

PRESIDENT'S NEWSLETTER: APRIL 2015

Expansion, expansion, expansion! Growth is all around us this spring

Welcome to the President's Monthly Newsletter, one of the ways the Rockford Area Economic Development Council demonstrates the economic momentum in our community and helps you better understand what we do.

The Rockford Region's momentum was highly visible in April, with signs of expansion in various stages.

The positive outlook on expansion also headlined the 2014 Voice of the Customer report released last week. Almost one-third of businesses plan to expand in the next three years, according to [the RAEDC's annual VOC business climate survey](#). This is significant because the Rockford Region is coming off three years of aggressive growth and historic wins.

You will see just what that looks like throughout this newsletter.

Another positive trend continues:

In March, the unemployment rate fell in the Rockford MSA to 6.8 percent, down almost 3 percentage points from the same time a year ago. Numbers have been below 8 percent since December 2014.

Major projects:

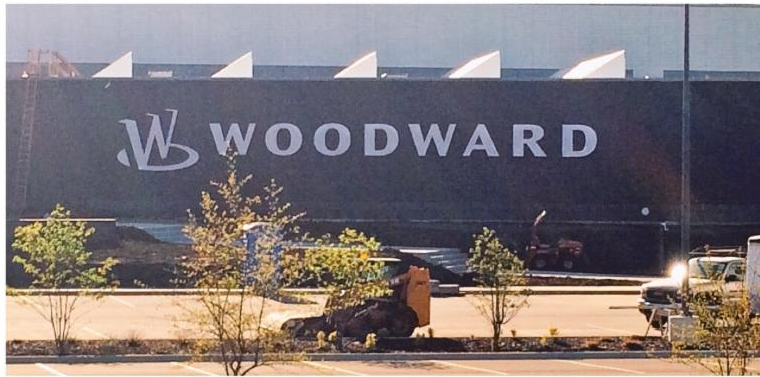
1. **Exciting nursing partnership:** [Rock Valley College](#) announced that it will start construction this summer of a [new \\$32 million Health Sciences building](#) on its Mulford

Road campus that will house the [Saint Anthony College of Nursing](#) program on two floors. This will allow students to earn a four-year nursing degree without leaving Rockford.

2. **"New era in our community"**: Rain held off just long enough April 24 for partners to hold their [construction "tipoff" celebration](#) outside the new indoor sports complex in downtown Rockford as part of the [Reclaiming First](#) initiative. The facility is expected to open in May 2016.



3. **Signs of progress**: In case you haven't driven by this part of Loves Park lately ... [Woodward](#) continues to put more finishing touches on its Rock Cut campus, like the signs on the building's Perryville Road side and in front of the Harlem Road entrance.



4. **May offers more to look forward to:** The [Meijer stores in Rockford and Machesney Park will open May 19](#) (their gas stations are already open). And [Gorman & Company expects to close in May on the downtown Amerock/Ziock property needed for its hotel and convention center](#).

The region's momentum is real; see our [2014 Annual Report](#)

Staff/organization updates

1. In mid-April, **Carrie Zethmayr** traveled to Miami for [MRO Americas 2015](#), **the most comprehensive conference program on aircraft maintenance**. She found tremendous diversity and opportunity in the field, critical to growing our supply chain as [AAR Corp.](#) gears up to open an MRO facility at [Chicago Rockford International Airport](#). See [photos](#) of the local companies Carrie saw while she was there. Earlier in the month, she also marketed the Rockford Region by attending the [Chicago Industrial Properties Summit](#) and sending the [quarterly Rising Star newsletter](#) to key real estate contacts.

2. At the April 24 board meeting, the RAEDC thanked **Mark Podemski** for his dedication, passion and [accomplishments](#) in improving the economic strength of the Rockford Region for the past 10 years. **We will miss him but are pleased he is staying in the area** to lead a growing young company, [Ikon Electric](#). Congrats again! ([The position, vice president for development, is posted.](#) Please share with your contacts.)



3. **Two recent events promoted the major growth opportunity posed by exports.** On March 27, "[Preventing Scams, Fraud, and Deceit in International Business](#)" featured Louise Kern, managing director of GloBIS, a world-renowned resource for vetting international business partners and mitigating risk. And on April 16 at "[Taking Your Business International,](#)" experts from UPS offered ways to become more efficient and profitable when businesses go global.

Terrance Hall, international trade and business development specialist, was featured April 5 on [WREX-TV](#)'s 30-minute Sunday news program, "13 Cares," to further promote the value of going global.



4. **New Illinois Treasurer Michael Frerichs** introduced himself to three dozen business and government leaders in Rockford April 30 as part of a statewide tour. He used the casual lunch setting to promote financial programs that help people succeed, from college savings programs to retirement plans. His office also manages the I-Cash unclaimed property program. Frerichs plans to return to talk about a new program that will affect businesses with more than 25 employees. Find links to his office and programs [here](#).

We share good news regularly. A recent sampling:

[Conseco building to be renovated to accommodate TAC Rockford's growth](#)

[Ceroni Piping plans to build in Cherry Valley so it can grow](#)

[Rockford Rescue Mission breaks ground on two-story addition](#)

[OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center plans \\$85 million expansion](#)

[Superior Joining Technologies closes on 54,000-square-foot Machesney Park property](#)

National press: [Rockford's aerospace cluster touted in Aerospace Manufacturing and Design magazine](#)

Upcoming events

- **May 27, Northrop Grumman Supplier Symposium:** Hosted by U.S. Congressman Adam Kinzinger. This is your opportunity to connect directly with a leading global security company. [Register by May 20.](#)
- **Aug. 18, AAR Supplier Symposium:** Email Bea Miller at bmiller@rockfordil.com if you are interested in learning more.

- **Nov. 18, RAEDC Annual Meeting and Dinner:** Save the date! Details to come.
- ... **And next year! May 4, 2016:** [Go Global 2016](#), the stateline's premier international trade conference.

Watch for my President's Newsletter each month to see the collective impact of our efforts.

The RAEDC often works behind the scenes due to the confidential nature of business projects. Plus, big deals take time: The average time from start to completion on the more than 20 announced project wins in 2014 was 665 days, with several projects requiring more than three years.

We are committed to persistence and continuity in our work: We market the Rockford Region to the world, influencing companies to locate or expand here. We support and promote growth within targeted industries through regional public-private collaboration. We assist prospective and existing companies by connecting them to resources for workforce development, available buildings, supply chain partners, incentives and more.

Together, we will continue the momentum in 2015 for an even stronger, more sustainable economy. **Together, we will Connect, Act and Thrive!**



Michael Nicholas

[Michael Nicholas](#)

President,
Rockford Area Economic
Development Council



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ABOUT THE RAEDC

The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC) is to collaboratively improve the economic strength of the Rockford Region by helping employers retain and create quality jobs. The RAEDC works closely with many partners to learn what existing and new employers need to grow, and to serve as a one-stop resource for clients. The RAEDC seeks to improve the competitiveness of the region by taking what it learns from the region's employers, and engaging the community in the daily work of economic development.