

GM Foundation Steps Up to Aid Education

To underscore its commitment to improving education in America, the General Motors Foundation will be a lead sponsor of the Detroit stop of the NBC News' "Education Nation On-The-Road" series that began on March 22.

The NBC News team gathered educators, community leaders and students at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and discussed the pivotal issues and solutions impacting education in the region.

According to Education Nation, the organization seeks to create a thoughtful, well-informed dialogue with policymakers, thought-leaders, educators, parents and the public, in pursuit of the shared goal of providing every American with an opportunity to achieve the best education in the world.

During each week of "Education Nation On-The-Road," NBC News and affiliate stations will air local education stories and provide coverage of "Education Nation." Online, EducationNation.com will live stream all events and host more detailed information on the tour.

At the first airing, Mary Barra, GM's senior vice president of Global Product Development, on a panel with local business leaders, talked about the 21st century workforce and the importance of educating Michigan's students to compete in a global economy.

Other sessions in Detroit include "K-12: New Choices in Changing Times," a panel on early childhood education, a Teacher Town Hall and a Student Town Hall.

"Education is the primary area of focus for the GM Foundation, and NBC News' Education Nation On-The-Road provides a forum

for us to join key stakeholders to share best practices and inspire real, systematic change in our schools," said GM Foundation President Vivian Pickard. "From birth through college, the GM Foundation is committed to improving education and changing the lives of students."

In 2010, the GM Foundation pledged \$27.1 million to United Way for Southeastern Michigan to establish a "Network of Excellence" in seven Detroit-area high schools. The grant is infusing science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, into curricula, and aims to improve graduation rates from roughly 50 percent to 80 percent over five years.

The Education Achievement Authority has become active in two of the schools and, in those schools, funding will continue in

support of Education Achievement Authority programming.

"Education Nation is shining a spotlight on the issues the GM Foundation and United Way for Southeastern Michigan are addressing locally as we work to improve educational levels in greater Detroit," said Michael J. Brennan, president and CEO, United Way for Southeastern Michigan. "We look forward to sharing our thought leadership, innovations and powerful success stories with the rest of the nation."

In addition to the "Network of Excellence," the GM Foundation funds the Buick Achievers Scholarship Program. Since its inception in 2011, Buick Achievers has provided nearly \$12 million to students heading to college to study STEM fields, as well as those related to the auto industry.

New Ford Fusion Built to Reduce Allergy Reactions

It's the little things that can make or break a driving experience, which is why the new 2013 Ford Fusion was designed with combating common airborne and touch-based allergens in mind.

Ford engineers tested more than 100 materials and components on the new Fusion and other Ford vehicles for allergy issues. Engineers avoid - or minimize - materials such as natural latex, hexavalent chromium and nickel, which can produce an allergic reaction in some people.

Components requiring allergen testing include common high-touch areas such as the seats, steering wheel, armrests, door handles and shifters.

"Allergies affect large numbers of people, so anything we can do to reduce potential allergens inside Ford vehicles we do through rigorous, controlled testing," said Linda Schmalz, supervisor of Core Material Engineering for Ford.

WebMD says more than half of all Americans test positive to one or more allergens. Allergies have been increasing for the past three decades across all age, gender and racial groups, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ford seeks to reduce the irritation of allergens - associated with seasonal weather and possibly rash-inducing materials - by rigorously testing its vehicles and installing cabin air filters that prevent airborne particles such as dust, spores, fungus and pollen from entering the vehicle.

Almost any material or substance can be a potential allergen. Ford testers make sure dyes and formaldehyde are strictly limited to levels that are acceptable even for clothing.

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