

**Michigan Works! Honors Denise Weeks**



Front row-from left: Dawn Weeks and Denise Weeks of Middleville; Jill Carter, Barry ISD /MI Works!; and Valerie Eavey, Barry ISD/MI Works!. Back Row-from left: Greg Moore, Calhoun County Board of Commissioners; Representative Brian Calley (House District 87); Senator Patricia Birkholz (Senate District 24); Dr. Lynne Haley, Chairperson of the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board; and Elaine Furu-Baker, Calhoun ISD/MI Works! WFD Director.

Denise Weeks of Middleville 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 Weeks for this honor.

Weeks was recognized at a special awards ceremony held in the Boji Building’s Senate Hearing Room in downtown Lansing on Tuesday, February 6, 2007. Senator Patricia Birkholz (R-24) and Representative Brian Calley (R-87) presented a tribute resolution recognizing her success. Weeks was one of only 25 Michigan Works! participants statewide chosen for recognition at the annual Alumni Celebration.

Weeks enrolled in the Barry County WIA youth program, which is operated by the Barry Intermediate School

District, in June, 2003. The youth program typically starts a participant out with training in basic job skills. Weeks mastered the skills and moved right into a work experience activity developed by the Barry ISD staff. After doing an outstanding job at her worksite, Weeks completed a career assessment and decided she would like to go into the medical field. Weeks set her goal on attending Olympia Training Center in an accelerated 8 month program. She started the dental assisting program in May, 2005, and finished her program in December with a 93% overall grade!

The Barry ISD Michigan Works! staff placed Weeks at Glenn Valley Dentistry in a work experience. Dr. Vaughan said, “Denise is not afraid of new things, she is congenial, teachable, and has a servant heart.”

Valerie Eavey, Michigan Works! Program Coordinator for the Barry ISD, and Jill Carter, WIA Youth Case Manager, also attended the Alumni event and were recognized by Weeks for the assistance they provided throughout her participation in Michigan Works!. Weeks stated, “What I like most about Michigan Works! is that they help people better themselves. When you stop by to check in, it is not only your caseworker that shows you support, everyone who works there does. Michigan Works! has helped me to get to a place in my life that I have always dreamed of. They have not only helped me make my family and friends proud of me; I am proud of myself. Instead of feeling like I was just a case and someone to help, they make me feel like a partner. I feel like they weren’t there just to watch, but to also support and cheer me on.”

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.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- Albion MI Works! Center Moves.....2
- Interview USA.....2
- WIRED Team Receives Trophy.....3
- CNC Training Implemented.....4
- Youth Council Formed.....4
- Director’s Column.....5
- Upcoming Events.....6

## Albion Michigan Works! Service Center Has Moved to a New Location



*The lobby of the new Albion Michigan Works! Service Center.*

Michigan Works! hosted an open house in December with a luncheon and a tour of their new building located in Albion. The Albion Michigan Works! Service Center is a satellite location for Calhoun County. Services available at this location include Employment Services, Training Services and Work First. Veterans services and Michigan Rehabilitation Services are also available one day per week. Employment Service staff is available to serve the public 5 days per week from 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

**New Location:  
101 N. Albion Street  
Albion, MI 49224**



*Pictured from left: Pamela Newman, Albion Service Center staff; Mayor Bill Wheaton, City of Albion Mayor; Heather McCune, Albion Service Center staff; Elaine Furu-Baker, Director of the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Works!; William Stone, Albion Service Center staff.*

## Interview USA Available in Michigan Works! Service Centers

Interview USA is a new Virtual Video Interview (VVI) system that allows job seekers to record interviews that can be emailed, along with their resumes, to participating employers. Employers will be able to watch industry specific interviews and determine who they want to call in for a face to face interview. Job seekers can also take advantage of this system by practicing their interview skills and critiquing the interview so they are prepared to meet with employers. The VVI camera is installed at all four service centers (Albion, Battle Creek, Coldwater, and Hastings) as well as our Work First office in Hastings, located at 1611 S. Hanover. Trained staff is available to assist job seekers and employers with this process.



# WIRED WorkKeys Superstar Trophy Moves to Barry County

The Barry County WIRED WorkKeys Team was awarded the WorkKeys Superstar Trophy in recognition of their outstanding support of the WIRED WorkKeys regional innovation initiative. WIRED is the Workforce Innovation Regional Economic Development grant by the Education and Training Division of the Department of Labor to West Michigan.

The West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA) was awarded \$15 million to fund the development of the West Michigan Workforce Innovation Lab. One of the initiatives in the innovation portfolio is the use of WorkKeys and Career Readiness Certificates. Various teams have formed a Regional Advisory Group made up of volunteers from the WMSA seven county region including: Allegan, **Barry**, Ionia, Kent, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Ottawa counties. Some of the teams are focused on county level workforce development and others are focused on special tasks such as regional healthcare industry, integration with the SOURCE model, integration with the ex-offender re-entry model, and the “special needs” population.

The purpose of this innovation is to work toward a regional consensus regarding the deployment of WorkKeys as the regional skills measurement tool and the Career Readiness Certificate as the nationally portable work skill credential.

Employers throughout the country are struggling to find qualified candidates that have solid capabilities in the foundational skills of reading, math, and ability to correctly interpret gauges, graphs, and charts. Employers need a trustworthy credential to document foundational workplace skills. Weaknesses in foundational skills inhibit the ability of employees and candidates to learn effectively from occupational and job specific training.

Upon completion of the assessment, the job seeker is given a Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). The National Career Readiness Certificate



*From left are: Lisa Larson, Calhoun ISD/Michigan Works!; Dixie Stadel-Manshum, Barry County; Mark Irwin, Barry County; Barbara Walden, KCC; Valerie Eavey, Barry ISD/Michigan Works!; and Rachel Jungblut, Grand Rapids Community College Program Manager*

uses the WorkKeys assessment results to award certificates in three categories: Bronze, Silver, or Gold depending on the individual's score. The certificate demonstrates that an individual has attained specific workforce competency levels in Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information.

The Michigan CRC Consortium has created a website which provides details of the CRC. This website is [www.michiganarc.org](http://www.michiganarc.org) Grand Rapids Community College is the WIRED community partner for the WorkKeys initiative. For more information about the Barry County initiative, please contact Valerie Eavey, Barry ISD/Michigan Works! at (269) 945-9545, ext. 140; Barbara Walden, Kellogg Community College-Customized Training Division at (269) 965-4137, ext. 2847; or Lisa Larson, Calhoun ISD/Michigan Works! at (269) 789-2446.

## Michigan Works!, KCC, and RMTC Implement CNC Training Program for Branch and Calhoun County WIA Participants

After meeting with several local employers, it became apparent to the Michigan Works! Team that there is currently a shortage of skilled Computerized Numeric Control (CNC) operators in our area.

In late December, 2006 a meeting was scheduled with Barb Walden, Kellogg Community College's (KCC) Director of Customized Training and Laura DePompolo, Director of Kellogg Community College's Regional Manufacturing Technology Center (RMTC) to discuss the availability of training programs that would meet our area's need for individuals trained in CNC operation. Due to projected hiring requirements, we were faced with a very tight deadline in which to complete this task.

As a result of the collaborative efforts of Michigan Works!, Kellogg Community College and the Regional Manufacturing Technology Center, a CNC training program was designed, scheduled and approved to begin on January 22, 2007.

Twelve Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program applicants from Branch and Calhoun Counties were selected to participate in the CNC Operator training program utilizing Dislocated Worker Scholarships and WIA Individual Training Account (ITA) funding. This 10-week course will be completed by March 29,



*Russ uses calipers to check the size of a machined part and compares to the measurements indicated on the print*

2007, at which time, the students' applications will be submitted to area employers for consideration for employment.

Without the partnership between Michigan Works! and some very dedicated representatives from Kellogg Community College and the Regional Manufacturing Technology Center, this program would not have been possible, especially not within the time frame allowed.

## Calhoun County WIA Youth Program Forms Youth Council



*From Left to right (back row): Thomas Spratley, WIA Youth Case Manager; Marquetta Frost, WIA Youth Case Manager; Jarrett Dunn, Mia Adams, Morgan Smith, Paul Sharp III, Kristi Rigelman, WIA Youth Program Director From left to right (front row): Jacob Christophel, Tyler Miller, Michael Culliver, and Parrish Warnsley Missing: Kevin Brown, Kendra Gibson, Aaron Gregory, Zachary Mansfield, and Renea Montague*

The Calhoun County Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Program has recently created a Youth Advisory Council. This group of students is in the beginning stages of their council and currently working on forming by-laws, electing officers, and forming sub-committees. Representatives of this group are also collaborating with youth from Peace Jam to form a community service project. The WIA Youth Advisory Council will identify their own community service projects as well. Future plans for the Council include learning more about how the Workforce Development Board and the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners functions and creating an entrepreneurial program.

For additional information, please contact Kristi Rigelman, WIA Youth Program Director at (269) 968-2271, ext. 293.

## ***WFD DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS—ELAINE FURU-BAKER***

The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Works! Service Centers recorded over 301,000 customer visits in 2006, an increase of 64% over the customer visits recorded in 2005. With the local unemployment rate for our region remaining relatively high, we are likely to see record numbers of job seekers in 2007. Fortunately, funding for this year has increased to \$8.6 million dollars so that we have additional resources to serve the customers of our system.

Even though we are seeing a tremendous increase in customers, I am pleased to note that our MWA Service Center staff continues its tradition of providing excellent customer service. The recently released first quarter 2007 Mystery Shopper Report, conducted by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (MDLEG) showed four of the six Mystery Shopper visits in our MWA resulted in perfect scores! Our congratulations for the excellent ratings go to Marsha Grafft of the Battle Creek Service Center, Laura Miller and Debbie Smith of the Coldwater Service Center and Emily Gingrich of the Hastings Service Center. The Workforce Development Board will recognize their achievements in customer service with awards at the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

In other new developments, our MWA was awarded a \$93,500 National Emergency Grant from MDLEG as a planning grant. With funding from this grant, our MWA is financing an environmental scan and labor market study to be conducted by the W.E. Upjohn Institute. The environmental scan of the 5-county regional economy will:

- ◆ Assess the impact of both current and potential business closings, including military closures and downsizings, on the region;
- ◆ Develop a “profile” for the region for the purpose of determining emerging occupations and industries that will guide development of new training and workforce development initiatives;
- ◆ Survey a sample of the “emerging” employers to determine workforce needs (in terms of skill sets, training needs, etc.); and
- ◆ Summarize the demographics of the region’s population and projected future impact(s) to the economy and workforce.

Several members of our Michigan Works! Business Service Team are participating in Business Solutions Training, offered by the School of Labor & Industrial Relations of Michigan State University. The training is designed to develop and certify the ability of participants to perform the function of the Business Solutions Professional (BSP). This training is provided under a grant from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth. Topics and learning activities cover the range of knowledge and skills required of the Business Solutions Professional. At the conclusion of the training, participants will have demonstrated their competency to perform as a BSP through discussions, activities, and fieldwork. Training is a blend of classroom and on-line instruction and fieldwork. Participants are expected to attend and actively participate in all sessions, complete on-line assignments, and complete fieldwork within the specified time. Successful completion will result in a “Business Solution Professional” credential from MSU. Our Business Service Team participation in this training is another step in advancing the quality and depth of services to be provided to the business community.

Did you know that January was “Michigan Works! Month?” Each year, we recognize the outstanding “Alumni of the Year” in a statewide event (see article on Page 1). It seems very appropriate to also acknowledge the hard working staff at our Michigan Works! Service Centers for the great job they do working with the many customers of our system. Your hard work and dedication to serving the employers and job seekers of our region is VERY much appreciated!

What’s coming up in the world of workforce development? Governor Jennifer Granholm announced the “No Worker Left Behind” initiative in her 2007 State of the State address. Michigan Works! is slated to be the major player in increasing the number of dislocated workers who gain new job skills through participation in occupational skills training. We look forward to partnering with Kellogg Community College to further increase the number of dislocated workers who elect to train for new careers.

Elaine Furu-Baker  
Director of WFD

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

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17111 G Drive North  
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## UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

### **February 26, 2007—March 9, 2007**

Proposal Evaluation Panel evaluates proposals and selects finalists for W.I.A. Calhoun Youth, W.I.A. Core, Intensive & Training and Employment Service Programs to meet with the Planning and Development Committee

### **March 16, 2007 12:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m.**

Planning and Development Committee Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall  
Meets with finalists

### **March 20, 2007 8:00 a.m.—10:00 a.m.**

Workforce Development Board/CEOB Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall  
Acts upon recommendations for proposals

### **April 19, 2007 8:30 a.m.—10:30 a.m.**

Education Advisory Group Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall

### **April 20, 2007**

Monitoring and Evaluation Committee Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall  
Interviews and evaluates Barry & Branch W.I.A. Youth Contracts and the W.I.A. Incumbent Worker Contract

### **May 4, 2007 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.**

Planning and Development Committee Meeting  
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall

### **May 15, 2007 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.**

Workforce Development Board Meeting  
Coldwater Michigan Works! Service Center