



FOUNDERS  
COMMISSION

## FOUNDERS COMMISSION UNVEILS MULTI-FACETED 2023-24 GIVEBACK PROGRAMS

*Inaugural DIAMONDS Gala Net Proceed Yields DIAMONDS Scholar Post-Secondary Scholarship,  
Disabled American Veterans Donation and Creation of DIAMONDS Regional Hall of Fame*

**ROCKFORD, Ill., September 18, 2023:** Following the success of the inaugural DIAMONDS gala, **Founders Commission (FC)** is thrilled to announce its 2023-24 giveback program plans featuring a donation made earlier this summer to the **Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Blackhawk Life Chapter 29**, today's launch of the **DIAMONDS Scholar** post-secondary scholarship program, and the 2024 debut of the **DIAMONDS Regional Hall of Fame (DRHOF)**.

Administered by the Founders Commission, **DIAMONDS Scholar** youth scholarships are eligible to high school seniors from Boone, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago counties. For the 2023-24 cycle, at least one \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a graduating senior who is pursuing college, university, junior college, or technical/trades post-secondary education. 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. The DIAMONDS Scholar scholarship application period is open through January 31, 2024 (no late submissions will be accepted). For application information, visit <https://www.founderscommission.org/scholarships>.

Founders Commission was also honored to make a donation in late June to the **DAV Blackhawk Life Chapter 29**. Based at Veterans Memorial Hall in downtown Rockford, DAV Blackhawk is the local DAV chapter dedicated to a single purpose: empowering more than 800 Rockford area veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. In the region and around the country, the DAV ensures that veterans and their families have access to a full range of available benefits, it fights for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill, and it educates the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back into civilian life. For more information on the national and local chapter, click [DAV HQ](#) and [DAV Blackhawk Life Chapter 29](#).

"Our goals at the Founders Commission include leveraging success stories to create new programs that uplift the region," said **Nick Povalitis**, founder and president of Founders Commission. "Thanks to the support of so many individuals and organizations in our first year, DIAMONDS: TOPGUN delivered on event day *and* allowed us to extend our impact through the DIAMONDS Scholar program and a donation to the DAV Blackhawk Life Chapter 29. We're so excited to keep building on the momentum of DIAMONDS, including the unveiling of the 2024 gala theme and an expansion highlighted by the DIAMONDS Regional Hall of Fame."

Debuting in 2024 as another signature program of the Founders Commission, the **DIAMONDS Regional Hall of Fame (DRHOF)** represents an annual recognition bestowed upon the exemplary brands and people who are native to the Rockford, Illinois, region. DRHOF honorees include individuals and entities that have made an indelible mark on the world from their contributions to business, arts and entertainment, and sports arenas. Eligible to living and past legends native to Boone, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago counties, DRHOF inductees will be honored as part of the annual DIAMONDS gala beginning in 2024.

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Details for the DIAMONDS Regional Hall of Fame cycle—including the nomination process, hall of fame ballot announcement and public voting period—will be announced in the coming weeks.

“We are excited and proud to shine a light on Stateline organizations that are working so hard to improve the area,” said **Cathy Headley**, board chair of the Founders Commission. “Honoring those that are doing great things in our area is a desire of Founders Commission. I appreciate their hard work and determination. We hope to share more with the community.”

As the first flagship program of Founders Commission, **DIAMONDS** is an annual storytelling gala experience that honors the Rockford region’s long lineage of exemplary brands and people. **DIAMONDS: TOPGUN** marked the year-one event theme produced June 15, 2023, at the Emery Air North Hangar in Rockford, where **Lieutenant Commander Michael Andrews** (U.S. Navy TOPGUN instructor and Rockford native), **Nicole Briscoe** (ESPN SportsCenter anchor and Roscoe native) and **CAPT Deborah Davis McIvy** (U.S. Navy Supply Corps Officer and Rockford native) attended and shared their success stories to more than 200 attendees.

For more program information, visit [www.FoundersCommission.org](http://www.FoundersCommission.org).

**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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