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## Monsanto Fund awards \$25,000 to the Rural School and Community Trust

### Grant supports *Why Rural Matter 2015-16* research project

**St. Louis, MO**—The Rural School and Community Trust received a \$25,000 Monsanto Fund grant award providing support for the research and publication of *Why Rural Matters 2015-2016*. This biennial series research report focuses on the realities of K-12 education state-by-state across rural America. First issued in 2001 and unique in the field of education scholarly research, this report is recognized nationally as the premier data-based resource for educators, policymakers, community and business leaders, and the general public.

“With generous support from the Monsanto Fund, the Rural School and Community Trust *Why Rural Matters 2015-2016* research will continue to grow our knowledge and understanding regarding rural schools, students, and communities, said Robert Mahaffey, Executive Director, Rural School and Community Trust. Mahaffey added, “Rural communities, particularly high-need and remote places, are invisible when it comes to dedicating attention and resources to the more than ten million children who live and are educated in sparse, low-population, communities. *Why Rural Matters* shines a bright light on conditions for learning and our hope is policymakers will take notice and action to improve opportunities for these deserving children.”

While this report is eighth in a series, it is not simply an updating of data from earlier editions. Each report focuses on a wide set of the most current statistics including per pupil state education expenditures, student demographics, teacher supports and compensation, poverty rates, high school completion, and rural employment, to name a few. No other research takes into account data solely focused on rural places nationwide. This edition is unique because in addition to education achievement indicators, it will include findings regarding rural early childhood education programs, high-speed internet access and distant learning, health, nutrition, and overall well-being for rural adolescents.

Each state is given a numerical priority ranking though it is not the intent to compare states in terms of their differing rates of progress and commitment to rural education. Rather, the purpose is to provide information and analyses highlighting the priority policy needs for rural schools and the communities they serve. In addition, to describe the complexity of rural contexts in ways that can help policymakers better understand the challenges faced by their rural constituencies.

Mahaffey concluded, *Why Rural Matters* has informed policies at the local, state, and federal levels that are responsive, sustainable, and contribute to the academic success and vitality for all students regardless of where they live. The Monsanto Fund’s support is invaluable as we continue our research and mission.”

The Rural School and Community Trust is a national nonprofit organization addressing the crucial relationship between good schools and thriving communities. Our mission is to help rural schools and communities grow better together. Working in some of the poorest, most challenging places, the Rural Trust involves young people in learning linked to their communities, improves the quality of teaching and school leadership, and advocates in a variety of ways for appropriate state and federal educational policies, including efforts to ensure equitable and adequate resources for rural schools. A national office in Washington DC coordinates the work and contributions of staff and consultants living across rural America.

The Monsanto Fund, the philanthropic arm of the Monsanto Company, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the communities where farmers and Monsanto Company employees live and work. Visit the Monsanto Fund at [www.monsanto.fund.org](http://www.monsanto.fund.org).