



## HEADLINED BY MICHELLE WILLIAMS, SECOND ANNUAL DIAMONDS GALA BRINGS STAR AND STORY POWER TO ROCKFORD NEXT WEDNESDAY

*ESPN's Nicole Briscoe Joins Williams Back Home for Founders Commission's Nonprofit Fundraiser*

**ROCKFORD, Ill., July 9, 2024:** The second annual DIAMONDS storytelling gala returns to the Rockford region in eight days, when GRAMMY award winner, actor, author, mental health advocate and Rockford native Michelle Williams headlines **DIAMONDS: Michelle Williams**. Scheduled for 7 p.m. Wednesday, July 17, 2024, at Embassy Suites by Hilton Rockford Riverfront, the second edition of DIAMONDS will bring the community and stars out for an experience that celebrates and leverages the inspiring and powerful story of Williams. As part of an expanded year-two program, highlights include:

- **Rockford Icon:** A Grammy Award-winning singer, songwriter, actress and author, **Michelle 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”. In addition to her contributions to music and mental health, Williams is a renowned performer in film and theater settings, including a starring role earlier this summer in the Chicago-based theater production of “Death Becomes Her”.
- **Returning DIAMONDS:** There will be some familiar faces and an extra jolt of star power joining Williams for year two. ESPN SportsCenter anchor and Roscoe native **Nicole Briscoe** is back for the second-straight year as event emcee, while Lieutenant Commander **Michael Andrews** (U.S. Navy TOPGUN instructor (retired), 2023 DIAMONDS keynote) and Captain **Deborah Davis Mclvy** (U.S. Navy Supply Corps Officer, 2023 DIAMONDS panelist) will be in attendance next Wednesday evening to present the inaugural DIAMONDS Scholar honoree.
- **Inaugural DIAMONDS Scholar:** Administered by the Founders Commission, **DIAMONDS Scholar** youth scholarships are eligible to high school seniors from Boone, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago counties who are pursuing college, university, junior college, or technical/trades post-secondary education. In alignment with DIAMONDS as a vehicle for showcasing exemplary achievement, honorees must embody excellence in the classroom, demonstrate an ability to thrive under pressure, and show a commitment to volunteerism in the Rockford region. In its inaugural year, Founders Commission received 24 applications from students that represented nine area high schools. Of the 24 applicants, 100 percent had a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher and all demonstrated a well-rounded high school career inside and outside of the classroom. Our inaugural DIAMONDS Scholar will be unveiled during DIAMONDS next Wednesday evening.
- **Next Gems:** In partnership with the Rockford Park District, Founders Commission is proud to expand the impact of DIAMONDS for kids by debuting **Next Gems** this year as a free mental health and wellness summit curated exclusively for Rockford area youth. As part of DIAMONDS: Michelle Williams, the first Next Gems summit is an invite-only program open held the afternoon of Wednesday, July 17. The program will provide 50 area youth the opportunity to network with professional vendors, engage in breakout sessions led by local mental health professionals, enjoy

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lunch and giveaways, and meet with Williams, this year's featured guest of DIAMONDS. Special thanks to the Rockford Park District, presenting partner of the DIAMONDS Next Gems youth summit.

- **Great Seats, Great Cause:** DIAMONDS dinner tickets are \$125 per person, while VIP tickets cost \$175 (allowing guests access to the pre-event reception from 6-7 p.m.). In addition, standard tables of 10 are available for \$1,250, while 1834 Club corporate tables of eight are available for \$1,834. All tickets can be purchased at [www.FoundersCommission.org/diamonds](http://wwwFOUNDERSCommission.org/diamonds) – reserve your seat by this Friday! Net proceeds benefit the Founders Commission (501(c)(3)) and a local nonprofit to be announced.

For more information, visit [www.FoundersCommission.org](http://www.FoundersCommission.org) and follow Founders Commission on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

Special thanks to the following organizations and individuals:

- **Champion Partner:** Perfetti Van Melle USA
- **1834 Club Partners:** Andrell Bragg-Shaw LPC, Embassy Suites by Hilton Rockford Riverfront, J. Jeffers & Co., Jim and Pam Keeling, Kelley Williamson Company, MembersAlliance Credit Union, Rockford University, Xfinity, YMCA of Rock River Valley
- **TV Partner:** Eyewitness News (WTVO/WQRF)
- **Supporting Partners:** Country Financial – Justine Johnson, Rockford Park District, Ron Clewer, Winnebago County
- **In-Kind:** Luxe Productions, Plus Seven Company

**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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