

**BARRY/BRANCH/CALHOUN  
MICHIGAN WORKS! DIRECTOR REMEMBERED**



Elaine Furu-Baker worked tirelessly for over 30 years in the field of workforce development, most recently for 13 years as the Director of Workforce Development at the Calhoun ISD Michigan Works! Agency. Elaine passed away on May 7, 2008, following a six-year battle with cancer.

Elaine’s obituary read, “throughout the economic difficulties that Michigan suffered in the past few years, Elaine remained optimistic about the future of workers in Michigan.” Elaine was a consummate workforce development professional who modeled integrity, dedication and

compassion for others. Elaine never missed an opportunity to promote the benefits of Michigan Works! programs and services, both in the local region and to legislators and others who could affect the future of this very critical work.

Elaine’s leadership and mentoring led to the development and implementation of programs that made a difference to thousands of individuals. Elaine was truly driven to provide life improvement opportunities to many people. Despite her many responsibilities as Director, Elaine never hesitated to take the time to speak with a job seeker or employer about how Michigan Works! services might benefit them.

Elaine was a teacher and mentor and helped her staff and sub-contract agency staff to benefit from years of knowledge and experience to provide the best possible services to the customers in this Michigan Works! area. She was always complimenting others and telling them how proud she was of their work.

Good job, Elaine! We’re all so proud of what you accomplished—and helped us to accomplish—in Barry, Branch & Calhoun counties. You will be missed.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- ◆ Michigan Works! Director Remembered....1
- ◆ Youth Learn About Entrepreneurship.....2
- ◆ Youth Volunteer at Local Shelter.....2
- ◆ MI Works! Service Centers Certified.....3

- ◆ MPRI Recognizes Participant.....3
- ◆ Excellent Service Recognized.....4
- ◆ Work Readiness Participant Honored.....5
- ◆ Upcoming Events.....6

## BARRY COUNTY YOUTH LEARN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GARDENING SKILLS IN THE SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM

Participants in the Barry County Workforce Investment Act (W.I.A.) summer youth program have planted a garden and will use their entrepreneurship skills to market and sell the products at the local farmer's market.

Great care is taken each week as participants weed, water and tend to their garden. They have researched information about specific care for each plant, including when to pick each vegetable or herb and how to keep deer and rabbits away. A log is kept documenting the daily appearance of the plant and any other important observations.

When the youth participants are not in the garden, they are looking for recipes to package with the vegetables and herbs for the farmer's market as well as designing logos for the bags and flyers to distribute around the community.



*Barry County W.I.A. Youth participants take a break while tending to their garden.*

In addition to the gardening skills each individual is learning, business and marketing skills are also being taught in the summer program. Proceeds from this project will be put back into the W.I.A. Youth program for future activities.

## BRANCH COUNTY W.I.A. YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS VOLUNTEER AT THE HUMANE SOCIETY



*Branch County W.I.A. Youth Council participants and W.I.A. Youth Case Managers participate in a community service project at the Humane Society of Branch County.*

The Branch County Workforce Investment Act (W.I.A.) Youth Council headed up a community service project at the Branch County Humane Society in Quincy, Michigan. Youth helped clean the animals' living areas, sort and clean bottles from a pop bottle drive, and gave all the animals some much needed attention. Youth were able to spend time walking and giving treats to the 12 dogs at the shelter as well as play with and pet numerous homeless cats and kittens. The youth council chose this non-profit agency for their community service project because of their personal love for animals.

**BARRY/BRANCH/CALHOUN SERVICE CENTERS CERTIFIED**

The Battle Creek, Coldwater and Hastings Michigan Works! Service Centers were recognized by the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board with a certificate issued by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (MDLEG) for best practices. MDLEG conducted an extensive on-site review of the service centers to determine compliance with the Service Center Certification Criteria. The following best practices were highlighted:

- ◆ Excellent signage was noted throughout the Centers. The Resource Room was clearly marked with large signs hanging from the ceilings, with sections such as “Job Search”
- ◆ Bookmarks on computers in the Resource Room

were extensive and well organized

- ◆ Resource Room materials were robust and all customers within the system can use and benefit from the materials
- ◆ The Service Center configuration is by services provided, rather than by program, thus supporting the One-Stop Philosophy of the Workforce Investment Act
- ◆ Documents and accessibility is monitored internally by an Inclusion Committee, comprised of partner agencies
- ◆ DLEG collected 162 examples of compliance with state policy

**MPRI ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOGNIZES ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND HARD WORK**

The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative (MPRI) Advisory Council honored Richard Foxe for his accomplishments and hard work at their April 2008 meeting.

One of the primary goals of MPRI is to increase public safety by reducing crime and increasing the number of parolees who are successful on parole. In order to meet these goals, the MPRI staff must assist parolees in making the transition from prison back into the community by providing them with support and resources.

Richard was referred to the MPRI program after being in prison for 8 years. Richard said, “I never expected to make such a smooth transition into society after being in prison for 8 years, I thank God for the MPRI program and all of the help that they gave me.”

During the time that Richard worked with MPRI, he was assisted with transportation, obtaining his identification, and taking his driving test. He also participated in a transitional employment program with Goodwill Industries of Central Michigan’s Heartland. During his transitional employment, he attended Successful Thinking classes and attended weekly meetings with the MPRI Community Resource Advocate, Tammy Burbey. Richard worked at a local factory as a line assembly worker for one year, until he was just recently laid off.

After accepting his award, Richard said, “I would also



*Richard Foxe was presented with a plaque that acknowledged his accomplishments and hard work at the April 2008 MPRI Advisory Council meeting.*

like to give a special acknowledgement to my mother, Helen Horton, and my grandmother, Winona Atkinson, who will be 100 years old in August, for their support and encouragement throughout the years.”

Please contact Michael DeBoer, Barry/Branch/Calhoun MPRI Community Coordinator, at (269) 441-1469 or [deboerm@calhounisd.org](mailto:deboerm@calhounisd.org) if you have additional questions or would like to be added to the MPRI Advisory Council’s e-mail list.

## MICHIGAN WORKS! STAFF RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE



*Pictured from the left are: Laura Miller of Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College Employment Services, Debbie Smith of Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College Employment Services, Sharon Blankenship of Michigan Works!/HRDI, and Jack Faulkner, Workforce Development Board Monitoring & Evaluation Committee.*

The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board recently honored Michigan Works! employees for their excellence in service.

Debbie Smith, Case Manager/TAA Administrator and Laura Miller, Employment Services Recruiter/Job Developer of Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College Employment Services and Sharon Blankenship, Business Solutions Manager of Michigan Works!/Human Resources Development, Inc. (HRDI) were recognized with the "Excellence in Customer Service Award" for their achievements in customer service at the Coldwater Michigan Works! Service Center by Dr. Lynne Haley, chairperson of the Workforce Development Board. They earned their perfect score in overall satisfaction for an Employer On-Site Visit conducted on January 11, 2008. The Mystery Shopper awarded Smith, Miller, and Blankenship the highest possible scores for being very friendly and committed.

Valerie Eavey, Programs Coordinator of Michigan Works!/Barry Intermediate School District and Emily Gingrich, Customer Service Representative of Michigan Works!/Barry Intermediate School District were also recognized with the "Excellence in Customer Service Award" for their achievements in customer service at the Hastings Michigan Works! Service Center by Dr. Lynne Haley, chairperson of the Workforce Development Board.



*Pictured from left are: (Above) Valerie Eavey of Michigan Works!/Barry ISD and Bob Chojnowski, chairperson of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. (Below) Emily Gingrich of Michigan Works!/Barry ISD and Bob Chojnowski.*

Valerie earned her perfect score during an Employer On-Site Visit conducted on January 17, 2008. The reviewer noted that "Valerie went beyond the scope of the scenario and the traditional Michigan Works! services to help facilitate needs." Emily earned her perfect score during an Employer Telephone Call conducted on November 9, 2007. The mystery shopper noted that Emily was confident, articulate and provided accurate and precise information during the phone call.

According to Haley, the awards are based on achieving perfect scores in the "Mystery Shopper" reports issued by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

"The Battle Creek, Coldwater and Hastings Michigan Works! Service Centers are evaluated on a quarterly basis by mystery shoppers and are scored in the areas of courtesy, helpfulness, knowledge, and professionalism," explained Haley. "Each area is scored in a range of 0 to 10, with 10 being the highest score. Overall satisfaction is determined by averaging all four areas."

**FORMER WORK FIRST PARTICIPANT SUCCEEDS THROUGH GOODWILL WORKS JOB READINESS PROGRAM**

*Bobbie Singleton is honored for her success in the Goodwill Works Program by Kendra Gibson, Goodwill Works Case Manager*

Bobbie Singleton received the Achiever of the Year Award for the Battle Creek campus of Goodwill Industries of Central Michigan's Heartland on May 8, 2008, at the Annual Awards Banquet in Jackson, Michigan.

In July of 2007, Bobbie Singleton participated in the Goodwill Works Job Readiness Class. Goodwill Works is a work readiness program that is designed to enhance the employability of individuals referred from the Michigan Works! JET (Jobs, Education and Training) Program (formerly Work First). The Goodwill Works Job Readiness Program provides activities that address employment barriers and teach work readiness skills in a sheltered work environment, thus enabling individuals to achieve self-sufficiency.

Until coming to Goodwill Works, Bobbie said that she had been a Work First participant for several years and had exhausted all programs and services that were available to her. She also had not been able to secure permanent employment. Bobbie knew that she was a good employee, but felt that some of her main draw backs were bad choices she had made when she was younger and an inconsistent work history.

During the Goodwill Works classroom sessions, she struggled with frustration over not finding a job after months of searching, feared interviewing, had low self-confidence, and was not able to take steps toward her career goal of becoming a Hotel Manager. Despite feeling challenged by class topics, Bobbie took the initiative to make changes in how she dressed, how she completed applications, and practiced her interviewing skills. In fact, interviewing proved to be a bigger challenge for Bobbie than she anticipated, as she fumbled through her first mock interview and cried through her second. With the support of her program manager and her fellow classmates, Bobbie continued to practice her interviewing skills in class. Despite her trouble with interviewing, she successfully completed her classroom training and entered a work placement in one of Goodwill's retail stores. While there, she impressed the store staff that she worked with in her willingness to learn, her sense of responsibility, and her willingness to take initiative. At the end of her program session, Bobbie successfully interviewed with the store and was hired. She has continued to work as a valued employee at the Helmer Rd Goodwill Retail store for the last year.

Recently, Bobbie decided to take steps toward her long term goal of being a Hotel Manager. When things fell through with the local college that she applied to, Bobbie accepted the encouragement of her co-workers and continued applying. In the end, she applied for and was accepted into one of the top Hotel Management schools in the nation in Oregon.

Bobbie has since moved to Oregon to attend the college program that began in June. Before she left, on the advice of Goodwill staff, Bobbie also contacted Goodwill USA who put her in touch with the local Goodwill near her school. They are interested in having her apply to their store. Bobbie is one of the many success stories that have come through the Goodwill Works program in Battle Creek, Michigan. She made the most of her time at Goodwill and continues to be a great example of how Goodwill programs can help a person, with barriers to employment, achieve her dreams.

<b>Albion Service Center</b> 101 North Albion Street Albion, MI 49224	<b>Battle Creek Service Center</b> 135 Hamblin Avenue Battle Creek, MI 49017	<b>Coldwater Service Center</b> 210 Vista Drive Coldwater, MI 49036	<b>Hastings Service Center</b> 535 West Woodlawn Ave. Hastings, MI 49058
---	--	---	--

Calhoun Intermediate School District  
Workforce Development  
17111 G Drive North  
Marshall, MI 49068  
Phone: (800)-285-WORKS (9675)  
Fax: (269) 781-8792  
Email: larsonl@calhounisd.org  
www.michpartners.org



**UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS**

**September 7-9, 2008**  
Michigan Works! for People Annual Conf.  
Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center  
100 Renaissance Center, Detroit

**September 12, 2008**  
Planning and Development Committee Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall

**September 16, 2008**  
Workforce Development Board Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall

**October 1, 2008**  
Fiscal Year 2009 JET and FAE&T Program,  
Work Readiness and MPRI contracts begin



**www.michpartners.org has a new look!**