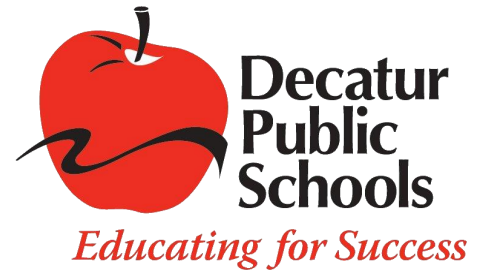


# For Immediate Release

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## **DPS Receives \$2.3 Million Grant from Howard G. Buffett Foundation to Launch Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute**

Decatur, IL – Leaders from Decatur Public Schools and the Decatur Public Schools Foundation today accepted a gift totaling more than \$2.3 million from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation to launch the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute.

The Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute will offer DPS students a program designed to raise awareness and encourage the pursuit of careers in public service, including law enforcement, nursing, paramedic support, firefighting, government service, and legal professions.

“Communities are strongest when the broadest cross-section of citizens are engaged and work together to improve the quality of life for everybody,” said Howard G. Buffett, Chairman and CEO of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. “We believe the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute will give Decatur’s young people opportunities to see how they can pursue careers that allow them to engage, support and be the future leaders working to improve their community.”

The Institute is named for former Macon County Sheriff Jerry J. Dawson, who served the Sheriff’s Office for more than 30 years. Following his retirement in 2008, Sheriff Dawson served as an Adjunct Instructor of Criminal Justice at the Decatur Area Technical Academy and Richland Community College, in addition to eight years as a City Councilman. Jerry Dawson continues to live in and serve the Decatur community.

“Early in my career I worked directly with a number of young people who made mistakes,” said Jerry Dawson. “Those interactions opened my eyes to the support kids need to make good choices as they mature. Later I looked back on that experience and really tried to get to the root of things and understand where our challenges are. In Decatur we are blessed with resources to explore new ways of addressing these challenges. We’re fortunate to have community members invested in creating an environment that helps students grow into positive, productive citizens.”

The Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute will launch in fall of 2020 for students at Eisenhower and MacArthur High Schools, and will also have ties to the current Public Service Academy at Stephen Decatur Middle School.

“The Howard G. Buffett Foundation continues to empower our students to reach their fullest potential,” said Dr. Paul Fregeau, Superintendent of Decatur Public Schools. “This investment, and

the creation of the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute, will not only shape our students into capable leaders, but will also create a direct pipeline to meaningful careers that serve our community.”

In addition to creating the Jerry J. Dawson Civic Leadership Institute, the grant will also provide scholarships for eligible Institute graduates to continue their public service education. Scholarships will support students in the pursuit of certifications through Emergency Medical Services (EMS), nursing and nursing assistance, criminal justice, and political science programs.

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation continues to invest in the Decatur Public Schools Foundation, providing transformational programming for our students. A \$1.65 million gift from the Buffett Foundation in 2017 established the Dwayne O. Andreas Ag Academy, designed to help DPS students explore careers in agribusiness. Prior investments from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation have also supported creative science programming, student leadership, and parent engagement activities.

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