

# NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



## **5<sup>th</sup> Annual Rock River Off-Season Competition Gives Back!** *R2OC to Offer Scholarships, Grant Money as Event Expands to 36 Teams*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 11, 2017**

**ROCKFORD, IL** – Giving back and growth highlight the fifth annual Rock River Off-season Competition (R2OC), a premier robotics event presented by UTC Aerospace Systems and Woodward. Under the stewardship of a local nonprofit volunteer board and committee, R2OC, a certified 501(c)(3) organization, will for the first time offer up to four \$1,000 scholarships to 2017 R2OC student participants—a \$4,000 total commitment split evenly between R2OC and Rock Valley College Foundation—in addition to as much as \$7,000 in grant funding courtesy of R2OC for robotics start-up expenses for grade school and middle school programming in Boone, Stephenson and Winnebago counties.

The R2OC scholarship application process was open for student participants graduating in 2017 or 2018, and the winning recipients will be announced at the 2017 event, which is slated for Saturday, July 29, at the Rock Valley College PE Center.

“The R2OC Committee is ecstatic to bring this prestigious youth showcase back for a fifth year, and we’re particularly excited about being in a position to give back to area youth through grants and the event’s attendees through scholarships,” says Karen Hill, R2OC co-chair. “The students competing in this event are our future workforce, and our five local teams now have alumni interning or working at manufacturers in the Rock River Valley. R2OC is a phenomenal organization for our community and it’s a pleasure to work alongside so many talented students and partners.”

RVC Foundation allocated up to \$2,000 of additional scholarship funds after R2OC announced the event’s scholarship program.

“For five years, Rock Valley College has been a key partner of R2OC, and it is only fitting that the RVC Foundation has offered further scholarship opportunity for participating kids,” says Chris Magee, R2OC co-chair. “R2OC has been fortunate to have received such great support from our community’s educational and corporate base, and that has been integral in building a nonprofit organization that can give back in so many ways.”

Thanks to that strong local support and careful budgeting, R2OC is also working with *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in establishing up to \$7,000 in grant funding this year that is earmarked specifically for supporting the long-term growth and health of robotics programming in the three counties represented by the event’s five host teams: Flaming Monkeys from Belvidere, Metalheads from Freeport, Rockford Robotics, Stateline Robotics from Rockton, and Winnovation from Winnebago and Pecatonica. All school districts within these three counties that are interested in developing robotics programming for grades K-8 are encouraged to contact [grants@R2OC.org](mailto:grants@R2OC.org) about this financial assistance opportunity.

After a highly successful first four years, the 2017 R2OC will feature 36 teams from the Midwest. The STEM showcase event will begin at 8:45 a.m. Saturday, July 29, with an opening ceremony before continuing all day with robotics competitions until approximately 5 p.m. The 2017 field is projected to total more than 700 participants and 2,000 fans from four states.

The teams of R2OC will also coordinate their annual Reach Out and Read Book Drive in conjunction with the 2017 event. Participants are encouraged to bring books for donation to the local Reach Out and Read chapter affiliated with Crusader Clinic. In its first four years, R2OC has donated 4,400 books.

Admission to R2OC is free and concessions will be available. Please wear closed-toe shoes for access to the team pits. For more information, visit [www.r2oc.org](http://www.r2oc.org).

This off-season event is derived from the international *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC), which combines sports with the rigors of science and technology. Approximately 3,357 teams and 83,000 students globally have competed for glory in the 2017 themed game, *FIRST STEAMWORKS*, a competition that invites two adventure clubs from an era in which technology relied on steam power to prepare their airships for the ultimate long distance race. This varsity sport for the mind features teams of 10 or more high school students who are challenged to build and program a robot to perform prescribed tasks against a field of competitors, raise funds, design a team brand, and hone teamwork skills.

**RACVB** is a private, non-profit organization established in 1984 to champion efforts to promote the Rockford Region as an overnight visitor destination. The RACVB adds wealth to the region's economy by investing in marketing programs that grow tourism. [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com)

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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