

Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Works! Staff Certified as Business Solutions Professionals



From left: William Slone, Michigan Works! HRDI; Valerie Eavey; Michigan Works! Barry I.S.D.; Elaine Furu-Baker, Director of Michigan Works! Calhoun ISD; and George Bauer, Michigan Works! Calhoun ISD.

On October 1st, three individuals from the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Works! received their Business Solutions Professionals certification from the School of Labor & Industrial Relations of Michigan State University. The individuals to receive this training and certification included George Bauer, Business Services & Industry Coordinator for the Michigan Works! Administrative Team/Calhoun Intermediate School District; Valerie Eavey, Programs Coordinator for the Barry County Michigan Works! Service Center operated through Barry Intermediate School District; and William Slone, Regional Manager for HRDI/Michigan Works! in Branch and Calhoun counties. Ron Rose, HRDI, also graduated from this training. Other individuals that participated in the class included partners from other MWAs throughout the state of Michigan (including board members), economic developers from around the state, members of other Business

Service Teams, individuals from the private business sector, and union representatives.

This training is designed to develop and certify the ability of participants to perform the function of the Business Solutions Professional (BSP). Training is provided through the 21st Century Regional Planning Initiative under a grant from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. Topics and learning activities covered the range of knowledge and skills required of the Business Solutions Professional. In addition to working with an employer, students completed on-line assignments and participated in classroom training and discussions.

One of the highlights from the training was to complete a project with a local employer that was either expanding, considering moving to the area, experiencing mass layoff, involved in layoff aversion, experiencing labor management problems, had excess production capacity, or was involved with new products. Team members worked with a large local auto parts manufacturing company. Initially, the team chose this business due to the expected mass layoff and plant closure. As the project progressed, the business had expanded due to a new product line, hired people back and is continuing to expand. They used Michigan Works! services during this process. The Business Solutions Process Phase with the employer consists of entry, fact finding, solution design, implementation, and follow-up. The solution design includes a written proposal (plan) to the employer that addresses the “trigger” or stimulus for action. This plan must be approved by the employer.

Students in the class have the option of taking this training as a for-credit course at MSU and can earn six 400 level social science credit hours. If students elect this option, they must enroll, pay tuition and complete additional assignments.

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Branch County Provides Opportunities for Youth During the Summer Months

The 2007 Branch County WIA Summer Youth Program ran for five weeks during the months of June and July. The program provided community service and classroom instruction for twenty participants. The summer was filled with a diverse schedule including teambuilding, classroom instruction, presentations, and community service projects.

The summer began with trip to Sherman Lake YMCA where the participants were able to increase teambuilding skills. Participants were broken into small groups and given tasks to accomplish that required good communication and teamwork.

Classroom instruction included learning about financial planning, filling out job applications, building resumes, interview skills, and team building activities. Participants also completed interest surveys that allowed them to compare their interests to possible future careers. This allowed them to explore careers that would be a "good" fit for them.

Presentations were a big part of the classroom component. Various community representatives from local business colleges, and service agencies took time to talk to the students about their career and the business that they represented.

Another highlight of the summer program was the time the participants spent working on improving their community. One community project included working at the Branch County Food Bank's Community Garden, where the participants came to together to maintain a garden where the produce was donated back to the Food Bank. Participants also worked at Altrusa TeenSHARE where they assisted with general cleaning and maintenance of the shelter. Another project included the Habitat for Humanity where participants spent time doing demolition, cleaning, and landscaping at Coldwater and Union City homes. Finally, participants helped move Franklin High School to their new location in Girard.



Ann Lown (front left), Branch County Food Bank and Barry/ Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board member poses with summer program participants at the Community Garden.

Barry County Teens Participate in Summer Program

During the month of July, twenty-one Barry County teenagers participated in the Barry County Michigan Works! Youth program that was operated by Barry Intermediate School District.

Students were placed on various worksites throughout the county. They were exposed to workplace skills of resume preparation, on-line applications, interviewing, team building, time management, appropriate dress and workplace conduct. In addition, the students worked with Donna Lipp, Youth Programs Case Manager, to determine suitable career opportunities for them based upon interests and skills.

Worksites for the students included: Family Dollar-Middleville-Hastings; Beginning Roots Day Care-Lake Odessa; Lakewood Public Schools; Our Roots Nursery-Hastings; Plumbs; Delton Public Library; Hastings Library; Woodland Library; and Kmart. Glenn Cuddahee, receiving manager for Kmart, stated "the Summer Youth Program acts like a 'safety net' for teenagers to gain the experiences needed to successfully enter the world of work. It's a great program that benefits both Kmart and our area youth."

In addition, three students helped out this summer at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. The participants learned the damaging effects of non-native plants to our natural habitat and the importance of maintaining pre-existing landscapes. The students assisted Pierce Cedar Creek by removing non-native plants from their grounds. Workplace skills emphasized were appropriate workplace dress and conduct, teambuilding, communication, and reliability. Students also participated in classroom activities. Included were a discussion of career exploration, including realistic career choices, work readiness skills, resume preparation, job search skills, wages, benefits and education requirements needed for each career.

Joanna Plummer, a Pierce Cedar Creek participant, stated, "I liked having something to do this summer and received real work experience. I have never had a job before." Josh Eddy, also placed at Pierce Cedar Creek, stated, "I had a great time. I would like to do it again."

The summer programs are brought to Barry County through the Workforce Investment Act Youth Programs grant operated by Barry Intermediate School District/Michigan Works! The programs would not be possible without the support of the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board, Barry Intermediate School District Board or James A. Hund, Barry ISD Superintendent.



Students remove non-native plants from the grounds of Pierce Cedar Creek Institute.

Calhoun County Offers Youth “Connecting with Careers Summer Institute”



Jerry Mainstone, Workforce Development Board Member, conducts a mock interview with one of the Calhoun County summer youth program participants.

During the month of July, 2007 the Calhoun County Michigan Works! Youth Program once again hosted the “Connecting with Careers Summer Institute.” Thirty youth representing many areas of Calhoun County were introduced to and honed their skills in areas related to career exploration and employment skills development throughout July.

The many activities offered to students throughout the month, helped them develop skills related to job search and included career interest inventories, filling out job applications, learning how to prepare for a job interview (including interview tips), and actually participating in an interview. As a group, students were introduced to the computer-based software Interview USA. Utilizing this program, each student participated in a computer-based interview in which they were asked a series of questions related to various types of interviews from general to industry specific, depending upon the interview the student chose. Using a web-

cam, each student recorded their individual interview and was then able to watch the finished product. In doing so, participants became much more aware of their body language and verbal styles and were able to be more aware of what they needed to concentrate on during an actual interview. Additionally, students became aware of this software as a tool some area employers will be utilizing to screen first-round interviews for some companies. Interview USA software will continue to be available to students throughout the year, both for interview practice and as an actual application and interview process for some area employers. After completing classroom instruction regarding interviewing and participating in the Interview USA interview, each student also participated in a face to face Mock Interview. Workforce Development professionals and area business people graciously donated their time to interview participants, provide individual feedback and review with the group strengths and potential growth areas for future interviews.

Also provided during the month were a broad range of other activities related to career development and work readiness. Students learned about the importance of building and maintaining good credit and overall financial literacy. They also participated in activities related to maintaining a healthy lifestyle such as proper nutrition and the effects of alcohol and illegal drugs. As always, the leadership and team building exercises provided by the National Guard Drug Demand Reduction Program were a big hit with the group!

Other career awareness/readiness activities focused on advanced training and post secondary educational opportunities. The group toured several colleges, the Regional Manufacturing Technology Center, Borgess Hospital and Koyo Manufacturing. Throughout the month participants had the opportunity to talk first-hand with young people who have recently graduated to learn more about what to expect during their upcoming senior year of high school and life beyond. Throughout the upcoming year, participants will continue to build on the skills they learned during the month of July and will have opportunities to participate in a broad range of activities to further prepare them for what lies ahead!

Workforce Development Board Recognizes Chris Wigent

Dr. Lynne Haley, Chairperson of the Barry, Branch, Calhoun Workforce Development Board, recognized Chris Wigent, Superintendent of the Calhoun Intermediate School District, with a personalized plaque for his support of Michigan Works! at the Workforce Development Board meeting in May of 2007. Chris accepted a superintendent position with Wayne RESA that started in July of 2007. Chris was a true supporter of Michigan Works! and will be missed.



Chris Wigent accepts plaque from Dr. Lynne Haley, Chairperson of the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board.

Michigan Works! Staff Earn Career Development Facilitator Credential



Staff who graduated in June include Julie Klein and Gail Granville.



Staff who graduated in March include Gyla Bender and Cheryl Kies.

Four staff from the Barry, Branch, Calhoun Michigan Works! graduated with a Global Career Development Facilitator (GCDF) certification this past spring and summer. The following staff completed the CDF training: Gyla Bender, Employment & Training Specialist-HRDI, and Cheryl Kies, Employment Specialist-HRDI, graduated in March of 2007. Julie Klein, Employment Specialist-HRDI, and Gail Granville, Education Coordinator-HRDI, graduated in June of 2007.

Valuable skills are learned during the CDF training that can be used when working with customers. The curriculum focuses on career development theory, individual and group counseling skills, individual and group assessments, information/resources, program promotion, management, and implementation, diverse populations, ethical/legal issues, research/evaluation, and technology.

Some of the activities in the class involve researching and completing assessments, presenting best practices, designing a services center, presenting information on employment theory, reviewing career planning models, learning how to be group facilitators, discussing different types of job search strategies, and looking at different types of technology that can be used when working with customers.

Michigan Works! Provides Training Based on the Concepts of Dr. Ruby Payne

In May of 2007, several individuals graduated from the Getting Ahead Training that was held at the Battle Creek Michigan Works! Service Center. The class was facilitated by Janice Chapman, Work First case manager for Michigan Works!, and Gwen Zeine, Haven of Rest. Participants were referred from both of these agencies. Janice and Gwen are both members of the Bridges to Getting Ahead Collaborative.

The participants, referred to as “co-investigators” because they are investing their life, are trained in Dr. Ruby Payne’s concepts and how they can become self-sufficient and build their resources for a better life. They spent 20 weeks participating in modules which included topics such as The Rich/Poor Gap and How It Works, Hidden Rules of Economic Class, Stages of Change, Building Resources, Community Assessment, and Where to Build Personal and Community Resources. Stipends were provided to co-investigators for participating as well as books, supplies, and supportive services.

Co-investigators commented to case manager, Janice Chapman, that they felt they had found a voice after the training and that their input was important to make changes. Participants gained confidence and made friends. One student said that after the training, he was using services at a local agency and felt that he was able to go further



Getting Ahead students and their facilitators Janice Chapman and Gwen Zeine.

with that agency then he would have been able to do in the past. He said he was able to eliminate communication barriers as a result of the training and being educated on the hidden rules of how a middle class society operates.

One Battle Creek employer is now working with Bridges to Getting Ahead and is regularly interviewing participants who have completed the Getting Ahead training. The Bridges to Getting Ahead Collaborative is currently working with other employers in the area to implement similar programs.

For more information, contact Janice Chapman at (269) 660-1435.

WFD DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS—ELAINE FURU-BAKER

As our State continues to reinvent our economy, Michigan Works! is committed to assisting our employers to remain competitive by upgrading the occupational skill levels of the workforce and job seeking customers.

In August of 2007, Michigan Works! launched the “No Worker Left Behind” training initiative. Introduced by Governor Jennifer Granholm in her 2007 State of the State Address, “No Worker Left Behind” enables workers to acquire the skills necessary to succeed in the fast-changing global economy of the 21st century and is central to Michigan’s strategy for economic transformation. The vision for No Worker Left Behind (NWLB) is to accelerate worker transitions through learning: NWLB provides Michigan’s workers who have lost their jobs, are at risk of losing their jobs or are trying to advance from low-wage jobs, an opportunity for education and training oriented towards good-paying jobs in high demand occupations and emerging industries. The cornerstone of the initiative is up to two years’ worth of tuition at any Michigan community college, university or other approved training program paid through Michigan Works! workforce development funding. Michigan Works! Service Center staff kept busy in July and August with an influx of customers by offering career and training information, intake and eligibility determination, assessment and selection into NWLB training. Our MWA’s inaugural class of fifty (50) NWLB customers, joins one hundred and eighty three (183) other training customers who are completing training that was funded in the previous year by Michigan Works! to meet our employers’ need for a more highly skilled workforce.

I’m pleased to note that Michigan Works! remains very involved in the “Bridges to Getting Ahead” initiative designed to help citizens move out of poverty. MWA staff is providing training for individuals wanting to achieve self-sufficiency through “Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’ By World.” Jerry Mainstone, Vice Chairperson of the Workforce Development Board, is providing leadership to the business component of this initiative which is working with local businesses to create opportunities and support for the employment of this target population.

The Work First (Welfare-to-Work) Program is being renamed “Jobs, Education and Training” (JET) on October 1, 2007. The shift to a new approach from “Work First” is a strategic move to a stronger emphasis on helping welfare applicants/recipients and other at-risk workers stay employed, gain skills, and advance rather than only emphasizing initial placement. The Fiscal Year 2007 Plan is being developed jointly with our partners at the local Departments of Human Services (DHS) and Michigan Rehabilitation Services. Additional information about FY07 JET will be shared in future newsletters.

Our MWA is engaged in the roll-out of the Michigan Prisoner ReEntry Initiative (MPRI) into Barry and Branch counties, as well as continuing MPRI for the second year in Calhoun County. A primary focus of the MPRI initiative is workforce development services to assist parolees in obtaining employment. The MPRI grant also provides funding for other supportive services, including housing, healthcare, and transportation.

It is apparent that the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board and Michigan Works! partners are devoting considerable resources and energy to increase the skills of the workforce that will contribute significantly to fueling the rebirth of Michigan’s economy. I look forward to providing updates on these efforts throughout the upcoming year!

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UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

November 9, 2007 12:00 p.m.

Planning and Development Committee Meeting
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall
Develop design recommendations for PY08-09
WIA Youth and Incumbent Worker Training
Programs

November 20, 2007 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

Workforce Development Board/CEOB Meeting
KCC's Regional Manufacturing Technology
Center- Battle Creek
Acts on PY08-09 WIA Youth and Incumbent
Worker Training Program Design
Recommendations from Planning Committee

December 6, 2007 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.

Education Advisory Group
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall
Michigan Works! WFD Team presents WIA
Youth Program Design Recommendations

December 7, 2007

Workshop-WDB-funded Youth Program and
proposal development

January 11, 2008 12:00 p.m.

Planning and Development Committee Meeting
Location to be determined
Develop RFP recommendations for WIA Youth
Program and Incumbent Worker Training Program

January 15, 2008 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

WDB/CEOB Meeting-Location to be determined
Act on recommendations from Planning Committee on
WIA Youth Program and Incumbent Worker Program

January 16, 2008

Staff issues the Calhoun WIA Youth and Incumbent
Worker Training RFP Notices of Availability to
Potential Bidders

January 23, 2008

Staff e-mails WIA Youth Program and Incumbent
Worker Training RFP packages to potential bidders
who requested the package

January 29, 2008

Staff conducts RFP Bidder's Conferences for WIA
Youth Program and Incumbent Worker Program-CISD