



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 4, 2015

**CONTACT:** Patricia Walters  
**PHONE:** 815-488-3256  
**EMAIL:** pwalters11@att.net

**NCI/STARVED ROCK REGION 6<sup>TH</sup> ILLINOIS COMMUNITY DESIGNATED  
AS AN ILLINOIS 60 BY 25 NETWORK LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY**

LASALLE – Despite state budget issues, work continues across the NCI/Starved Rock Region to ensure Illinois students will graduate high school ready with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in life after high school -- college and career. For several months now, educators, government, business and non-profit leaders in NCI/Starved Rock, which mirrors the IVCC district, have been organizing collaborative efforts to increase the proportion of adults in the region with high-quality post-secondary degrees and industry credentials to 60% by the year 2025 (“Goal 2025”). The State average is now roughly at 42%.

The NCI/Starved Rock Region is one of 6 communities honored with the “Leadership Communities” designation for our outstanding application to the Illinois 60 by 25 Network (<http://www.advanceillinois.org/outreach/60-by-25-network/>) (the “Network”). “The Network is designed to meet the needs of communities, like ours, that are working together to provide rigorous, real world learning in and out of the classroom—creating successful education to employment systems available to all students”, said Patricia Walters of the North Central Regional Betterment Coalition (NCRBC). “Our Network efforts support and enhance the fantastic work already being done across our region by many of our current and future partners.” Through the Network, which was formed by Advance Illinois, the Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University, and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, organizers are building a platform that connects state and local agendas for action and acceleration toward Goal 2025.

As a part of the Network, each of the Leadership Communities is focused on implementing local education to career pathway systems to support students in the region and help advance the state’s Goal 2025. Each Leadership Community, including NCI/Starved Rock Region, is eligible to receive targeted technical assistance, capacity building, and funding supports through the organizations supporting the Network. Dr. Conrad Spirrisson, retired superintendent of Deer Park School District and President of NCRBC said, “I’m delighted at the budding success of the Network in bringing together partners from all of sectors of the community to strengthen our region’s college and career preparedness.” Network partners also praise and endorse the local effort. “The Regional Office of Education (ROE) is excited about the increased partnerships and communication occurring. When everyone works together, we are able to best utilize shared knowledge, experience, and financial resources in preparing our students for future success”, said Christopher Dvorak, ROE Superintendent. Employer partners also understand the importance of the Network. Tom Welsh, President of MBL USA Corporation says: “MBL USA is excited about the possibility of working with students and prospective employees to help grow our community’s resources, its people.

“NCI/Starved Rock received Leadership Community designation because of their commitment to systems collaboration and the use of data to inform their work to identify not only the near future career prospects for students, but also long term workforce development opportunities and needs,” said Teresa Ramos director of community engagement for Advance Illinois and one of the founding organizers of the

--more--

Network.

A team of leaders from the NCI/Starved Rock Region will be participating in the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Illinois 60 by 25 Meeting in Springfield Illinois this January. Find out more about the work of the Illinois 60 x 2025 Network at <http://www.advanceillinois.org/outreach/60-by-25-network/> and [http://www.niu.edu/edsystems/projects/pathways/60x2025\\_network.shtml](http://www.niu.edu/edsystems/projects/pathways/60x2025_network.shtml) For local information about the Network, or to submit an application to become a NCI/Starved Rock Region Network partner, contact Patricia Walters at 815-488-3256 or [pwalters11@att.net](mailto:pwalters11@att.net) .

