of Stroll 2023:

- 35,000 sparkling lights + 275 ornaments on the nearly 50-foot-tall official City of Rockford blue spruce Christmas tree
- 46 parade entries with 9 highflying inflatable balloons (with the largest balloon a 30-foot Sock Monkey) and 5,800 cubic feet of helium used for balloons
- 12,112 s’mores were sold
- 50 gallons of mulled wine were sold
- 1,545 hot buttered rum drinks were sold
- Dasher Dash 5K had 1,138 runners and walkers
- 801 letters were written to Santa, from kids in nine states

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2023

STROLL ON STATE/PAGE 3 of 3

Other numbers continued

- 24 new lighted trees bringing total to 124 string-lit trees
- 70 large presents, 50 lollipops, 75 wreaths, 200 ornaments on display throughout downtown
- 40 large lit snowflakes on light poles
- 75 strands of garland on light poles
- 18 firepits for conversation
- 25,000 pounds of ice for the Fire & Ice towers
- 6 horses pulling 3 wagons
- 58 vendors at outdoor markets
- 87 sponsors, friends, and partners who helped make Stroll a free gift for all to attend

For more information about Stroll on State, visit www.strollonstate.com.

###

About: *Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau 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 tourism, RACVB strengthens the economic position of the region and provides opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com*

About Placer.ai: *Placer.ai aggregates location data from users' mobile apps usage. When a geographic polygon or radius is drawn in Placer.ai's platform, a mobile user who spends more than 2 minutes within that point of interest (POI) is counted as one activity or movement. This is aggregated into visitation trends and demographic trends when there are enough counts to meet a privacy threshold. Placer.ai overlays its trade area analytics datasets from a large marketplace of data partners. From this, they can create insights based on national and statewide benchmarks about consumer information, demographics, work and lifestyles, and online activity.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Kristen Paul, RACVB executive vice president: 815.489.1661 or kpaul@gorockford.com