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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anonymous Donor pledges \$110,000 to match gifts to Rogers STEM Spirit Fund at Innovia Foundation

SPOKANE, WA, June 24, 2020 — A retired teacher, who wishes to remain anonymous, is donating \$110,000 with a challenge to the community to match this gift to support Rogers High School students in pursuing careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. Every dollar donated will be matched, dollar for dollar, up to \$110,000.

“Rogers has had a big turnaround in the last six years or so. We extended the school day, added extra days onto the 180-day schedule, provided in-school support for attendance and connecting to families, and have an active College Success Foundation advisor,” Rogers High School Principal Lori Wyborney said. “Our graduation rate is one of the highest in Spokane, but there is more we need to do.”

Why Rogers?

- 81% of students at Rogers qualify for free or reduced meals.
- 28.8% of Rogers students move during a school year, making this the highest mobility rate among the five comprehensive high schools in Spokane.
- 94% of Rogers’ 2020 graduates applied to their post-secondary choice of a technical/trade school, military, 2-year/4-year college or apprenticeships.
- Only 70% of Rogers graduates who go to a 2- or 4-year college are able to continue their education for a second year. This rate is far lower than the 89% of high school graduates in Spokane who persist in college after their first year.
- When Rogers graduates do continue their higher education beyond year one, only 27% attain a degree within eight years, compared to 46% of other high school graduates in Spokane.

2018 Rogers Grad achieves success

Like many Rogers students, Britny Farrar ‘18 achieved success through the experience she gleaned at Rogers BioMedical lab, helping her to land a promising job as an environmental monitoring technician at Jubilant HollisterStier. Opportunities like these need to be accessible to more Rogers students.

“The STEM program prepared me for the majority of what I do at Jubilant HollisterStier,” Farrar said. “A lot of the lessons and projects we had to do were focused around current, new-age processes within the biomedical field.”

There is strong data indicating that future jobs will increasingly require knowledge in STEM. An education with a strong STEM component can improve students’ future work success, but many Rogers students lack access to those educational opportunities, creating a noticeable opportunity gap. There are costs associated with effective STEM education, but the return on investment is worth every penny.

“Students need real-life applications to help translate these words into tangible and relatable experiences,” Spokane STEM Executive Director Cassidy Peterson said.

Rogers STEM programs help students research problems and design solutions that benefit the community. Two years ago, a group of biomedical and engineering students from Rogers High School completed a project where they collected carbon waste from burned trees, turned them into capsules and devised a way to inject those capsules into the ground to fertilize the soil and balance its pH to promote crop growth. Financial support helps students who show promise, providing scholarship assistance from donated funds to ensure they continue their education, complete a degree and become engaged in meaningful work.

“It is critical for the Spokane community to continue identifying barriers—intellectual, as well as physical, resource barriers—that we can eliminate. Over the next decade, we need to prepare young people to fill the vast amount of job openings in our regional economy that will demand STEM knowledge and skills,” Peterson said.

The Rogers STEM Spirit Fund at Innovia allows the school to apply the funds at its discretion to enhance their science labs and pursue unique strategies to help students succeed in the classroom and beyond. This summer, community members can double their donations by supporting the Rogers STEM Spirit Fund hosted at Innovia Foundation by visiting [https://innovia.org/give-now/?select_fund= Rogers STEM Spirit Fund](https://innovia.org/give-now/?select_fund=Rogers%20STEM%20Spirit%20Fund).

“Rogers students demonstrate what resilience in the face of challenge looks like by persistently pursuing academic achievement. By investing in the school’s STEM programs, we can provide students with the resources and support they need to thrive in their post-secondary pursuits,” Innovia’s CEO Shelly O’Quinn said. “The community can close the opportunity gap for these students and together we can support them to achieve their potential. Our community benefits as a whole when students are given the tools they need to succeed.”

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Innovia Foundation ignites generosity that transforms lives and communities so that every person has the opportunity to thrive. As the community foundation for Eastern

Washington and North Idaho, we partner with people who want to make our world better. We work together to address and solve our region's problems, help those in need, identify and respond to our greatest opportunities and leave a lasting impact. Each year, Innovia Foundation invests nearly \$7 million into our communities through grants and scholarships to nonprofit organizations and local students.