



GOROCKFORD QUARTERLY REPORT

FY26, Q4
April - June, 2026

GO ROCKFORD
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The mission of GoRockford is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.



gorockford.com



GoRockford Mission Statement

GoRockford 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 at a rate greater than our competitive set.

ENHANCE TOURISM PRODUCT

The Rockford Region offers unique and marketable experiences and venues that meet or exceed visitor expectations and enhance the quality of life for residents.

ENGAGE CONSTITUENTS ON BEHALF OF TOURISM

GoRockford tourism marketing, sales, and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders.

ELEVATE THE BRAND

The Rockford Region's brand is clearly defined and positively perceived, supporting the region's competitiveness as a destination and place to live.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



As we close the end of the fiscal year, the Rockford region continues to build momentum through strong partnerships, and experiences that attract visitors while enhancing quality of life for our residents. This quarter showcased the strength of our tourism industry through major events, national media exposure, destination development, and record-breaking marketing efforts.

IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford once again demonstrated the power of sports tourism, welcoming more than **2,200 athletes** and generating an estimated **\$7 million** in economic impact. Our sales team also secured **22,380 future hotel room nights** during the quarter, positioning Rockford for continued economic growth through future sporting events and tournaments.

Our marketing efforts reached new audiences on both the national and digital stage. Rockford earned coverage in **Forbes**, the **TODAY Show**, and **Midwest Living**, and generated more than **8 million social media views** during the quarter. We also launched the redesigned **Made for Rockford** website, creating a comprehensive relocation resource for prospective residents and generating more than **80 relocation kit requests** in its first month.

Looking ahead, we are excited to launch **RockYard Music Fest**, a new signature event that supports the vision of **Thrive 2035** by creating new destination experiences, activating public spaces, and strengthening downtown Rockford. Along with continued investments in destination development and community partnerships, these efforts ensure Rockford remains a vibrant place to visit, live, and invest.

Thank you to our board, staff, volunteers, sponsors, and community partners for making this momentum possible. Together, we continue to build a stronger future for the Rockford region.

Be well,

John Groh
GoRockford President/CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOROCKFORD NEWS

IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford.....	3
RockYard Announcement.....	3
Major News Coverage.....	3

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

Sports Sales Highlights.....	4
Booking Highlights.....	4
Winnebago County Hotel Statistics.....	4

MARKETING

Media Mentions & Placements.....	5
Earned Media.....	5
Social Media Analytics.....	5
Social Media Promotions.....	6
National Travel and Tourism Week.....	6
Website Statistics.....	6

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

CRE8IV Sculptures.....	7
Community Partnerships.....	7
Forest City Beautiful.....	7

MADE FOR ROCKFORD

New Resident Mixer	8
Role Call Summit.....	8
Website Launch.....	8

GOROCKFORD BOARD & STAFF

GoRockford Board of Directors.....	9
GoRockford Staff.....	9

GoROCKFORD NEWS

IRONMAN 70.3 ROCKFORD ELEVATES ROCKFORD'S SPORTS TOURISM



IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford athletes run along Rock River Recreation Path on June 14, 2026.

IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford returned to the Rockford region on **June 14**, welcoming **2,268 athletes** and approximately **7,500 spectators** from **30 states** and **19 countries**. The internationally recognized triathlon once again showcased the Rock River and region, while reinforcing Rockford's reputation as a premier destination for sporting events. The event generated an estimated **\$7 million in economic impact**, benefiting hotels, restaurants, retailers, attractions, and other local businesses throughout race weekend.



Athlete by the Numbers

- 2268 registered athletes
- 95 athletes from Rockford area
- 41 international athletes
- 1229 from Illinois
- 253 from Wisconsin
- 105 from Indiana
- 79 from Minnesota
- 63 from Michigan
- 58 from Missouri
- 38 from Florida
- 34 from California
- 31 from Texas

GoRockford partnered with IRONMAN, City of Rockford, Rockford Police Department, Rockford Park District, volunteers, and other community organizations to deliver a successful event. More than **1,200 volunteers** filled nearly **1,550 volunteer shifts**, helping create a welcoming race experience while demonstrating the community collaboration that has become a signature of Rockford's major sporting events.

In addition to supporting race operations and destination marketing, GoRockford encouraged athletes and spectators to explore local businesses, restaurants, attractions, and entertainment throughout the

weekend. The continued success of IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford strengthens the community's position as a nationally recognized sports tourism destination.

ROCKYARD ANNOUNCEMENT

GoRockford announced the launch of RockYard Music Fest at a May news conference. The new free, two-day music festival will debut in **Davis Park** on **August 14–15**.

Created as part of Rockford's America 250 celebration and in conjunction with Rockford 815 Day, the festival was developed to create a signature end-of-summer event that brings residents and visitors together while driving activity to downtown Rockford.

The inaugural festival will feature live music, food and beverage vendors, family activities, classic yard games, and community competitions. Friday night's festivities end with fireworks, and Saturday's end with a

Rockford-themed drone show. Saturday morning kicks off with a ticketed pancake breakfast. RockYard will also serve as one of the first major public events to activate the newly renovated Davis Park, showcasing the riverfront as a premier gathering space and destination for festivals.



Local artist Emilio Salinas performs at the RockYard Music Fest news conference in May. Emilio is part of the RockYard music line up.

Presented by **Foresight Bank**, RockYard reflects GoRockford's commitment to advancing the goals of **Thrive 2035** by creating new destination experiences, activating public spaces, strengthening downtown, and enhancing quality of life. Through strong partnerships with sponsors, local businesses, artists, and community organizations, the festival is designed to become a signature annual event that grows tourism while creating lasting economic and community impact.

MAJOR NEWS COVERAGE ELEVATES ROCKFORD

GoRockford's public relations strategy continues to generate national media coverage by pitching compelling stories that showcase the Rockford region's unique attractions, tourism investments, and visitor experiences. During the second quarter, the region earned significant national attention through a **Forbes** feature highlighting the opening of **Hidden Creek Estates' Wine Barrel Homes**. The article positioned the accommodations as a luxurious Midwest getaway, showcasing the wine barrel homes, restaurant, and serene setting while introducing Rockford to travelers seeking unique overnight experiences.

Rockford also received national exposure on the **TODAY Show**, where Rockford was featured in a segment highlighting destinations inspired by iconic films. The story encouraged viewers to visit the home of the original **Rockford Peaches** and experience the legacy of **A League of Their Own** through the city's baseball history, attractions, and fan experiences and also showcased the upcoming Women's Baseball Week in Rockford in July. Women's Baseball Week includes three high profile events including the WBSC Women's World Cup Group Stage.

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

SPORTS AND MEETING SALES HIGHLIGHTS



Local fitness influencer Noah Anderson crosses the finish line during his second IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford in June.

NCTTA CHAMPIONSHIPS RETURNS

The **National Collegiate Table Tennis Association (NCTTA) Championships** were held **April 9–12** at the UW Health Sports Factory. The national event welcomed collegiate athletes and visitors from throughout the country. The event brought an estimated economic impact of **\$467,401** to the region.

MIDWEST WOMEN RIDERS SETS WORLD RECORD IN ROCKFORD

Midwest Women Riders made history in Rockford **June 11–13** by hosting the **Get Your Groove On 2026** world record female ride, bringing **1,433 women motorcyclists** together in a successful world record-setting ride. The three-day event at **Hard Rock Casino Rockford** attracted riders from across the country for workshops and entertainment. With an estimated economic impact of **\$936,233**, the event introduced a unique event to the region.

NATIONAL DOG SHOW MAKES ROCKFORD DEBUT

Rockford hosted the American Belgian Tervuren Club National Specialty for the first time **May 1–9**. The multi-day event brought over **\$752,590 in economic impact**. More than **350 competitors** participated in events that included herding, scent work, agility, tracking, obedience, and junior showmanship.

USA BMX DRAWS THOUSANDS TO ROCKFORD

The **USA BMX Midwest Nationals** returned to **Searls Park June 19–21**, generating an estimated **\$800,000** in economic impact for the Rockford region. The three-day event welcomed more than **3,500 athletes and fans**, representing over **100 teams** from across the United States while generating more than **2,700 hotel room nights**. Hosted in Rockford for more than **40 years**, the Midwest Nationals continue to showcase Searls Park as one of the nation's premier BMX facilities and reinforce Rockford's reputation as a leading sports tourism destination.

TRADE SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

In April, GoRockford's sales team attended the **Sports ETA Symposium** in Las Vegas, the premier conference and trade show for the sports tourism industry. During the event, the team conducted more than **30 appointments** with tournament directors, event owners, and industry partners to promote Rockford's sports facilities and event-hosting capabilities. The meetings introduced new event opportunities, and reinforced Rockford's position as a leading destination for sports tourism.

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

Team Illinois Lacrosse 2027

June & October 2027
5,000 Total Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$2.8 million

Progressive Volleyball Events 2027

March & May 2027
3,600 room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$1.9 million

BMX Midwest Nationals

June 18–20, 2027
800 Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$1.4 million

Forest City Classic

February 27–28, 2027
500 Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$789,238

Windy City Invite

September 26–27, 2026
200 Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$182,004

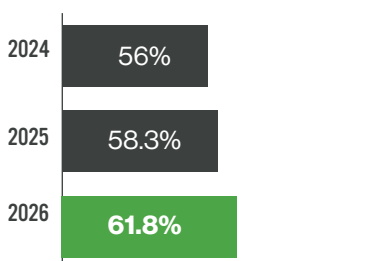
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked During the Quarter: 22,380 with an economic impact of \$15.2 Million
Number of Bookings: 38



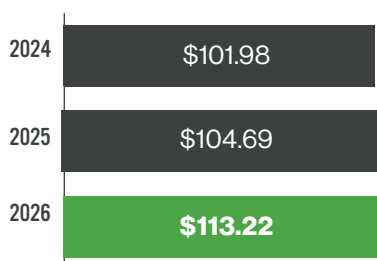
Midwest Women Riders line up for their world record ride on June 13, 2026 with 1,433 total female riders.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS January - June, 2026

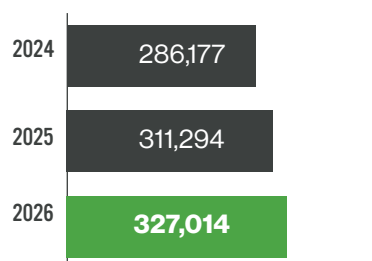
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



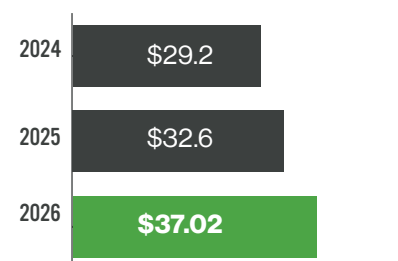
Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



MARKETING

MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

GoRockford garners media mentions and placements to draw visitors to the Rockford region. Collaborating with regional and national media outlets, our team diligently seeks and shares captivating stories and compelling content centered experiences in Rockford, visiting the region and destination development.

NATIONAL MEDIA MENTIONS

Forbes: “*Enjoy The Serenity And Style At This Midwestern Getaway*” (06/10/2026) 47,210,000 impressions and \$1,746,770 Earned Media

TimeOut Magazine: “*The 29 Most Unique Day Trips from Chicago*” (04/09/2026) 9,063,000 Impressions and \$335,331 Earned Media

TODAY “*Summer Trips Inspired by Movies: ‘Rocky,’ ‘Hidden Figures,’ More*” (06/23/2026) 7,870,000 Impressions and \$291,190 Earned Media

Midwest Living: “*20 Best Botanical Gardens and Arboretums for an Easy Afternoon Escape*” (04/09/2026) 775,000 impressions and \$28,675 Earned Media



SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

3.6 Million Views
66,136 Followers



INSTAGRAM

1.8 Million Views
26,973 Followers



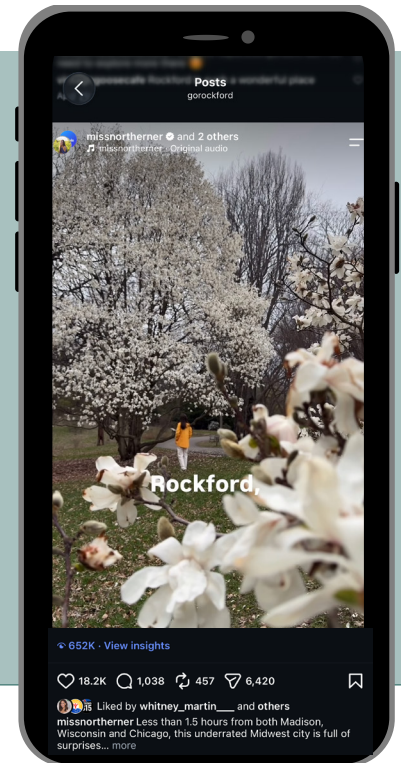
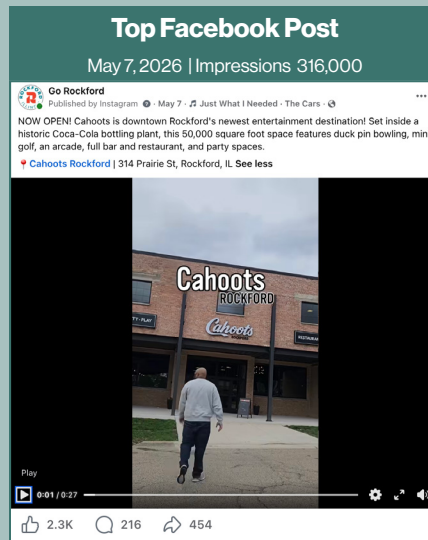
LINKEDIN

3,203 Followers



TikTok

2.6 Million Views
18,769 Followers



EARNED MEDIA (April - June, 2026)

GoRockford works to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. Pitches are focused on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



\$5,700,000
Ad equivalency



616,000,000
Total impressions



1,163
Number of mentions

MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTIONS

Each month of the quarter had a different focus, leading to impressive engagement.

APRIL

April's promotions were focused on spring attractions, seasonal openings and spring events. April also focused on gardens and what's blooming in Rockford. The top post for Facebook and Instagram in the quarter was in April, showcasing the opening of Cahoots, with **316,000 views**. April's promotions had **1.3 million total views** between Facebook and Instagram, an increase from **756,600 views** in April 2025.



MAY

May's promotional efforts continued promotion of spring events and highlights of summer travel in Rockford. Farmers markets including Rockford City Market and summer activities reopening in Rockford such as Food Truck Tuesdays, Dinner on the Dock, and live outdoor music were a major focus of May. May also included National Travel and Tourism Week (see sidebar). Viewers on Facebook and Instagram soared to **2 million**, up from **1.4 million** in May 2025.

JUNE

June's major focus was the return of IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford and promotional efforts leading up to America 250 Rockford celebrations. Summer things to do and major cultural festivals such as South Main Mercado and Juneteenth were also a focus. A posting for Midwest Riders world record ride also broke records for GoRockford's most viewed Tiktok video, with **1.5 million views** and over **83,720** in engagement. Total views for June between Facebook and Instagram was **2.5 million**, up from **2.3 million** in 2025.



MARKETING EFFORTS

National Travel & Tourism Week 2026

GoRockford celebrated **National Travel & Tourism Week (May 3-9, 2026)** with a campaign highlighting tourism's impact on the Rockford region while recognizing the people and businesses that create exceptional visitor experiences. In partnership with local businesses, GoRockford assembled **Experience Rockford Packs** featuring locally made products, increasing foot traffic to the GoRockford visitor center. A National Travel and Tourism Week prize giveaway generated **243 new e-newsletter subscribers**. For the fourth year, GoRockford recognized five local Hospitality Heroes: Cheryl Yanez (Embassy Suites), JoAnn Peterson (Anderson Japanese Gardens), Sports Factory Maintenance Team (Sports Factory), Carter Weaver (DairyHaus), and Alan Gonzalez (Screw City Vintage). Additional outreach included the launch of an official summer bucket list, social media campaign, and a marketing booth at Food Truck Tuesdays.

Influencer Collaborations

GoRockford collaborated with Enjoy Illinois and Wisconsin based content creator Miss Northerner on a Rockford itinerary including Rock Cut State Park, DC Estate Winery, Gretta's Goats, Embassy Suites, Klehm Arboretum and more. She created four total posts with combined views of 1.4 million views with 27,884 interactions. GoRockford worked with Illinois Foodies to promote a spring and summer bucket list in Rockford in April. The posts had 7,276 views with 288 interactions.

South Main Mercado & Juneteenth Awards

In June, GoRockford participated in South Main Mercado with a marketing booth to connect with a new audience and showcase the many attractions, events, and experiences throughout the Rockford region. GoRockford sponsored and selected the Juneteenth Community Award recipients who received their awards at the Rockford Juneteenth celebration on Friday, June 19.

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

Things To Do In Rockford
Events in Rockford
Restaurants in Rockford, IL

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford
South Main Mercado
Memorial Day Events

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

Anderson Japanese Gardens
Food Truck Park in Loves Park
Olson Lake Beach

Website Traffic Sources



122,115 total website users

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

CRE8IV SCULPTURE PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW



Static Vestige, by Benjamin Jose finds its new temporary home in Rockford for the CRE8IV biennial sculpture program.

GoRockford's CRE8IV sculpture initiative continued to expand in 2026, further strengthening Rockford's reputation as a destination for arts, culture, and placemaking. The biennial sculpture program welcomed **Static Vestige** by artist **Benjamin Jose**, installed at West State and Jefferson streets as the newest leased sculpture in the rotating outdoor exhibition.

Since its launch in 2018, the program has transformed public spaces throughout the region with large-scale sculptures that encourage exploration, enhance neighborhood character, and create memorable visitor experiences. There are

currently **33 sculptures** on display in the region and there are **57 large-scale murals** as part of the program.

The program also reached an important milestone with the addition of four sculptures to GoRockford's permanent collection through the generosity of community partners. **Steve and Rachel** and **Karen**, both by John McNamara, were donated by the Illinois Arts Council and the Brubaker Family Foundation, while **Millennium Gate** and **Keyhole Flutter Gateway**, both by Jim Gallucci, were donated by the Dean Alan Olson Foundation and GoRockford. These permanent installations ensure that the community's investment in public art will continue to enrich the Rockford region for years to come while advancing CRE8IV's mission of creating vibrant public spaces that inspire residents and visitors alike.

ART TOUR AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

GoRockford partnered with the Rockford Area Arts Council to provide a guided public art bus tour for residents of Wesley Willows. Led by Destination Development Operations Manager Julie Huber and Rockford Area Arts Council Community Engagement Officer Jordan DeWilde, the tour highlighted murals, sculptures, and other installations created through GoRockford's CRE8IV initiative. By introducing residents to the public art throughout the region, the experience celebrated Rockford's creative identity while demonstrating how placemaking can foster community pride, encourage exploration, and enhance quality of life for both residents and visitors.

As a thank you to one of its longtime partners, the Destination Development team hosted a hospitality tent at the Northwestern Illinois Building Trades annual golf outing, recognizing the organization's continued support of GoRockford events and the important role the skilled trades play in building and enhancing the community.



Destination Development sets up a hospitality tent for the Northwestern Illinois Building Trades.



Newly installed Forest City Beautiful signage uses GoRockford's new branding.

FOREST CITY BEAUTIFUL

Since 2014, **Forest City Beautiful** has enhanced downtown Rockford through seasonal landscaping, public art, streetscape improvements, benches, wayfinding signage, and other beautification projects that create welcoming spaces for residents and visitors. This year, the initiative introduced new signage featuring updated GoRockford branding, adding a fresh, cohesive look to key corridors while strengthening the city's identity and sense of place.

Made possible through partnerships with the City of Rockford and generous support from businesses, foundations, and individual donors, Forest City Beautiful continues to invest in projects that enhance the visitor experience, encourage exploration, and create a vibrant downtown that residents are proud to call home.

GoRockford is grateful to the community sponsors that help make this initiative possible including:

City of Rockford
David & Colleen Anderson Charitable Foundation
Bergstrom
LawnCare by Walter
CoyleKiley Insurance, Inc.
Rockford Park District
Franchesco's Ristorante
WIFR
WIPFLI
Community Foundation of Northern Illinois
Rockford University
John & LuAnn Groh
Bobbie Holwarth & Norm Lindstrom
Carol & John Schuster
BMO Center
Thomas McNamara
Jim Pirages
Marcia Mueller
Dickerson & Nieman Realtors
KMK Media Group
Geno Iafrate
Jennifer Furst
Greg Watt
Maurice West
NorthWest Illinois Alliance of REALTORS
Rockford Area Arts Council
Rocktown Adventures
Jim & Pam Keeling
Justin & Theresa Kegley
Leslie West
Patricia Diduch
Kim Keefe, Compass
Peter & Heather Provenzano Charitable Trust
Rockford IceHogs
Rosecrance
Iconic Energy
Fridh Corporation

MADE FOR ROCKFORD

NEW RESIDENT SPRING MIXER



New residents mingle at the spring Made for Rockford mixer in April.

More than **100 newcomers** gathered at the **Rockford Public Library** terrace for Made for Rockford's spring new resident mixer in April. The evening featured live saxophone music, interactive games, and opportunities to connect with fellow newcomers, community partners, and Mayor Tom McNamara. By helping new residents build relationships early, these events strengthen community connections and support long-term talent retention.

ROLECALL TALENT ATTRACTION SUMMIT



Made for Rockford Program Director Whitney Martin attends RoleCall Talent Attraction Summit in April.

Made for Rockford Program Director Whitney Martin was selected as a featured panelist at the **2026 RoleCall Talent Attraction Summit** in Buffalo, New York in April. During a session on strategic media coverage for community growth, Martin shared how authentic storytelling and earned media can elevate a community's reputation, attract new talent, and build lasting momentum for talent attraction efforts.

WEBSITE LAUNCH & MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Made for Rockford launched a redesigned website alongside a targeted marketing campaign focused on recruiting talent in key industries. The Made for Rockford website serves as a one-stop relocation resource, offering information on careers, housing, neighborhoods, schools, recreation, and quality of life. Interest was immediate, with more than **80 prospective residents** requesting complimentary Move to Rockford relocation kits during the first month.

IRONMAN 70.3 WELCOME BOOTHS



GoTeam members showcase Rockford attractions and information at IRONMAN welcome booths at hotels in June.

During IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford race weekend in June, Made for Rockford's **Go Team** ambassadors staffed welcome booths at participating hotels, greeting athletes and their families with local recommendations and community information. These conversations helped create a memorable first impression while showcasing Rockford's hospitality, making visitors feel welcomed and encouraging them to see the community as a place worth returning and potentially calling home.

MERCYHEALTH MEDICAL RESIDENT TOUR

Made for Rockford hosted a community bus tour for incoming Mercyhealth medical residents, introducing life in Rockford beyond the workplace. The tour included visits to **Anderson Japanese Gardens**, the **Coronado Performing Arts Center**, and **Rock Cut State Park**, along with stops highlighting local neighborhoods, recreation, and community amenities. Residents also sampled locally roasted coffee while learning about the region, helping them build an early connection to the community and supporting long-term physician retention.

GoROCKFORD BOARD & STAFF

GoRockford Board of Directors

Geno Iafrate (Chair)
Hard Rock Rockford

Tiana McCall (Vice Chair)

Mick Gronewold (Treasurer)
Fehr Graham Engineering
& Environmental

Dana Martin (Secretary)
Rosecrance Behavioral Health

Carol Schuster
University of Illinois
College of Medicine - Rockford

Jennifer Furst
Furst Staffing

Shelton Kay
Rockford Regional Health Council

Richard Shuga
Painters District Council
No. 30 Local 607

Todd Cagnoni
City of Rockford

Gretchen Gilmore
Rockford Area Venues &
Entertainment Authority (R.A.V.E.)

Angela Larson
Greater Rockford Chamber of
Commerce

Chintan Thakkar
Decorum Management Group

Mark Henderson
Village of Rockton

Bobbie Holzwarth
HolmstromKennedy

Ricardo Montoya-Picazo
Office of State
Representative Dave Vella

Patrick Thompson
Winnebago County

Duncan Geddes
City of Loves Park

Sonya Hoppes
City of South Beloit

Jay Sandine
Rockford Park District

Kirk Weitzel
Rock Hospitality

Ald. Kevin Frost
City of Rockford

GoRockford Foundation Board of Directors

Carol Schuster (Foundation Chair)
University of Illinois College of Medicine
Rockford

Geno Iafrate (Vice Chair)
Hard Rock Rockford

Marco Lenis
(Foundation Treasurer)
Vocational Rehabilitation Management

Gina Caruana
(Foundation Secretary)
Foresight Financial Group

David Anderson
Anderson Japanese Gardens

Jennifer Furst
Furst Staffing

Jeff Marrs
Morgan Stanley

Leslie West
State Farm

Rebecca Francis
Ignite Change Solutions LLC

Theresa Kegley
Movement Fitness

Jim Pirages
AGHL Law

Alexis Wright-Conniff
Woodward

GoRockford Staff



John Groh
President, CEO



Kristen Paul
Executive Vice President



Lindsay Arellano
Vice President of Sales &
Service



Joanne Nold
Vice President of
Finance & Administration



Amanda August
Social Media and
Communications Specialist



Chenaire Barmore
Communications Manager



Kara Davis
Senior Sales Manager



Elizabeth Falls
Marketing Manager



Julie Huber
Destination Development
Operations Manager



Whitney Martin
Made for Rockford
Program Director



Kyra Murray
Marketing & Customer
Experience Coordinator



Emily Plumb
Sales & Servicing
Manager



Leah Ticknor
Office Manager &
Executive Assistant