

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



RACVB Named National Sports Tourism Champions Again by Sports Events & Tourism Association

*2020 National Event Marketing Campaign, Locally Created Event of the Year
Honors Bring Bureau Fourth, Fifth National Sports Tourism Awards Since 2016*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2020

Rockford, IL – For the fourth and fifth times since 2016, the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) has been named a national champion by the Sports Events & Tourism Association (SportsETA), the official governing association for sports events and tourism in the United States. RACVB was chosen by its sports tourism colleagues for two more national awards—the **2020 SportsETA Event Marketing Campaign of the Year** and **2020 SportsETA Locally Created Event of the Year**—for its work in recruiting and hosting Rockford’s first-ever Olympic Trials, as well as creating and producing a three-part community event series in honor of the city’s first homegrown National Basketball Association (NBA) champion.

“It is my pleasure to announce that the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau has been chosen for not one, but two Sports ETA Member Awards: Event Marketing Campaign of the Year, Population under 500,000, and Locally Created Event of the Year, Population under 500,000. Congratulations on receiving both of these much-deserved awards,” said **Al Kidd, president & CEO of SportsETA**. “Each year we recognize the successes and good work of our members. These are the highest honors organizations and individuals in the sports events and tourism industry can receive and are awarded by peers. We are proud of the Rockford Area CVB and its many outstanding and invaluable contributions to the advancement of the sports events and tourism industry.”

RACVB’s winning Event Marketing Campaign of the Year was centered on its successful marketing and operations partnership with the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) North America, USA Table Tennis and BMO Harris Bank Center in hosting the first-ever Olympic Trials in Rockford. The Bureau’s marketing work began during the competitive bid process for the 2019 ITTF North American Olympic Table Tennis Trials, when it created a complete event marketing plan as part of the venue’s winning proposal.

The comprehensive plan included: multiple interactive press events; creating an event logo and branding elements; executing various media partnerships and digital and outdoor campaigns; and curating a free three-part community event awareness series that included the RKFD Loop recreational bar league, the City Market Celebrity Smash celebrity and media awareness tournament, and the Rally RKFD community festival the day of the 2019 ITTF North American Olympic Trials. From its efforts, RACVB tracked 2,500 total attendees to Trials-related events, a media reach in the millions, and more than 7,000 visits to www.RockfordOlympicTrials.com.

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“It is an honor to represent this community as a national sports tourism leader, and we’re grateful to SportsETA and our industry peers for these award recognitions—while they serve as a reminder of what results look like, they’re also motivator for us to recruit and create even more major tourism events, greater economic impact and enhanced brand awareness for the Rockford area,” said John Groh, RACVB president/CEO.

The Bureau received 2020 SportsETA Locally Created Event of the Year honors after it created and produced Jurassic Park RKFD as the only Toronto Raptors-themed NBA finals watch parties in the United States and Fred Comes Home as the official championship homecoming event in honor of Rockford native Fred VanVleet. An event trio developed as part of ongoing partnership efforts with professional athletes who are from the region, Jurassic Park RKFD and Fred Comes Home—which were free for the public to attend—brought more than 14,000 residents and visitors to downtown Rockford streets and City Market Pavilion over three days in June 2019.

RACVB hosted Jurassic Park RKFD watch parties for games five (June 10, 2019, 2,500 attendees) and six (June 13, 4,000) of the NBA Finals, before delivering Fred Comes Home + Dribble the City (June 29, 8,000) as a championship celebration that brought the community together to honor one of its proudest and most successful natives. The event series generated a media reach of 807,778,521, 736 media mentions around the globe, a GoRockford Facebook reach of 406,598, and a Rockford region advertising equivalent value of more than \$7.4 million.

“There are so many partners involved with earning the rights to host an international sports event or the trust to produce community events that create lifetime memories,” said Nick Povalitis, vice president of marketing & sports development. “We’re proud of what we accomplished last year and remain thankful to the BMO Harris Bank Center, the ITTF North America and USA Table Tennis, and Fred VanVleet and his team for their commitment to Rockford.”

Prior to this week’s honors, the Rockford Area CVB garnered three previous national SportsETA awards, including the 2016 and 2018 National Sports Tourism Organization of the Year and the 2019 Destination Branding & Marketing Campaign of the Year. Since 1984, RACVB has developed partnerships with a wide array of national event operators, regional facilities and partners near and far to set the standard for sports tourism throughout the Rockford region. The Bureau annually delivers millions in economic impact to Winnebago County and beyond from sports tourism events and continues to build the region’s destination brand through a mix of traditional and disruptive tourism marketing and sales programs.

As the Rockford region’s official tourism entity accredited by Destinations International (DI), RACVB utilizes the industry’s foremost data authorities and marketing insights companies to measure organizational success, including SportsETA, Tourism Economics – A Division of Oxford Economics, U.S. Travel Association, the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity and Meltwater, among others. For more information about RACVB’s marketing and sales programs and successes in sports tourism, visit www.GoRockford.com/sports.

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About Sports Events & Tourism Association (SportsETA): *As the non-profit 501(c)3 trade association for the sports events and tourism industry in the United States, SportsETA is the most essential resource for sports commissions, sports destinations, sports event owners, and industry partners. SportsETA believes sports tourism and the events that our members own and host have the power to transform society for the better. The organization's passion is to help sports events and tourism professionals achieve previously unimaginable levels of performance. SportsETA does this by nurturing a diverse and inclusive community of smart, creative, and interesting people: its members.*

The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. www.gorockford.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Nick Povalitis, RACVB vice president of marketing & sports development, 815.489.1652, npovalitis@gorockford.com

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