## Midwest’s Best Holiday Fest: Stroll on State Returns to Downtown Rockford, Saturday Nov. 25

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**October 25, 2023**

**Rockford, IL –** The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is excited to announce the 11th annual **Stroll on State, presented by Illinois Bank & Trust,** is set for Saturday, Nov. 25 in downtown Rockford.

The day will commence with the running of the Dasher Dash 5K at noon, followed by the festival taking place from 2 – 9 p.m. with new enhancements, attractions, live entertainment, vendors and more for eventgoers to enjoy. The free-to-all holiday celebration, which is always held the Saturday after Thanksgiving, attracts over 70,000 guests every year.

“Every year, the best Holiday Fest in the Midwest happens in downtown Rockford. Stroll on State, presented by Illinois Bank & Trust, brings our community together to create lasting memories, rally behind local businesses and usher in the holiday season. I’d like to extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated partners, sponsors, volunteers for their unwavering support which makes this festive tradition possible,” said **Kristen Paul, RACVB’s vice president of destination development**. “Together, we bring merry and bright memories to the season, one joyful moment at a time.”

**Sponsor Support Makes Stroll Possible**

Stroll on State transforms downtown Rockford into a winter wonderland thanks to many partners, volunteers and sponsors. In total, over 50 companies and organizations will provide financial support through sponsorship of this year’s Stroll on State and Dasher Dash 5K. Their investment allows RACVB to present the event as a gift to the community and visitors.

“It is with great pride that Illinois Bank & Trust continues to serve as presenting sponsor of Stroll on State. Our commitment stems from the belief that community connections and tradition are important cornerstones of a thriving city. So, in that way Stroll on State is also an investment in our community’s future,” said **Jeff Hultman, CEO of Illinois Bank & Trust.** “Year after year, this event helps to bring people together to create cherished memories and provides an invaluable boost to local businesses, fostering economic vitality in our region. On behalf of all of us at Illinois Bank & Trust, I want to say thank you to all involved who make this event a reality each year. We look forward to many more years of shared success.”

Additional local organizations and media companies provide support invaluable to the production of Stroll.

on State. A complete list is on pages 5 and 6 of this release.

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“Stroll on State is the perfect kick off to the holiday season in Rockford. My family and I have made Stroll on State a tradition. Stroll represents what is best in Rockford - government, business and community members coming together donating their time, resources and funding to ensure everyone can celebrate, said **Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara**. “Stroll also happens to fall on Small Business Saturday. I love seeing so many people shopping at locally owned businesses, and I hope that continues throughout the community all season long.”

**Stroll’s Top Announcements in 2023**

1. **Interactive Map**The new Stroll on State interactive map helps visitors plan their Stroll experience in advance with images, descriptions and navigation at the touch of a button.[**www.gorockford.com/stroll-on-state/map/**](http://www.gorockford.com/stroll-on-state/map/)**.**
2. **Gather for Tree Lighting**

One of the event’s most popular moments – the lighting of the city Christmas tree – will take place at 6 p.m. at the Main Stage located at Main and Elm streets. This year’s City of Rockford tree is **sponsored by the Northwestern Illinois Building Trades.** The Main Stage, **sponsored by ComEd,** will featuremusic and other entertainment throughout the day.

1. **Sky Lights Fireworks, presented by Pierce Distribution,** will once again light up the skies of downtown Rockford. The fireworks will be launched from the Jefferson Street Bridge at 8:30 p.m. Viewers will be able to see the skies burst with color from anywhere in the festival if they can see the Jefferson Street Bridge.
2. **Inflatable Balloons Highlight Parade**

**Stroll on State’s Holiday Parade, sponsored by The Power Connection – IBEW 364 & NECA** steps off on S. Main Street at Chestnut Street at 2 p.m. and will move north to State Street then east across the State Street Bridge, ending at 3rd Street.

Parade onlookers are encouraged to find a spot along the route beginning at 1 p.m. **Hard Rock Rockford** is rocking the parade by sponsoring eight balloons, including a surprise new balloon built custom for the Stroll parade. **HolmstromKennedy PC** and **Mercyhealth** each also are sponsoring a parade balloon.

**Parade In the St. Nick of Time:** Local organizations and businesses are invited to participate in the parade. Deadline to register is November 10. For pricing options and information, contact Julie Huber at [strollonstate@gorockford.com](mailto:strollonstate@gorockford.com). Visit [www.gorockford.com/stroll-on-state/parade/](http://www.gorockford.com/stroll-on-state/parade/) for a list of rules, more information and to download a registration form.

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1. **Blitzen’s Ball, a Character Dance Party for Kids**From princesses to heroes and everything in between this dance party is hosted by **Characters 2 Life** and will take place inside Stewart Square, 308 W. State St. This event is sponsored by **OSF Medical Center.**
2. **Holiday Hot Rods Classic Car Show**  
   Hosted by **Cars & Coffee Rockford** see this combination of classic and vintage cars decked out for the holidays in the parking lot behind CJ’s Bar & Grill at 115 N. Madison St. Prizes for best in class as well as best decorated vehicles. The deadline to register is November 22. Email [carsandcoffeerockford@gmail.com](mailto:carsandcoffeerockford@gmail.com) to register. A limited number of cars will be selected.
3. **Frozen in Time Selfie Stations**Stop at any, or better yet all, of our Selfie Stations at Stroll on State. Check out the map for this year’s locations and pose for your perfect shot. This interactive activity is sponsored **by General Mills** and **Quartz**.

There are two new photo opportunities this year. A North Pole Village experience with a Rudolph balloon, elf houses and more. There will also be a Snow globe photo station sponsored by **Comfort 1st Insulation.**

1. **Indoor and Outdoor Movie Land**

See the return of the fan favorite Outdoor Movie Land next to Jimmy Johns on E. State St. or experience the Indoor Movie Land in Stewart Square, **sponsored by Xfinity**. “The Grinch” will be shown at each location.

1. **Ice Skating at BMO Center**  
   Take a break from strolling the grounds and lace up some ice skates at the BMO Center put on by the **Rockford Park District** and the **Rockford IceHogs**. Additionally, there will be street hockey provided by the **Chicago Blackhawks Foundation** and the **Rockford IceHogs Community Foundation** outside of BMO Center as well as family friendly activities provided by the Rockford Park District outside of Veterans Memorial Hall.
2. **Dasher Dash 5k**

Dasher Dash is a holiday-themed 5k run or walk that starts and finishes near Beattie Park (near 100 Park Avenue). Participants will travel across the beautiful Rock River and decorated East State Street. The race starts at noon. Runners must register by Nov. 24. There will not be registration on the day of the festival. Register at DasherDash.com by Nov. 10 to guarantee a race t-shirt. Thank you to **FiberCity, Members Alliance Credit Union, Brad Martin with Dickerson & Nieman, Fleet Feet, Fehr Graham** and **DataPoint** for sponsoring.

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**Classic Attractions**

* The main event grounds will be along State Street in downtown Rockford bordered by Jefferson, Church, Chestnut and Third Streets. Look for new, upgraded decorations throughout the event.
* **Santa** **Claus** will walk throughout the festival. He may be at a S’mores station, taking care of his reindeer, on State Street, at the tree lighting ceremony or enjoying a hot chocolate.
* The popular **Hot Chocolate Express** will be at two locations – in the Veterans Memorial Hall parking lot and next to the Outdoor Movie Land.
* **Rudolph’s Reindeer Village, sponsored by Mercyhealth**, is back and will be at Veterans Memorial Hall.
* Your favorite group of elves will be back at Rockford City Hall to collect letters and give them to Santa! At **Letters to Santa, sponsored by FurstStaffing,** kids are encouraged to write and decorate their letters to Santa, and then mail them on site to the North Pole.

**Additional Event Favorites:**

* **S’mores stations** will be set up in three locations. These yummy, gooey snacks are made fresh to order by Stroll grill masters.
* **Horse & Wagon Rides, sponsored by Amazon** will return with one location.
* **Two Outdoor Holiday Markets** with local retail and food vendors**.** The markets will be located at Rockford City Market Pavilion (116 N. Madison St.) and Wyman Street District, **sponsored by** **Chicago Blackhawks Foundation** (Wyman St., North and South sides of W. State St.).
* **Veterans Memorial Hall,** at 211 N Main St**,** will feature a toy train display on the main level. Rockford Dance Company will offer free performances of “The Nutcracker” all afternoon on the second level.
* A full listing of events and attractions is available at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com)

**Shop Small Business Saturday**

Stroll on State takes place in conjunction with Small Business Saturday which is an annual holiday tradition that encourages people to support local shop owners. Locally owned businesses throughout the downtown River District will offer holiday specials and fun events. Be sure to visit the wide range of stores and restaurants, both during Stroll and throughout the holiday season.

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**Volunteers Help Make It Happen**

Stroll on State is made possible in part with the help of several organizations, businesses and volunteers.

Volunteer Workshops are held Saturday mornings from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m. and Tuesday evenings from 6 – 9 p.m. at 310 Winnebago Street, on the corner of Winnebago and Chestnut Streets. Children ages 12-15 may volunteer with an adult and a signed waiver; 16- and 17-year-olds must provide a signed waiver.

Volunteers are welcome to come to the workshops without prior registration. Workshops end on Tuesday, November 21. Volunteers are needed for the **Downtown Decorating Days** on Friday and Saturday, November 17-18 and the day of the event. Those looking to lend a helping, including post-event volunteer opportunities, can get more information at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com).

**Parking and Park-And-Ride Free Transportation**

In addition to the interactive map, there will be parking options specified on detailed maps. On-street parking and surface parking lots will be available as posted. The event map with suggested parking areas is available at [www.strollonstate.com](http://www.strollonstate.com).

There also will be three Remote Parking Lots with free shuttle bus transportation, **sponsored by Rockford Mass Transit District:**

* YMCA, 200 Y Boulevard (handicapped accessible paratransit buses are available).
* Bethesda Church, 2102 E. State St. (new location this year) and
* Crusader Community Health, 1200 W. State St.

Shuttle buses run continuously every 10 minutes from 1:30 – 9:30 p.m. All shuttles drop off / pick up in downtown near Third and E. State Streets.

**Supporters & Partners**

Led by the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, in addition to many partners, the following entities have come together to generously support Stroll on State.

**Presenting Sponsor:**

* Illinois Bank & Trust

**Parade Presenting Sponsor:**

* The Power Connection IBEW 364 & NECA

**Parade Balloon Sponsor:**

* Hard Rock Rockford

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| **Supporting Sponsors:**   * Accuride * Amazon * Chicago Blackhawks Foundation and Rockford IceHogs Community Foundation * ComEd * Comfort 1st Insulation * CoyleKiley * Field Fastener * FurstStaffing * General Mills * Great Water 360 Auto Care * Hard Rock Casino Rockford * HolstromKennedyPC * LaMonica Beverages * Mercyhealth * Northwestern Illinois Building Trades Unions * OSF HealthCare * PCI Pharma Services * Pearson Plumbing & Heating * Pierce Distribution * Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 23 * Project First Rate * Quartz * United Union of Roofers Local 11 * UWHealth * Winnebago County * Xfinity   **Partner Organizations:**   * City of Rockford * BMO Center * Rockford Mass Transit District * Rockford Park District * Two Men and a Truck | **Friends of Stroll on State:**   * Aetna Plywood * Bennie’s Dry Cleaning * Cars & Coffee * Characters 2 Life * City First Church * County Materials * Creative Crane * Entre Computer Solutions * Event Floral * Fehr Graham * Forest City Fairytale * Lino’s * Power Road Auto Body * Prographics * Rockford Dance Company * Rockford Ornamental Iron * Rosecrance * Stenstrom * Tree Care Enterprises * Ware Crane & Rigging   **Dasher Dash 5K Sponsor:**   * Rockford FiberCity * Brad Martin at Dickerson & Nieman Realtors * Data Point Inc. * Fehr Graham * Fleet Feet * MembersAlliance Credit Union   **Media Sponsors:**   * Northwest Quarterly * 23 WIFR * 13 WREX * WTVO Channel 17 |

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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](http://www.gorockford.com)

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