

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



RACVB & State Rep. Maurice West Award \$469K to 33 Rockford Area Restaurants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2024

ROCKFORD, IL — In a collaborative effort to support the vibrant culinary landscape of Rockford and Winnebago County, Illinois State Representative Maurice West and the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) announced the distribution of state-funded grants totaling \$469,475.35 to 33 local businesses.

These funds aim to alleviate the financial strain experienced by restaurants following unprecedented challenges due to state-mandated COVID-19 closures and related employee layoffs in the first three months of 2021 resulting in unemployment insurance claims and payments. Today's grant award amounts are based on the increase of a restaurant's state unemployment tax rate caused by their unemployment claims in Quarter 1 of 2021. The current award is for the increased unemployment taxes a restaurant paid in 2022 and 2023 directly related to unemployment claims in Q1 2021.

Awards ranged from \$298 to \$80,010. In total, 25 restaurants received grant awards under \$10,000. Four restaurants received grants ranging between \$10,001 and \$50,000 and four received awards over \$50,000 with the highest being \$80,010.

Recipients Include:

27 Aluna @ Octane
Abreo Restaurant
Alchemy at Aldeen/ Gio Events
Alpine View Restaurant
Culver's of Winnebago
District Bar & Grill
Dusty Boots Saloon & Eatery
Famous Dave's Rockford
Franchesco's Ristorante
Golden Corral
Greenfire Restaurant & Bakery
Hoffman House
Hope & Anchor English Pub
J. W. Marc's Fusion Café
Johnny Pancakes
LimaMar Restaurant

Lucha Cantina
Mulligan's of Rockford
Murphy's Pub & Grill
Onyx Bar & Grill
Oscar's Pub & Grill
Prairie Street Brewhouse
Scanlan's
Stockholm Inn
Stockyard Rock Burger Bar
Tad's Bar & Grill
Tavern on Clark
Thai Hut Restaurant
The Filling Station
The Norwegian
The Olympic Tavern
The Pomodoro
Vintage @501/Taco Libre

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reverberated across various sectors, particularly affecting the restaurant industry. Amidst mandated-closures and restrictions, many establishments faced significant hurdles and forced layoffs, leading to surging unemployment insurance rates. Recognizing the critical need for support, Rep. West and RACVB took proactive measures to extend a lifeline to these vital community businesses.

Expressing his commitment to aiding local businesses, **Rep. Maurice West** remarked, "Our restaurants are part of the heart and soul of our communities, providing not just meals, but also employment opportunities and gathering spaces. The grants we've awarded are a testament to our unwavering dedication to preserving the fabric of Rockford's culinary community."

Administered by RACVB, the grants were awarded to eligible restaurants in Winnebago County through an application process and professional review panel.

John Groh, president/CEO of RACVB, emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, "As stewards of Rockford's tourism and hospitality industry, it's imperative for us to support our local restaurants during times of crisis. These grants offer a lifeline to establishments that have endured immense challenges, ensuring they can continue serving residents and visitors - and employing our hardworking neighbors."

Review Panel: Grant recipients and the amounts awarded were determined by RACVB and a professional review panel. The panel reviewed application materials and recommended award amounts, working to ensure fairness across the board to eligible applicants. The review panel was chosen based on unemployment tax and staffing knowledge and consisted of Bridget Coleman, CPA, Coleman CPA & Accounting; Jennifer Furst, President, Furst Staffing; Carrie Hagerty, Finance Director, City of Rockford; Linda Heckert President & CEO, Northwest Bank and State Bank of Davis; John J. Morrissey, President/CEO, Staff Management; and John Schuster, Retired CFO, Rosecrance Health Network.

Future Grant Awards: Another round of awards will be made after Q1 and Q2 of 2024 unemployment taxes have been paid and quarterly payroll reports are completed. RACVB anticipates Round 2 applications will open in early July and additional awards will be made by early September. A third and final application round will open in January 2025 after Q3 and Q4 of 2024 are completed.

For additional information about the Restaurant Relief Grant Program, please visit GoRockford.com/Restaurant-Grant.

About: the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing and management organization for Rockford and Winnebago County and 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

State Representative Maurice West is serving his third term representing the 67th House District in the Rockford region. A Rockford native, Rep. West serves as Assistant Floor Whip in the 103rd General Assembly.

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