



## Rockford Named a Ford Next Generation Learning Model Community

**Rockford, IL, Oct. 20, 2015** – Rockford, Illinois, has been named the nation’s third Ford NGL Model Community by Ford Motor Company Fund, the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company. The designation is based on Rockford’s success in developing and implementing the high school career academies and includes a \$25,000 grant from Ford Fund to further develop the program.

The Rockford community came together in 2012 to launch the career academy model across the district’s high schools. Career academies are a proven national model in which students learn in an environment that is more relevant and engaging, better preparing them for college, career and life. Over the past three years, Rockford has successfully launched career academies at all RPS205 high schools, featuring career pathways such as Engineering, Information Technology, Law and Public Safety and Medical and Health Sciences.

As a Ford NGL Model Community, Rockford will be an example for educators in Ford NGL communities across the country, offering educational visits and workshops on how to transform their high schools and better prepare students for college, career and life. Ford NGL is nationally recognized for its unique model of career-themed academies that provide the foundation for high school students to learn academics through the lens of a potential career. Ford NGL communities connect academy students with professionals currently working in their chosen field, providing valuable insight into the day-to-day challenges and the skills required for success.

Rockford was designated a Ford NGL community in October of 2014, when Superintendent Ehren Jarrett publicly announced the intention to become a Model community by 2016. Rockford is hosting its first Ford NGL Academies of Rockford Study Visit this week from October 19-20 with 40 people attending from five communities.

The academy approach is at least partially responsible for positive indicators in the Rockford School District: In the last four years, attendance is up 2 percent, the average ACT score is up almost a point, the five-year graduation rate is up 5 percent and there have been double-digit increases in both the number of AP tests taken and passed.

“The College & Career Academies of Rockford are an outstanding example of how educators and community members can organize and align their resources in support of a strong plan to implement high school career academies,” said Cheryl Carrier, Executive Director of Ford NGL for Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services. “Their goal of reaching “Model” status by 2016 was certainly surpassed! Congratulations to this amazing community and their students.”

Superintendent Ehren Jarrett said the credit is shared. “We are grateful to Ford NGL for recognizing the hard work of our staff, students and community partners in Rockford, and we are indebted to Nashville for leading the way. Nashville was the first Model Community, and we have big shoes to fill. But we are

honored and privileged to do this work, on behalf of the students who have so much invested in a relevant and transformed education.”

***About Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services***

Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services works with community partners to advance driving safety, education and community life. For more than 60 years, Ford Motor Company Fund has operated with ongoing funding from Ford Motor Company. The award-winning Ford Driving Skills for Life teaches new drivers through a variety of hands-on and interactive methods. Innovation in education is encouraged through programs that enhance high school learning and provide college scholarships and university grants. Through the Ford Volunteer Corps, 25,000 Ford employees and dealers work on projects each year that better their communities in more than 30 countries. For more information, visit

[www.community.ford.com](http://www.community.ford.com).

***Alignment Rockford*** is a collaborative, non-profit framework for improving Rockford's schools that coordinates community resources with the strategic plan of the Rockford Public Schools. Alignment Rockford is the community coordinator for Ford NGL.

***Rockford Public Schools*** focuses on college and career readiness for its 28,500 students. It is among the largest school districts in Illinois and the second-largest employer in the Rockford region. RPS 205 strives to be the first choice for all families.

For more information:

Bridget French, Executive Director, Alignment Rockford  
815.979.1313, [bridgetfrench@alignmentrockford](mailto:bridgetfrench@alignmentrockford)

Earl Dotson Jr., Chief Communications Officer, RPS 205  
815-966-5299, [earldotson@rps205.com](mailto:earldotson@rps205.com)