The Manufacturing Institute, Alcoa Foundation to Host Women’s Networking Event Featuring Industry Leaders

“STEP Forward” networking event to engage more women in recruiting, retaining, and advancing women into manufacturing and related careers.

HAMPTON, Va., Sept. 15, 2016: Today, The Manufacturing Institute and Alcoa Foundation hosted STEP Forward: Hampton Roads, a networking reception for manufacturing women to discuss challenges and opportunities, best practices, and connect with their peers and learn from each other’s successes. While women make up about 47 percent of the labor force, they only represent 27 percent of the manufacturing workforce. The Manufacturing Institute and Alcoa Foundation are committed to improve and tackle this glaring statistic through the STEP Forward series.

STEP (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Production) Forward brings all levels women together, from the factory floor to the C-suite, with speakers considered to be role models to provide opportunities for participants to connect with other talented women. The attendees heard advice and key takeaways from 2015 STEP Ahead Honoree Mary Perkinson, supervisor, Crane Engineering and Quality at Newport News Shipbuilding; 2016 STEP Ahead Honoree Marcia Kull, vice president, Marine Sales - North America at Volvo Penta of the Americas; and Anna Gamache, senior industrial engineer at Alcoa Inc.

"Alcoa and Alcoa Foundation value diversity in the workforce and are committed to supporting women in pursuit of manufacturing careers," said Suzanne van de Raadt, Alcoa Foundation's program director. "Today's manufacturing industry offers high-tech, higher paying careers in which women can and do succeed, and where their diversity of thought, experience, skills and background are needed to ensure continued advancements.”

The Manufacturing Institute launched the STEP Ahead initiative to honor and promote the role of women in the manufacturing industry through recognition, research, and leadership. STEP Forward brings the STEP Ahead initiative regionally into the community.

“STEP Forward is a unique opportunity to strengthen your company’s diversity strategy. It mobilizes women to act as a catalyst for change within their company and their community,” The Manufacturing Institute Executive Director Jennifer McNelly said. “We are thrilled to be able to continue spreading our message to women all across the U.S.”
The STEP Forward event took place at the Hampton Roads Convention Center from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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**About The Manufacturing Institute**

The Manufacturing Institute (the Institute) is the 501(c)(3) affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers. As a non-partisan organization, the Institute is committed to delivering leading-edge information and services to the nation’s manufacturers. The Institute is the authority on the attraction, qualification and development of world-class manufacturing talent. For more information, please visit [www.themanufacturinginstitute.org](http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org).

**About Alcoa Foundation**

Alcoa Foundation is one of the largest corporate foundations in the U.S., with assets of approximately $480 million. Founded 64 years ago, Alcoa Foundation has invested more than $635 million in communities worldwide. In 2015, Alcoa Foundation contributed more than $22 million to nonprofit organizations throughout the world, building innovative partnerships to improve the environment and educate tomorrow’s leaders for careers in manufacturing and engineering. The work of Alcoa Foundation is further enhanced by Alcoa’s thousands of employee volunteers who share their talents and time to make a difference in the communities where Alcoa operates. Through the Company’s signature Month of Service program, in 2015, 47 percent of Alcoa employees took part in 1,000 events across 24 countries, benefiting more than 300,000 people and 400 nonprofit organizations. For more information, visit [alcoafoundation.com](http://alcoafoundation.com) and follow @AlcoaFoundation on Twitter.