

MPRI ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOGNIZES PERSEVERANCE AND HARD WORK OF PARTICIPANT



Pictured from the left are: Sara Wallace, MPRI Coordinator; Lisa Templeton; Charles Templeton; Tammy Burbey, MPRI Community Resource Advocate; Noah Nagy, Calhoun County Parole Supervisor.

The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative (MPRI) Advisory Council honored Charles Templeton for his perseverance and hard work at their January 2008 meeting.

One of the primary goals of MPRI is to increase public safety by reducing crime and increase 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.

After 15 years in prison, Charles was released and referred to the MPRI program. He has been working with MPRI for one year. During this time he has worked in a transitional employment program with

Goodwill Industries of Central Michigan’s Heartland, attended Successful Thinking classes, and attended weekly meetings with the MPRI Community Resource Advocate. The Community Resource Advocate assisted Charles with transportation, obtaining his I.D., housing expenses which included rent and utilities, and his employment search.

Charles gave a heartfelt thank you to the Advisory Council and expressed his appreciation for those who had faith in him. He stated that, “The mind is like a parachute, it has to be open to function.” Charles is proud to say that he now has a full time job in packaging and assembly that he has held for the last six months. He has also purchased his own vehicle and a home. Charles was excited to tell that group that he married Lisa Templeton (also in attendance at the meeting) the same day that he received this award!

The next Barry/Branch/Calhoun MPRI Advisory Council meeting will be held on April 16th, at a location to be determined. During this meeting, a workshop will be facilitated by the Foundation for Behavioral Resources (FBR), the agency that provides workforce development services and career assessment services to MPRI participants. FBR will discuss tips on how to address felonies/criminal records on a resume and in an interview.

Please contact Sara Wallace, Barry/Branch/Calhoun MPRI Coordinator, at (269) 441-1469 or wallacsa@michigan.gov if you have additional questions or would like to be added to the MPRI Advisory Council’s e-mail list.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ◆ MPRI Participant Recognized.....1
- ◆ Community Garden.....2
- ◆ Workforce Staff Recognized.....2
- ◆ Michigan Works! Success Story.....3

- ◆ Business Services Team Arranges Training...3
- ◆ Workforce Board Recognizes Service.....4
- ◆ Calhoun Program Named Friend of 4-H.....4
- ◆ WFD Director’s Comments.....5

MICHIGAN WORKS! PARTICIPANTS GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Work First and W.I.A. youth participants in Branch County gave back to their community by working in the Community Garden established by Ann Lown, Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development member and Fay Lutz, a master gardener.

The garden was designed so that agencies and individuals could plant gardens with one row of each garden donated to the Branch Area Food Pantry.

This work experience taught participants about gardening and allowed them to take home fresh produce. It also taught them the value of giving back to the community.

Faye Lutz thanked Michigan Works! on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Branch Area Food Pantry for participating in the Community Garden, Plant a Row for the Hungry Project 2007. She stated that they were able to provide 1,776 pounds of fresh, organic produce for the hungry of Branch County. She anticipated that this number would increase once the sweet potatoes and parsnips were harvested.



BARRY/BRANCH/CALHOUN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD HONORS MICHIGAN WORKS! STAFF WITH CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION



Michigan Works! Team members were recognized with certificates of appreciation at the January 15 Workforce Development Board meeting.

The Michigan Works! Workforce Development Team was recognized in January with certificates of appreciation for their individual contributions to the Barry/Branch/Calhoun Workforce Development Board. The following Michigan Works!/CISD staff were recognized: Elaine Furu-Baker, Workforce Development Director; Christel Owen, Finance Coordinator; M.J. Bruns, Planning Manager; George Bauer, Business/Industry Service Coordinator; Lisa Larson, Education & Training Coordinator; Lindy Bishop, Contract Compliance & MIS Monitor; and Joan Bujdos, Administrative Assistant. CISD staff members Mary Ellen Currie, Interim Superintendent, and Becky Rocho, Assistant Superintendent, General Services/Legislation, were also recognized with certificates for their support and commitment to the Workforce Development Board.

Business Services Team Arranges Customized Training for Local Employer

The Michigan Works! Business Services Team is assisting job seekers and a local auto parts supplier by providing customized welding training at the Regional Manufacturing Technology Center (RMTC).

This employer was hiring welders but they were not succeeding on the job due to the type of welding that the employees were trained in. The welding at this company is light welding but most employees were trained in heavy welding.

The Business Services Team contacted the RMTC and arranged for a welding instructor to go to the plant and teach welding techniques to employees. There are two facets to the program, classroom training and on-the-job training. Employees learn to weld stainless steel during the classroom training. After they

graduate, they participate in on-the-job training at the company. This gives them the opportunity to learn other aspects of the job.

Michigan Works! is funding this training through the No Worker Left Behind Program. This program assists unemployed or underemployed individuals, who meet eligibility requirements, in obtaining skills and credentials in high demand occupations.

Michigan Works! now collects applications and submits them to this company. The company screens the applicants prior to sending them through the training. This employer is halfway to meeting their goal of hiring 61 welders. Three classes of 10 students each have been completed. All of these students have been hired and there is a 90% success rate!

HOLIDAY CHEER: A MICHIGAN WORKS! SUCCESS STORY

Gary Christie is a man who has worked hard all of his life to achieve his goals and provide for his family. Gary was a truck driver with a career spanning over 30 years. As the result of a medical condition, Gary was no longer able to drive trucks and thus was forced to pursue a different career path. He was employed as a security guard for a reputable security company, but through no fault of his own was laid off in May of 2007. It was at this time that Gary sought the assistance of the Barry County Michigan Works! office staff.

Over the next few months, Gary worked diligently with Michigan Works! staff to find another job. Because of these regular visits, Gary became well know to the staff at the office, particularly the Customer Service Representative, Emily Gingrich. During the course of his visits, Gary expressed that his dream job would be to "play Santa" during the holiday season.

In October 2007 Gary was placed through Manpower in a job at Steelcase. Because of his steady employment there, he no longer came into the Michigan Works! office for assistance.

In November of 2007, Donna Lipp, Barry County Michigan Works! Youth Programs Case Manager, learned that the Hastings K-mart was seeking someone to play Santa for the holidays. When Donna asked other staff in the office if they knew of a good "Santa" candidate, Emily immediately thought of Gary Christie. His physical appearance and personality were perfect for the job, plus she remembered that "playing Santa" was his dream job. Emily quickly called Gary and left a message explaining the need of the store and

gave him the information needed to contact the store manager regarding the position. Several days later he walked into the Barry County Michigan Works! office exclaiming "Thank You, Thank You, Thank You"!!! He had been hired by Hastings K-mart and the local Rent-A-Center to play Santa for the next several weekends leading up to Christmas.

Emily recently visited Gary "playing Santa" at K-mart and was able to see him interacting with the children who came to tell Santa about their Christmas wishes. Emily knew at that time that the "true" Santa had been found at the Barry County Michigan Works!.



WORKFORCE BOARD RECOGNIZES EXCELLENT SERVICE

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

Suzan Moore, Recruiter/Job Developer, of Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College Employment Services was recognized with the "Excellence in Customer Service Award" for her achievements in customer service at the Battle Creek Michigan Works! Service Center by Dr. Lynne Haley, chairperson of the Workforce Development 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."

Moore, in her first year of employment with Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College, earned her perfect score in overall satisfaction for a Job Seeker Telephone Visit conducted on August 2, 2007 while she worked as a Customer Service Specialist. The mystery shopper awarded Moore the highest possible scores for being very professional, friendly and focused. Suzan was promoted to a Recruiter/Job Developer for Michigan Works! Calhoun County/Kellogg Community College Employment Services on August 8, 2007.



Pictured from the left are: Dennis Bona of Kellogg Community College, Bob Chojnowski of Decker Manufacturing and Chair of the WDB Monitoring & Evaluation Committee, Suzan Moore of Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College Employment Services, and Curtis Warren of Michigan Works!/Kellogg Community College Employment Services

Calhoun Youth Program Named "Friend of 4-H"



Calhoun WIA Youth contract staff members Marquetta Frost and Kristi Rigelman are shown receiving the "Friend of 4-H" award from Sherry Grice, MSU Extension Educator, as Elaine Furu-Baker, MWA Director looks on.

The Michigan Works! WIA Youth Program, operated by Battle Creek Public Schools under a contract with the Calhoun ISD MWA, recently received recognition with a "Friend of 4-H" award due to an innovative collaboration with the Michigan State University 4-H Program.

"In these times, when resources are in short supply and the need to strengthen programs and support for youth is so great, the Michigan Works! WIA Youth Program and the Calhoun

County 4-H Program came together to better assist the young people of Calhoun County," noted MSU 4-H Extension Educator Sherry Grice during the award presentation.

Kristi Rigelman, director of the Battle Creek Public Schools WIA Youth Program, recognized the valuable resources that the 4-H Program could bring to the young people enrolled in the WIA Youth contract in terms of both personal and leadership development, as well as valuable career exploration. The WIA Youth who became enrolled in urban 4-H programs gained valuable skills by participating in JIFF, a 4-H health program in which the older teens teach younger youth about healthy lifestyles. The WIA Youth also benefitted from participation in "Peace Jam," a program focusing on social justice, leadership and community service that was coordinated for both 4-H and WIA populations. WIA Youth also took an active part in MSU 4-H Exploration Days and gained familiarity with the MSU campus during their week-long stay.

Elaine Furu-Baker, director of the Calhoun ISD Michigan Works! Team and an alumnus of the Calhoun County 4-H Program, encouraged the collaboration between the two programs as a means to reach more youth across the county with deeper and more meaningful services. "Our MWA is very pleased to receive recognition as a "Friend of 4-H" but more importantly, the customers of our youth program gained valuable skills from the collaboration," stated Furu-Baker.

WFD DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS—ELAINE FURU-BAKER

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Terance Lunger as the new superintendent of the Calhoun Intermediate School District. Dr. Lunger had been the superintendent of Greenville Public Schools since 2004, where he became familiar with Michigan Works! due to the closing of a large employer in that region. His understanding of the vital roles that education and workforce development play in economic development will lend valuable support to Michigan Works! Please join me in welcoming Dr. Lunger to our region!

The Barry/Branch/Calhoun Michigan Works! Service Centers recorded over 400,000 customer visits in 2007, an increase of 33% over the customer visits recorded in 2006. Funding for this year has increased to \$9 million dollars so that we do have some additional resources to serve the customers of our system. Capturing the energy and resources of the No Worker Left Behind training initiative has led to a significant investment in occupational skills training for the job seekers of our system.

The WFD Team received notice on February 27th that the Battle Creek, Coldwater, and Hastings Michigan Works! Service Centers earned certification as a result of DLEG's intensive certification process that was implemented in April and May of 2007. I'd also like to note that the Battle Creek Service Center was recognized as one of the outstanding sites visited by the DLEG Mystery Shopper during the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2008.

WDB Chairperson Lynne Haley and I attended the 2008 Michigan Works! Alumni Celebration at the State Capitol and were once again reminded of the many job seekers who have greatly benefited from Michigan Works! services. A sincere appreciation is extended to all of our frontline staff in all of our Michigan Works! Service Centers who provide excellent customer service every day!

The MWA Business Service Team is actively engaged in a number of exciting projects with local employers to ensure that prospective employees possess the skills necessary for the success of the business. This newsletter contains a great example of our "business solution" model relating to a customized welding training project.

Our MWA remains committed to providing high quality services to business, industry and job seekers in order to move Michigan forward on the path to economic recovery. As always, please feel free to contact me with concerns, ideas and comments regarding Michigan Works!

Elaine Furu-Baker
Director of WFD

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UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

April 3, 2008
Education Advisory Group Meeting
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall

April 18, 2008
Monitoring and Evaluation Committee Meeting
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall
Interviews and evaluates the WIA Core,
Intensive & Training contracts and the
Employment Service contracts

May 2, 2008 12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
Planning and Development Committee Meeting
Calhoun I.S.D. 17111 G Drive North-Marshall

May 20, 2008 8:00 a.m.
Workforce Development Board Meeting
Coldwater Michigan Works! Service Center
210 Vista Drive, Coldwater

May 21, 2008
Staff issues FY09 JET, Work Readiness, and
Food Assistance Employment & Training RFP
notices of availability to potential bidders

May 27, 2008
Staff emails the FY09 JET, Work Readiness, and Food
Assistance Employment & Training RFP packages to
bidders who requested the package

May 30, 2008
Staff conducts JET, Work Readiness, and Food Assis-
tance Employment & Training RFP Bidder's Confer-
ences between 9 a.m. and noon at Calhoun I.S.D.

June 23, 2008
JET, Work Readiness, and FAE&T proposals are due
at Calhoun ISD by noon

July 11, 2008
Planning & Development Committee meets at Calhoun
ISD to review Work Readiness, JET and FAE&T and
interview finalists

July 15, 2008
Workforce Development Board Meeting
Hastings Michigan Works! Service Center
535 West Woodlawn Avenue