

# RAEDC 2015 Annual Meeting and Dinner

## Opportunities to Rockforward

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 18, 2015

**ROCKFORD** -- Nearly 800 business and community leaders celebrated the region's economic progress and looked ahead to an even brighter future in manufacturing at tonight's Rockford Area Economic Development Council's 2015 Annual Meeting and Dinner.

James M. Schultz, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, presented the evening's keynote address. Director Schultz was appointed by Governor Bruce Rauner to the position in February 2015. During his address he spoke regarding today's challenges, that of our state and its businesses, as well as touching on some key solutions and exciting opportunities. The State of Illinois' existing tools and resources, available from the Illinois Department of Commerce, were also highlighted during his address.

Director Schultz provided an update on the State's strategies to grow the economy, improve its reputation and expand opportunities. All with the goal of retaining and attracting top talent and increased investment to the state.

During his speech Director Schultz discussed the evolution of the state's marketing strategy by providing a snapshot of its "Transition Branding".

[Rockforward20/20](#) has been announced as the successor to Rockforward2!.

Rockforward2! started in 2013 as a three-year program to measure the three major indicators of economic activity: jobs, capital investment and business growth by square footage. As of October 31, 2015 two of the three Rockforward2! goals have been surpassed.

Rockforward2! measurement	Total goal over 3 years (2013-2015)	Progress so far	Percentage achieved
Number of jobs (new or retained)	4,500	3,966 (415 to go)	88%
Capital investment	\$249 million	\$395 million (goal achieved)	159%
Square feet of new or renovated space	2.31 million	3.7 million (goal achieved)	163%

The Rockforward20/20 initiative begins in January 2016. Introduced in September 2015 the five-year Strategic Plan and Investment Campaign will embrace the many economic opportunities in our region and carry forward the momentum from

Rockforward21.

Representing a bold vision for our future, this aggressive plan will be a catalyst to create and retain over 10,000 jobs and significantly increase capital investment in the region.

The new Rockforward20/20 five-year goals continue to measure the three main economic activities.

Rockforward20/20 measurement	Total goal over 5 years (2016-2020)
Number of jobs (new or retained)	10,500
Capital investment	\$925 million
Square feet of new or renovated space	38 million

The Mission of Rockforward20/20: The Rockford Area Economic Development Council cultivates opportunities for primary job growth that increase the economic well-being of our region.

The Vision for Rockforward20/20: The Rockford Area Economic Development Council propels the region to top 25 status, as the model for impactful economic development in partnership with regional organizations.

The key areas of focus for the Rockforward20/20 initiative include:

- Trail-blaze
- Inspire Action
- Align
- Seed
- Serve

[Sagar Patel](#), President of Woodward and Chairman of the Board for the Economic Development Council mentioned in his opening remarks, "The RAEDC and its stakeholders have been committed to assist this exciting step in our region's workforce development initiatives. We are in the midst of a manufacturing renaissance and engineers are at the core of it." Continuing on stating "The Rockford Region will be able to grow our own engineering talent and provide a big boost to our advanced manufacturing companies. This is exciting and historic!," referring to the Rock Valley College and Northern Illinois University's partnership that allows regional students the opportunity to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering or Electrical Engineering for under \$40,000.

RAEDC President [Mike Nicholas](#) mentioned in his closing remarks that the RAEDC heard and understands what the community needs stating, "We listened and implemented many of the suggestions we received. As the steward of this region, we market the region externally for growth and we will not abandon our current efforts...,

we will be expanding efforts, we will be a trailblazer."

#### **RAEDC ANNUAL MEETING EVENT SPONSORS**

*Presenting Sponsor:* OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center

*Principal Sponsor:* Alpine Bank

*Premier Sponsors:* First Northern Credit Union, MercyRockford Health System, Meridian, Nicor Gas, PCI Pharma Services, SwedishAmerican Health System, Woodward, Inc.

*Supporting Sponsors:* Northwestern Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council, ComEd

#### **ROCKFORWARD2! PRESIDENTS CIRCLE INVESTORS**

Alpine Bank, Building Trades/Project First Rate, City of Loves Park, City of Rockford, Comcast Business, ComEd, Fehr Graham, First Midwest Group, Inc., Greater Rockford Airport Authority, IBEW/NECA, JP Morgan Chase, Larson & Darby Group, MercyRockford Health System, Mid-West Family Broadcasting, Northern Illinois Building Contractors Association, OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center, Rockford Area REALTORS, Rockford Public Schools, Rockford Register Star, SwedishAmerican Health System, Townsquare Media, LLC, UTC Aerospace Systems, Village of Machesney Park, WIFR-TV, Winnebago County, Woodward, Inc., WQRF TV/WTVO TV, WREX

#### **ABOUT THE RAEDC**

The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council 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 serve as a one-stop resource for clients, to improve the competitiveness of the region and to engage the community in the daily work of economic development.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Jimsi Kuborn

Director of Investor Relations

815.969.4259

[jkuborn@rockfordil.com](mailto:jkuborn@rockfordil.com)

Erin Marshall

Communications and Marketing Coordinator

815-969-4267

[emarshall@rockfordil.com](mailto:emarshall@rockfordil.com)

# # #