



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Miller Ingenuity Becomes Founding Legacy Partner in REACH**

*The program will address the need for a skilled workforce in the manufacturing sector.*

**Winona, MN** - Miller Ingenuity, a rail product manufacture based in Winona, MN, has pledged its support to a new student-focused project called REACH. Led by the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce Business Education Network, a pilot project of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, REACH is intended to bridge the gap between classroom curriculum and local employers.

Thirty Winona High School juniors will participate in a two-year immersion experience that will focus on work preparedness, improved academic performance and internships. Students will learn leadership, communication and professional soft skills through classes and out-of-school activities. In addition, REACH students will take a series of specific technical classes such as computer-aided design and how to read and develop blueprints and render the blueprints into 3D objects.

Through a dual-credit arrangement, the students will graduate from high school and also earn credits through Minnesota State College Southeast Technical.

Miller Ingenuity became the Founding Legacy Partner of the REACH program with a financial gift of \$15,000 to the Winona Chamber Foundation.

“At Miller Ingenuity, we know that there has been a growing gap between employer needs and worker skills,” said Steven L. Blue, President & CEO, Miller ingenuity. “Partnering with the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce and investing in the REACH program will not only provide students with necessary workplace skills, but will also set them up for stable and engaging employment post-graduation.”

“This is an exciting program to address workforce issues” stated Winona Chamber President Della Schmidt. “We are thrilled to have Miller Ingenuity as the Founding Legacy Partner for REACH. Steve Blue has always been a champion for promoting careers in manufacturing. He understands the potential impacts of REACH for local manufacturing employers.”

The initiative is part of the Minnesota Chamber’s Business Education Networks, a program launched in 2016 to better connect employers with high school and college students, and with higher education and workforce training systems. The goal is to ensure that businesses have ready access to highly skilled workers they want to employ, and to make certain that students from all backgrounds complete degree and certificate programs in areas where they will have meaningful employment opportunities.

“Every conversation we have with employers includes their urgent concerns about workforce needs. The strategy behind Business Education Networks is to mobilize employers to engage directly with students and help them understand what jobs look like in their communities, how to prepare in school for those opportunities, and how to access these opportunities, said Laura Bordelon, Minnesota Chamber senior vice president for advocacy. “REACH is the next step. We are really excited to see the project launched and the students succeed.”

The Minnesota Chamber is expanding Business Education Networks in partnership with local chambers of commerce in other communities in Minnesota.

## **PILOT PROJECT**

Minnesota Chamber Business Education Networks began with the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce. Winona has 100-plus manufacturers, many in need of workers. Initiatives include:

- “Hot Jobs, Cool Companies” – a manufacturing and jobs website and directory of every manufacturing and technology company in the Winona area, listing opportunities and required skills needed for jobs.
- Career Exploration Expo - high school students are introduced to trade and educational paths in all industries where there is a high demand for jobs in the region.
- CEO in the Classroom - business executives engage with eighth-grade classrooms to talk with students about their career choices and how decisions in high school will open up opportunities.
- Teacher in the Workplace, where high school teachers are placed in local manufacturing companies for weeklong immersion experiences.

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## **ABOUT MILLER INGENUITY**

Miller Ingenuity, a manufacturing company based in Winona, MN, is a global supplier of lifesaving, high-technology safety systems and services that surpass rail-safety standards. For more than 65 years, the organization has demonstrated the ability to conceptualize, design, produce and deliver railroad parts that meet the current and emerging needs of the industry. For more information, visit [www.milleringenuity.com](http://www.milleringenuity.com).