

MICHIGAN WORKS! HONORS DELANOS JOHNSON

Delanos Johnson of Battle Creek was honored as an Alumnus of the Year by the Michigan Works! Association, Michigan’s workforce development association. The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board nominated Johnson for this honor.

Johnson was recognized at a special awards ceremony held in the Boji Building’s Senate Hearing Room in downtown Lansing on Wednesday, January 25, 2006. Senator Mark Schauer (D-19) and Representative Mike Nofs (R-62) presented a tribute resolution recognizing his success. Johnson was one of only 25 Michigan Works! participants statewide chosen for recognition at the annual Alumni Celebration.

Johnson, as an ex-offender, had to re-adjust to life on the outside as well as deal with employers, who may for one reason or another not want to employ him. Upon his release, Johnson was determined to seek gainful employment as he attempted to begin a new and better life. To assist Johnson with his employment needs, he was referred to the Battle Creek Michigan Works! Work First Non Custodial Parent program operated by the Foundation for Behavioral Resources under a contract with the Calhoun Intermediate School District’s Michigan Works! Team.

Johnson relied on his newfound self-confidence when he landed a job with Steak ‘n Shake in June 2005 as part of their production crew. Currently, Johnson is in the Steak ‘n Shake training program learning to train new Steak ‘n Shake employees.

“Knowing that there is a program that can help individuals upon release from prison, makes re-entry to the workplace much easier. Work First



Representative Mike Nofs, Guest Lawanda Crump, Calhoun County Commissioner Gregory Moore, Alumnus Delanos Johnson, Senator Mark Schauer, and Workforce Development Director Elaine Furu-Baker are shown at the Michigan Works! Alumni of the Year celebration.

helped me gain confidence, kept me motivated, and assisted me with overcoming my barriers to make me more valuable in today’s society,” said Johnson of his experience in the program.

The Alumni Celebration recognizes those individuals who by hard work, sheer determination, and the strong will to become financially independent have successfully entered the workforce. It is also a time to recognize the commitment and contribution of employers, who have provided jobseekers career opportunities.

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AGENCY COLLABORATION BRINGS DR. RUBY PAYNE AND ASSOCIATES TO BATTLE CREEK

Through the collaboration of several agencies in the Barry/Branch/Calhoun County area, Dr. Ruby Payne and consultants from her company aha! Process Inc. were in Battle Creek in March to present the workshop series, Bridges Out of Poverty. The program provided community-wide training on understanding poverty in order to build skills, systems, and strategies to help families transition out of poverty and promote prosperity throughout the area.

What started out as a small group discussion about Dr. Ruby Payne's concepts turned into a community wide event. Individuals from Michigan Works!-Work First, Guardian, Inc., Legal Services of South Central Michigan, the Woman's Coop, and Trinity Lutheran Church met several times to discuss Dr. Payne's concepts and how this could be incorporated into the Work First program. This group decided that it would be beneficial to extend the invitation to additional organizations and give people the opportunity to understand the underlying concepts of Dr. Payne's approach. This workshop series involved the collaboration of over twenty community agencies, funding of over \$153,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Expert in Residence Program, and workshops that are taking place during March, June and August, 2006. The first full day workshop had close

to 1000 people! Workshops targeted social service professionals, educational administrators, teachers, churches, and any interested community members.

Dr. Ruby Payne is the author of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* and co-author of *Bridges Out of Poverty*. According to Dr. Payne, "The two things that move a person out of poverty are education and relationships." During the workshops, Dr. Ruby Payne and her associates discussed how economic class affects mindsets and behaviors, the "hidden rules" of poverty, middle class, and wealth, and eight resources that make a difference in success.

The goal of the workshop series is to provide the community with resources that will assist them in organizational changes and building sustainable communities. There will be additional workshops held in June and August of 2006. If you missed Ruby Payne's presentation, Kim Ellis will be presenting the same information (*A Framework for Understanding Poverty*) on **June 14**. In addition, facilitator training for *Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' by World* will be held on June 15 and 16. Workshops will also be held on August 8 and 9 for elementary and secondary level educators.



Committee members and volunteers pose with Dr. Ruby Payne (front row, third from the left)

WORKFORCE BOARD RECOGNIZES EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board recently honored several local Michigan Works! staff with the “Excellence in Customer Service Award.” Staff were each recognized for their achievements in customer service by Dr. Lynne Haley, chairperson of the Workforce Board.

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 Albion, 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. The Workforce Board is extremely pleased to learn of the excellent customer service provided to local employers and job seekers.”

The following staff members were recognized for their excellence in customer service:

- **Lyle Mack**, Kellogg Community College - Employment Services at the Battle Creek Michigan Works! Service Center
- **Will Slone**, Human Resources Development, Inc. at the Albion Michigan Works! Service Center
- **Debbie Smith**, Kellogg Community College’s Employment Service at the Coldwater Michigan Works! Service Center



(Left to right): Laura Miller, Dr. Lynne Haley (WDB Chairperson), Lyle Mack, Will Slone, Debbie Smith, Dr. Edward Haring (President, Kellogg Community College)

- **Laura Miller**, Kellogg Community College’s Employment Service at the Coldwater Michigan Works! Service Center
- **Krystal Froats**, Kellogg Community College - Employment Services at the Battle Creek Michigan Works! Service Center
- **Valerie Eavey**, Barry Intermediate School District-Hastings Michigan Works! Service Center
- **Jill Carter**, Barry Intermediate School District-Hastings Michigan Works! Service Center
- **Jennie Pettengill**, Barry Intermediate School District-Hastings Michigan Works! Service Center



Jennie Pettengill, Valerie Eavey, Dr. Lynne Haley (WDB Chairperson), Jack Faulkner (WDB Secretary)



Jim Hund (Barry ISD Superintendent), Jill Carter, Valerie Eavey, Dr. Lynne Haley (WDB Chairperson)



Krystal Froats

HASTINGS MICHIGAN WORKS! SERVICE CENTER HOSTS AN EMPLOYER JOB FAIR FOR NEW ETHANOL REFINERY

Michigan Works! Barry County and Michigan Works! Ionia County coordinated their efforts to host an employer job fair in Lake Odessa. The employer, US Bio Woodbury will soon be manufacturing ethanol in Barry County and bringing about 40 job opportunities to the community.

"It's a wide range of people that we're looking for," said US Bio Woodbury's General Manager Jim Zook.

Zook was scouting for prospective employees at the company's job fair at Lakewood High School Monday.

US Bio Woodbury's refinery is under construction about two miles east of the high school on 46 acres in Woodbury.

The plant will need operators, lab technicians, maintenance workers, and health and safety experts.

"We are here because of the corn that we grow here. Therefore, as long as we have

the ability to raise those crops, we will be here," Zook said. "We're not a manufacturer where we can pick up and move to Mexico. We are here because of the natural resources Western Michigan has."

The job fair started at 1:00 p.m. Within the first hour, Michigan Works representatives told News 3 more than 100 people signed up to apply for employment.

Many predict that ethanol will help ease U.S. dependency on foreign oil. When US Bio Woodbury opens in mid-September, it will be one of three ethanol refineries in Michigan, according to Zook. He said two more will quickly follow.

Of those, only this one in Barry County will be under the parent company US BioEnergy based out of Brookings, South Dakota.

Calhoun County W.I.A. Youth Participants Mentor Students from Ann J. Kellogg School in Battle Creek

The Michigan Works Youth Program of Calhoun County is partnering with Michigan State University Extension 4-H Youth Program and the Battle Creek 21st Century After-school program to develop leadership skills in W.I.A participants. W.I. A. Youth planned, and carried out a service learning project that enabled them to work with elementary youth and engage them in learning about the importance of being physically active and nutritionally healthy.

A team of W.I. A. participants were chosen by case managers to attend the 4-H Peer Plus/ TRY IT leadership training. These youth spent three days (along with a case manager) at the Kettunen Training Center in Tustin, MI preparing to be teen peer health educators. As health educators, W.I.A participants developed skills in program development and implementation, mentoring, leadership skills, public speaking and lesson planning.

This program was made possible through a mini-grant from Michigan State University Extension which enabled W.I.A participants to receive a small stipend at the end of the project. The teens taught 6 lessons (within six weeks) utilizing the Jump into Foods and Fitness (JIFF) Curriculum. They worked with thirty 4th and 5th grade students during the 21st Century after-school program at Ann J. Kellogg Elementary school focusing on dietary quality including the promotion of physical activity and food safety.



WFD DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS—ELAINE FURU-BAKER

As high unemployment rates continue to plague Michigan, our Michigan Works! system is working hard to connect job seekers with employers. Did you know that in the past year, our Michigan Works! Service Centers accommodated over 182,000 customer visits? This number represents a 72% increase over the number of visits recorded in the previous year!

I am pleased to report that despite the increase in traffic, the Michigan Works! staff remains committed to excellence in customer service, as evidenced in the eight Michigan Works! staff who scored perfect "10's" in the DLEG Mystery Shopper visits (see details on page 3). The continuing efforts by the frontline staff to provide excellent customer service is much appreciated by the WFD Team and the Workforce Development Board.

Our local system is actively participating in a number of initiatives, that go above the "regular" workforce development management tasks, to assist both local employers and job seekers. The WFD Team is administering a grant to support the activities of the Eaton Corporation's Joint Adjustment Committee (JAC) that will provide pre-layoff assistance to the 105 workers who will lose their jobs when the plant in Marshall closes later this spring. The Michigan Works! partners have actively engaged in the Michigan Opportunity Partnership (MiOpp), to assist in meeting the challenge to match 40,000 job seekers with jobs during its second year of operation. George Bauer is leading the development of "Business Service Teams" that will enable the Michigan Works! partners to more effectively and efficiently provide services to employers. MJ Bruns and Lisa Larson are both active participants in the "Ruby Payne's Bridges Out of Poverty" initiative, being funded with a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Expert-in-Residence Grant. I am co-chairing the Calhoun County Pilot Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative, which will result in additional resources for assisting parolees from the state prison system to become gainfully employed and stay out of prison. We are continuing our work with the Southwest Michigan Regional Healthcare Skills Alliance, with a "Excellence and Innovation in Healthcare" summit planned for May 19th in Kalamazoo.

On a final note, the Michigan Works! partners look forward to working with the members of the Workforce Development Board at the upcoming Strategic Planning Retreat. The goals that are developed will guide our Michigan Works! Service Centers to most effectively and efficiently connect employers and job seekers. I look forward to sharing those goals in our next newsletter.

Southwest Michigan Regional Healthcare Alliance Plans Employer Summit in May



Conveners and Partners for the Southwest Michigan Regional Healthcare Alliance, (front, from left): Elaine Furu-Baker, Jan Smith, Brenda Njiwaji, Lisa Larson, M.J. Bruns (back, from left): Jeanne Konrad, Sue Reimland, Yvonne Chapman, and Todd Gustafson

An Employer Summit on "Excellence and Innovation in Healthcare" will be held for healthcare employers on **May 19, 2006**. The event will take place at W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in Kalamazoo from 12:00 - 3:30 p.m. The goal of the summit is to explore effective strategies for recruitment training and retention of healthcare employers including the use of apprenticeships. An invitation will be mailed to area employers from the long-term care industry in southwestern lower Michigan. For more information, please contact M.J. Bruns at (269) 789-2423 or brunsm@calhounisd.org.

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535 West Woodlawn Ave.
Hastings, MI 49058

Coldwater Service Center
210 Vista Drive
Coldwater, MI 49036

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135 Hamblin Avenue
Battle Creek, MI 49017

Albion Service Center
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UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

May 16, 2006 8:00 a.m.
Workforce Development Board/CEOB Meeting
Coldwater Michigan Works! Service Center
210 Vista Drive

May 17, 2006
Issuance of Work First, Work Readiness, and
Food Assistance Employment & Training RFP
Notices of Availability to potential bidders

May 19, 2006 12:00—3:30 p.m.
Southwest Michigan Regional Healthcare
Alliance Employer Summit
Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
Kalamazoo

May 23, 2006 1:00—2:30 p.m.
MPRI Meeting- Burnham Brook Center
200 W. Michigan-Battle Creek

May 24, 2006
Issuance of Work First, Work Readiness, and
Food Assistance Employment & Training
packages to bidders

May 31, 2006 9:00a.m.—12:00 p.m.
Bidder's Conference for Work First, Work Readiness,
and Food Assistance Employment & Training

June 14, 2006 8:30 a.m.—3:30 p.m.
Bridges Out of Poverty Workshop
First Assembly of God Church
800 S. 24th Street—Battle Creek

June 23, 2006
Work First, Work Readiness, and Food Assistance Em-
ployment & Training proposals due at the Calhoun ISD
by noon

July 14, 2006 12:00—4:00 p.m.
Planning and Development Committee Meeting
Calhoun ISD
17111 G Drive North—Marshall

July 18, 2006 8:00 a.m.
Workforce Development Board/CEOB Meeting
Hastings Michigan Works! Service Center
535 West Woodlawn Avenue
Acts upon recommendations for proposals