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GRAMMY AWARD WINNER, MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE MICHELLE WILLIAMS TO HEADLINE SECOND ANNUAL DIAMONDS STORYTELLING GALA

ESPN's Nicole Briscoe Returns Home to Emcee Nonprofit Fundraiser on July 17

ROCKFORD, Ill., June 5, 2024: Founders Commission is thrilled to announce that the second annual **DIAMONDS** storytelling gala will be headlined by entertainment icon, mental health advocate and Rockford native Michelle Williams. Scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at Embassy Suites by Hilton Rockford Riverfront, **DIAMONDS: Michelle Williams** is a nonprofit fundraiser that celebrates and leverages Williams's inspiring and powerful story that will be highlighted live at DIAMONDS during an interactive on-stage interview. Corporate tables and tickets are on sale at [www.FoundersCommission.org/diamonds](http://wwwFOUNDERSCommission.org/diamonds).

A Grammy Award-winning singer, songwriter, actress and author, Williams rose to fame in the 2000s as a member of one of the best-selling female groups of all time – Destiny's Child. Now, Williams is a mental health advocate who became one of the first celebrities to publicly discuss her battle with depression, which led to her hosting her own podcast “Checking-In with Michelle Williams” on the iHeartMedia Network. In 2021 she released her first book “Checking In: How Getting Real about Depression Saved My Life — and Can Save Yours” and just a year later she released a follow-up Journal, “The Daily Check-In”.

“I’m so excited to come home for the second annual DIAMONDS,” said Williams. “While my career achievements have taken me around the world, my story traces back to Rockford. I’m looking forward to being home again and giving back as part of this amazing program!”

Williams will be joined back home by Roscoe native and ESPN SportsCenter anchor Nicole Briscoe, who returns as DIAMONDS emcee for the second-straight year. Briscoe will interview Williams during a packed evening program that includes a pre-event partner reception (invite only), dinner, cash bar, audience Q&A opportunities, entertainment, the inaugural DIAMONDS Scholar post-secondary scholarship presentation, and post-event reception.

“After last year’s acclaimed debut of DIAMONDS, we’re ecstatic to spotlight another iconic, ongoing success story,” said Nick Povalitis, founder and president of Founders Commission. “We’re incredibly grateful to Michelle (Williams) for joining us this year. Her story embodies excellence and perseverance – it’s filled with lessons that we as a community can learn from and better ourselves from in so many ways.”

Prior to the evening show, Founders Commission, Williams and the Rockford Park District are teaming up to expand the impact of DIAMONDS for kids by debuting Next Gems as a youth engagement event. Held the afternoon of July 17, this free, invitation-only program will be centered this year on mental health and wellness for area youth. Details for Next Gems attendees will be released in the coming weeks.

DIAMONDS tickets are \$125 per person and 1834 Club corporate tables of eight are available for \$1,834 at www.FoundersCommission.org/diamonds. A formal attire celebration, DIAMONDS net proceeds benefit the Founders Commission (501(c)(3)). In addition, Founders Commission will donate a portion of this year’s event proceeds to a local nonprofit to be announced on behalf of Williams.

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Partnership opportunities for this year's DIAMONDS are still available – inquiries should be emailed to Info@FoundersCommission.org. For additional updates and information, visit www.FoundersCommission.org and follow Founders Commission on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Special thanks to the following organizations and individuals:

- **1834 Club Partners:** Andrell Bragg-Shaw LPC, J. Jeffers & Co., Jim and Pam Keeling, Kelley Williamson Company, MembersAlliance Credit Union, Xfinity
- **TV Partner:** Eyewitness News (WTVO/WQRF)
- **Supporting Partners:** Rockford Park District, Ron Clewer, Winnebago County
- **In-Kind:** Embassy Suites by Hilton Rockford Riverfront, Plus Seven Company

About DIAMONDS: An annual storytelling gala honoring the Rockford region's exemplary brands and people, DIAMONDS embodies the pressure and process necessary to achieve the highest level of achievement. In addition to being a celebration of success, DIAMONDS is a platform for the community's most successful native brands and people to activate in and give back to their hometown. The inaugural DIAMONDS was produced June 15, 2023, after which Founders Commission utilized event net proceeds to donate to a local nonprofit and seed the launch of the DIAMONDS Scholar youth scholarship program.

About DIAMONDS Scholar: Administered by the Founders Commission, **DIAMONDS Scholar** post-secondary scholarships are eligible to high school seniors from Boone, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago counties. Scholarships are awarded annually to graduating seniors who are pursuing post-second education in college, university, junior college, or technical/trades settings. In alignment with DIAMONDS as a vehicle for showcasing exemplary achievement, applicants must embody excellence in the classroom, demonstrate an ability to thrive under pressure, and show a commitment to volunteerism in the Rockford region. Founders Commission received 24 DIAMONDS Scholar applicants the scholarship program's first year.

About Founders Commission: A certified 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Founders Commission celebrates and leverages the Rockford region's excellence and ingenuity in business, arts and entertainment, and sports for brand, economic and social good. Inspired by the region's lineage of success tracing back to 1834 when settlers first arrived along a rocky ford, Founders Commission was established in 2023 as a charitable, educational, civic and scientific nonprofit governed by community advocates and business leaders.

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