



Illinois Workforce Partnership

# 2021 AWARDS RECOGNITION

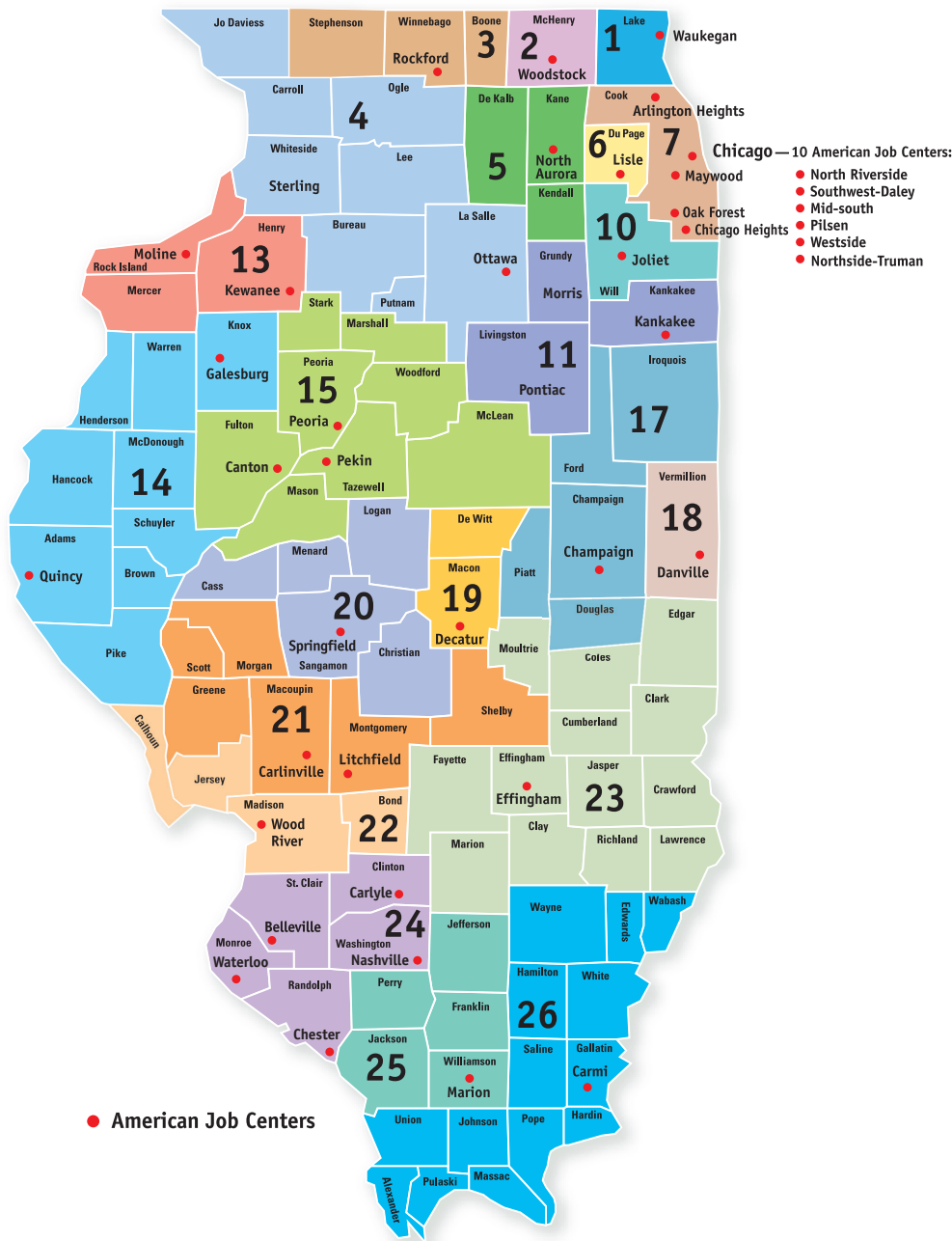


Illinois  
Workforce  
Partnership

*Supporting Workforce and  
Economic Development*

# Illinois American Job Centers

Provided courtesy of the Illinois Workforce Partnership



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This report is compiled by the Illinois Workforce Partnership, [illinoisworkforcepartnership.org](http://illinoisworkforcepartnership.org)



# WORKFORCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY ACT

**T**he Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) brings together, in strategic coordination, the core programs of Federal investment in skill development:

- workforce services (employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, & youth), adult education & literacy programs, Wagner-Peyser employment services, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs that assist individuals with disabilities.

In Illinois, the funding is made available through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) and allocated to Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA) to support each local workforce system and operate American Job Centers (AJC).

The local workforce system is led by a Workforce Board – a group of community leaders appointed by the Chief Elected Official, who also serves as the grant recipient for the funds allocated to the local area.

The Board is responsible for developing local plans and oversight of the local service delivery system, as well as coordinating activities with economic development entities and employers in their area.

The majority of each board is represented by members of the local business community. In all the board represents business and industry, education, labor, community organizations and public assistance agencies.

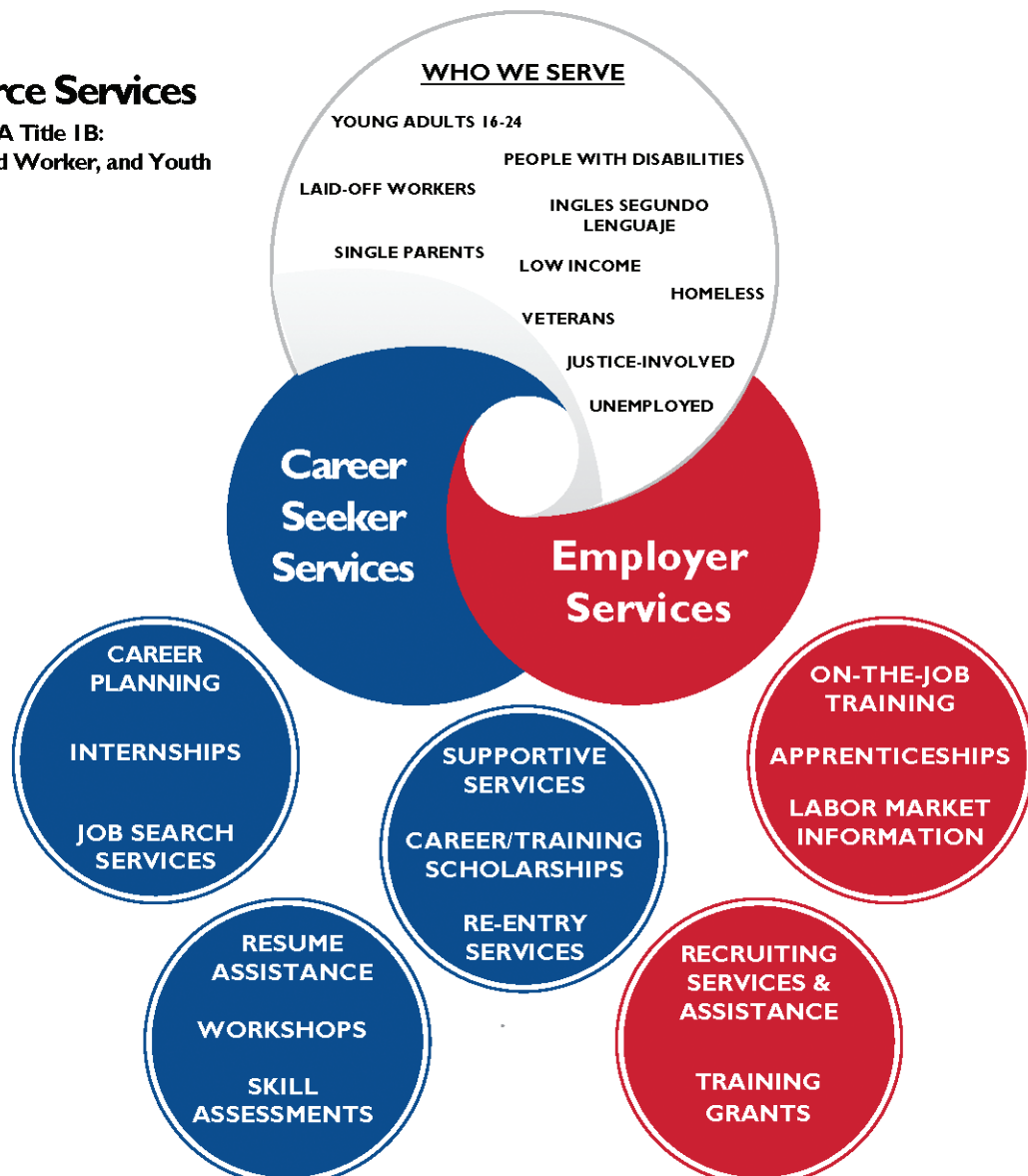
## Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIA)

- Customer centered design allows local communities to coordinate services and maximize resources to increase access to employment opportunities for all people.
- Illinois has 31 American Job Centers (AJC), one in each LWIA.
- The design is focused on one stop services, whether a physical location or virtual on-line resources. To note: Many Illinois AJC's have remained open throughout the pandemic, offering critical remote services as well as in-person services.
- The success of the local system relies on the implementation of service integration and collaboration among the partners.

An overview of our services are outlined below:

## Workforce Services

WIOA Title IB:  
Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth





## **IWP OFFICERS**

### **PRESIDENT**

Lisa Bly, LWA 3

### **PAST-PRESIDENT**

Michelle Cerutti, LWA 25

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

Tony Fuhrman, LWA 22

### **SECRETARY**

Sarah Graham, LWA 20

### **TREASURER**

Steve Martin, LWA 16

### **MEMBERS AT LARGE**

Jamie Brown, LWA 6

Matt Jones, LWA 24

Leeann Norris, LWA 15

Caroline Portlock, LWA 10



## **A Message from Our President...**

The Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) is a statewide association representing the 22 local workforce areas (LWAs) across the state of Illinois. Our partnerships spread across 10 Economic Development Regions, working with chief elected officials in every city and county to develop a local workforce to support each area's local economy. We are committed to creating a skilled workforce for employers to ensure that our state remains competitive and continues to grow.

Local Workforce Boards are responsible for the strategic development of the local workforce system by looking at current trends and forecasting future needs, while offering nimble and flexible programs and services. Led by local employers, working with economic development agencies, educational providers, labor organizations and other community stakeholders, workforce boards are responsive to the unique needs of their local economy.

As President of IWP, I am honored to represent the association and will focus on the following priorities:

- Growing Leadership for our profession.
- Establishing a state and federal legislative agenda that favors the efforts of local workforce boards.
- Ensuring that American Job Centers across the state of Illinois offer equitable access, opportunity and support to all Illinois residents and employers.
- Promoting the value of local workforce development professionals who are on the ground doing this work every day.
- Workforce development is a critical component to our nation's economy, both pre and post pandemic.

**LISA M. BLY-JONES, ED.D.**  
IWP President



# ABOUT THE ILLINOIS WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

**T**he Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) advocates for the creation of a skilled workforce for our state's continued competitiveness and growth. We connect businesses and individuals to a wide array of resources utilizing our public workforce system. We are leaders who strategically engage a variety of local, regional, state and national partners in workforce and economic development to ensure program effectiveness.

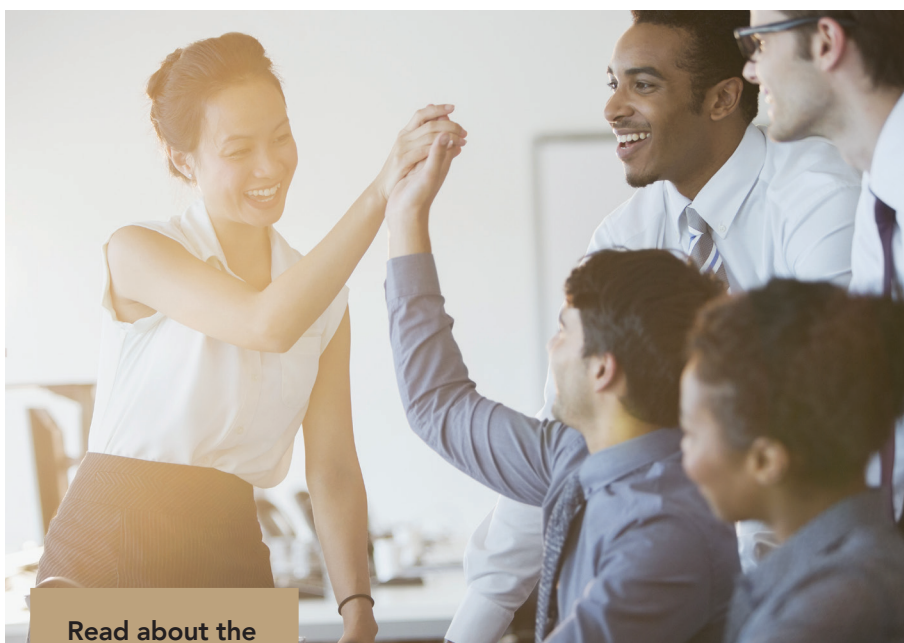
Our dedicated expertise makes us responsive to the needs of businesses and job seekers.

With assistance from 22 business-led Workforce Boards, 358 business leaders, 38 economic development entities, and 72 labor organizations serving as workforce board members, we are pleased to highlight some of the successes from our local workforce systems that are included in this report.

## WATCH US SUCCEED!

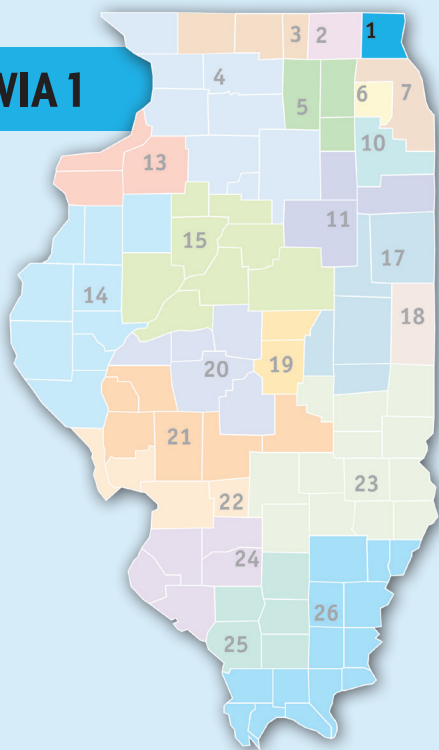
**Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP)** presents award winners from across the state. Each year, local workforce areas submit nominations and winners are selected by a panel of workforce professionals. The award categories are listed below and the unique stories and contributions of our award winners are highlighted in this report.

- **The Individual Achievement Award** recognizes an individual whose progression through the services leading to their goal was timely and focused, and who attained a credential and/or job in their field of training.
- **The Business Leadership Award** is given to recognize a private sector company that has demonstrated leadership in the areas of workforce and economic development. In addition, the company may have made significant contributions to their local workforce innovations area during the past program year.
- **The Innovative Solutions Award** is given to recognize workforce programs, economic development programs, projects and/or initiatives that have resulted in the economic growth of a community or region during the past program year.



Read about the  
2021 award  
winners on  
pages 6-44  
of this report.

## LWIA 1



Lake County is situated in the northeastern corner of Illinois, along the shores of Lake Michigan. As of the 2020 census, it has a population of 714,342, making it the third-most populous county in Illinois. Its county seat is Waukegan, the tenth-largest city in Illinois. The county is primarily suburban, with some urban areas and some rural areas. Due to its location, immediately north of Cook County, Lake County is one of the collar counties of the Chicago metropolitan area.

### Board Website

[www.lakecountyworkforce.org](http://www.lakecountyworkforce.org)

### Job Center Website

[www.lakecountyil.gov/167/](http://www.lakecountyil.gov/167/)  
Job-Center-of-Lake-County



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## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Chicago Boiler Company (CB Mills)



Manufacturing is one of the top three industries in Lake County. Many manufacturers continued operations throughout the pandemic. One of those was Chicago Boiler Company (CB Mills), a manufacturer in Gurnee, IL. CB Mills is becoming a leading designer and fabricator of grinding mills, wash systems, solvent recovery systems, and custom steel tanks.

Due to increased growth at CB Mills, Bruce Krumholz Jr., an Executive at the company, reached out to the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) regarding ways to train up the organization's employees. IMEC worked with CB Mills to develop a sustainable training project. During that interaction, Mr. Krumholz discussed workforce needs with his IMEC contact who immediately referred CB Mills to Lake County Workforce Development and the Business Service team.

Demar Harris, Director of Programs for Workforce Development, assured Krumholz that the Business Service team could source potential candidates to CB Mills and explained how there are business incentives that could support the employer's expansion and talent attraction efforts. The workforce programs described below had a financial and skill attainment impact on CB Mills: On-the-Job Training (OJT) is a "hire-first" program in which the employer enters into an agreement with Lake County Workforce Development to hire, train, and retain a job seeker upon successful completion of the training program. A work experience is a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for up to six months. Workforce Development pays the participant's wages during the duration of the work experience. These programs are a way to mitigate

risk for the employer while allowing the job seeker to learn new skills and explore a career path.

Initially, CB Mills interviewed and took on two candidates from the resumes that they received from the Business Service team. One participated in a work experience through September of this year, gaining experience in the areas of manufacturing. The other participated in On-the-Job training at CB Mills as an Equipment Sales Specialist.

Jordan Jackson completed a welding certificate and was looking to put his welding skills into practice. Due to his youth, he had little work experience and didn't hear back from potential employers. Antonio Garcia, Business Service Manager, engaged with Mr. Krumholz to see if CB Mills could accommodate a paid work experience for Jordan Jackson. Based upon the previous successes with candidate referrals, Mr. Krumholz accepted. Jordan started a Paid Work Experience in September 2021. During the next six months, Jordan will apply his welding learnings, learn new skills like manufacturing software, reading and interpreting manufacturing blueprints while earning wages.

Mr. Krumholz would recommend the Business Service team to any organization that is looking to expand their operations.

"I believe it relieves some of the growth stress that a company could be going through. The biggest cost we incur is training employees. This made it possible to get new employees up to speed quickly with training expenses covered." –Bruce Krumholz Jr.

CB Mills continues to partner with the Business Services Team to showcase their success to other employers in Lake County.



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Claire Simon

Claire Simon was working as a Peace Corps Health Volunteer in Ecuador when the pandemic struck. She loved her role as an educator, providing information on nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation practices to young adults with disabilities. She also had an opportunity to practice her Spanish while learning more about another culture. In March 2020, though, the Peace Corps notified Claire that she had to evacuate. She had only 24 hours to pack and return to her parent's home in Illinois. She describes early 2020 as a time of great uncertainty. Initially, she thought she might be called back to Ecuador. When it became clear that the pandemic was going to linger, she began looking for work but had little success. "There weren't a lot

of opportunities at the time. Employers seemed to be in limbo in the early months of the pandemic. I had no job leads or interviews."

Claire's mother, who works in the public health sphere, encouraged her to get in touch with Lake County. In response to the ongoing pandemic, Lake County Workforce Development had partnered with the Lake County Health Department with the goal of identifying and placing unemployed workers in disaster relief employment as Contact Tracers within the Health Department. Claire was one of the individuals placed as a Contact Tracer through this initiative funded through the National Dislocated Worker Grant.



Claire was thrilled to be able to assist the community throughout the pandemic. She managed one of the testing and vaccination sites and led a team of other Contact Tracers. She reviewed COVID-19 data and outcomes to manage cluster/outbreak investigations. She also continued to hone her Spanish skills while she worked with individuals from many cultures at the vaccination site. She participated in on-the-job training in safety, contact

tracing, HIPAA regulations, Salesforce, and Microsoft Teams

Because of her demonstrated leadership skills and focus on public safety, Claire was hired directly by the Lake County Health Department as a Community Health Specialist on the immunizations team in November 2020. She is thankful for the opportunity that the Contact Tracer initiative provided her. The financial stability afforded by the position, has allowed her to move into her own apartment. Most importantly, she genuinely enjoys her job. "I am able to work with a diverse team while fulfilling my passion for direct service in community health."

## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### Lake County Workforce Development Board's Efforts Toward Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Lake County Workforce Development is requesting that the Illinois Workforce Partnership to recognize the Lake County Workforce Development Board's efforts toward diversity, equity and inclusion for the Innovation Solution Award winner of 2021.

The Lake County Workforce Development Board has a strong commitment and agenda for ensuring that economic prosperity reaches underserved communities and creates opportunities across the County for all residents by working to remove barriers for the economically disadvantaged populations. A priority of the Board Chairman, Dr Andrew Warrington, President and CEO of United Conveyor was the creation of the Lake County Workforce Development Board Equity Task Force. He requested the Equity Task Force membership include Lake County Workforce Development Board members and community partners – a full list of members can be found online. The Task Force assignment was to develop a framework of recommendations within Lake County's workforce

network to establish goals and disrupt inequality for the populations served.

The Task Force is Co-Chaired by Dr. Carlotta Roman, Director of Diversity at the Center for Automotive Diversity, Inclusion and Advancement and Emily Garrity, Customer Advocate with Origin8cares LLC. Under Dr. Roman and Ms. Garrity's leadership the Lake County Workforce Development Board's Equity Task Force Action Plan was developed. The Action Plan goals are the driving force to embody a forward-looking workforce network where all can belong, contribute, and thrive.

1. Strengthen understanding of the interrelationship between diversity, inclusion, and equity through education and training,
2. Communicate the workforce system's diversity, inclusion, and equity ideals,
3. Demonstrate leadership commitment and accountability to promote a diverse and inclusive workforce system culture, and
4. Use data collection and reporting to assist in assessing

workforce system DEI efforts.

The Co-Chairs believed that dialogue around diversity, equity and inclusion is broad and growing and there is a need for common vocabulary to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Words often have different meanings; depending on lived experiences words might hold different meanings for different people. With that said, the Task Force created a list of agreed upon definitions to guide the efforts for the terms: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Disparities, Access, and Equity Lens. .

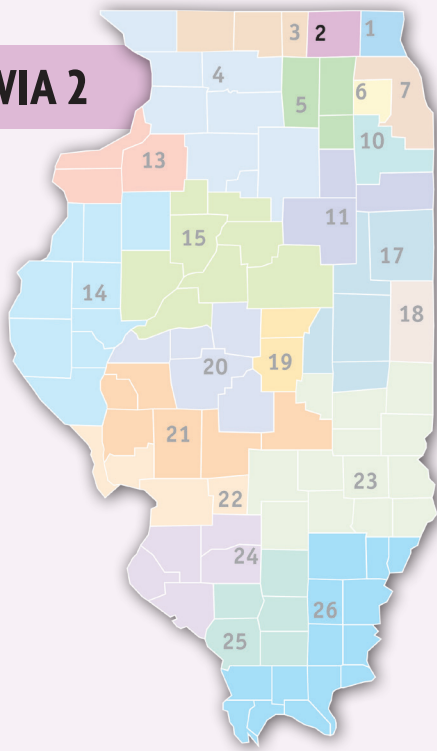
In response to the goal to strengthen understanding of the interrelationship between diversity, inclusion, and equity through education and training, the Lake County Workforce Development Board's Inclusive Leadership Institute (ILI) was developed and deployed in partnership with DEI practitioner, Cindu Thomas-George. The ILI is a four-part, eight work-shop training series designed to equip Lake County Workforce board members, task force members, and workforce development

partners with the awareness, knowledge, and skills that can encourage inclusive, equitable, intercultural competent and anti-racist communication. The training was designed to help strengthen an understanding of the inter-relationship between diversity, inclusion, and equity. The Task Force's optimism was to provide members and training attendees with fundamental knowledge and awareness that can further develop individuals as agents of change and advocates of inclusion in Lake County. You can see the full ILI sessions and descriptions in attachment B.

The Lake County Workforce Development Board along with the Task Force members realizes that the work of diversity, equity and inclusion is never done, and they are dedicated to continuing their efforts into 2022 and beyond. Thank you in advance for your consideration in recognizing Lake County's Workforce Development Board's sincere commitment to driving diversity, inclusion, and equity forward within the workforce development industry.



## LWIA 2



Located in Woodstock, IL, McHenry County Workforce Network brings Workforce Development programs and services for employers and job seekers needing assistance in meeting the challenges of today's job market. Our vision for the future is to create a skilled workforce in McHenry County that will help our community achieve economic prosperity.

Learn more at  
[www.mchenrycountyworkforce.com](http://www.mchenrycountyworkforce.com)

**McHENRY COUNTY**  
**Workforce Network**



Shown from left to right: Gary Reese, president of Heartland Cabinets; Mike Schulz, shop supervisor; Brian Gavina, Daniel Roy and David Baker.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Heartland Cabinet

*The Business Leadership Award is given to recognize a private sector company that has demonstrated leadership in the areas of workforce and economic development. In addition, the company may have made significant contributions to their local workforce innovations area during the past program year.*

### Second Chance Hiring as a business and economic solution

Jeffrey Korzenik writes in the introduction of his book "UNTAPPED TALENT" as he describes what it will take in the next decade of business leadership. He states that the "successful CEO of the future will be the one who can effectively manage through the current and ongoing talent shortage."

Heartland Cabinet in Crystal Lake has demonstrated that leadership in becoming a Second Chance hiring champion. Like every employer, the company has experienced the effects of the labor shortage. The company has responded with a business model that serves as an example for other businesses in the County.

Heartland Cabinet started by partnering with McHenry County Workforce to hire a job candidate with a felony background and provide the training needed with a WIOA funded On the Job Training. That successful hire led to another OJT hire followed by a third hire. The model of providing training and time to progress produced loyal employees that have helped train the new hires. Finding employees that have excellent attendance, punctual and appreciate the opportunity are of economic value to the company

That is not to say that Gary Reese,

President of Heartland Cabinet overlooks the value of human capital and the impact on community and individual. He has been recognized in the community for his leadership and practiced values. His employees also recognize that.

"Heartland Cabinet has not only given me a job but it has also allowed me to believe that everyone deserves a second opportunity in life." Brian G., Second chance employee and Cabinetmaker.

In the book "START WITH WHY" Simon Sinek makes a business case for starting with "why you do it" instead of starting with "what you do". The why requires a sense of the company values. Leaders lead with values. Values comes from what the company believes.

"Why do we hire people with prior convictions? Honestly, it was a pretty simple reason and that being open to hiring from this group of people greatly expanded our applicant pool. Also, there is research that shows ex-felons are often found to be an incredibly hardworking group, recognizing that their opportunities may not be as plentiful and are therefore more grateful for the chance to excel with an employer. At Heartland we have found that to be true.

During the interview process, I asked each what they learned from their experience and to an individual I believe that whatever mistakes they made are behind them. Everyone deserves a second chance and at Heartland they get that and can look forward to a great career in our industry," Gary Reese, President of Heartland Cabinet.



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Lucas Burkhardt

Lucas B. applied for the young adult WIOA program with McHenry County Workforce Network (MCWN) in May 2021. Right away Lucas's focus was finding employment. He even stated he would take any 'job'! Together with his career planner Lucas created his resume, a cover letter, completed mock interviews and received accommodations in completing employment applications.

Lucas had recently moved to the Woodstock area with limited employment history. Lucas grew up in Chicago and enjoyed playing sports in high school. Lucas stated he struggled academically and enjoyed working in physically intensive occupations. After several conversations and career assessments Lucas decided the best route for him would be to enter the workforce immediately. His housing and

transportation situation required him to have a steady income.

Lucas does not drive and knew he would be dependent on public transportation. He wanted to explore local manufacturing companies in Woodstock allowing him to stay close to work. Some appointment days Lucas would even walk to. This young man was committed and regardless of any challenges he was facing he completed all tasks within twenty-four hours. He also knew he wanted to work with a company that would allow him to grow within a role by obtaining hands on learning. Lucas is not a fan of change and stated he wanted to commit to a company with historical success. His intention would be to stay on with the employer for ten years plus.

Together Lucas and Elizabeth



explored various manufacturing companies in Woodstock and Lucas decided to explore the production assembler role at Kelco. Lucas accessed career training services offered through MCWN prior to applying for an open position at Kelco. Lucas applied to Kelco in June and started his work-based learning experience on June 20th.

Elizabeth kept in touch with both Lucas and his site supervisor during Lucas's first couple of weeks due to first day jitters. Within a few days after starting Lucas asked more questions,

kept his supervisor in the loop with concerns, and kept his attendance perfect. At Lucas's site evaluation his career planner Elizabeth was informed Kelco wanted to extend Lucas a full-time employment position effective August 4th. Lucas enthusiastically accepted the position and received a pay increase.

From day one Lucas kept focused on his goal. He has gained new employment skills including operating machinery, painting, and quality processing. Kelco and MCWN have agreed to move Lucas into an on the job training position and allow Lucas to grow with Kelco. Lucas will continue to receive any career or training support he requires for his training. A manufacturing certificate is being explored with Lucas. The MCWN looks forward to supporting Lucas's in all his career goals.

## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### Teacher Residency Program

#### Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

In collaboration with Aurora University Woodstock Center, Woodstock School District 200, developed a Teacher Residency Program which identified future teachers and helped provide them with the yearlong on the job training and courses needed to apply for their Illinois Professional Educator License (PEL) in Elementary Education. Curriculum and training opportunities were developed to specifically support this unique collaborative program. A critical component of the program is the interconnected relationship between the coursework and the residency wherein requirements to successfully complete the coursework are embedded in the residency. Each of the residents had been assigned a mentor teacher, who they shadowed over the course of an entire school year, working under a gradual release model in which the residents assume greater responsibility for the classroom during the school year. The residents were responsible for a total of 17 graduate level credits over in the 2nd semester – January –May 2021. Key elements of the program include:

- Recruited locally from a diverse population that filled local teaching positions.
- The program led to a professional educator license (PEL) with an Elementary Education endorsement for the incumbent workers
- Courses led towards the bilingual and ESL endorsement embedded into the training. Studies show students have greater success when the teaching staff represents the student body.

In Woodstock, approximately 34% of students are Hispanic, whereas about 9% of the teaching staff is Hispanic. A specific emphasis has been placed on recruiting and training minority candidates into the program. This was an important criterion to improve the career opportunities of that population of students in the local economy and industries.

- All of the 8 students who completed the Teacher Residency program are employed in McHenry County.
- These individuals were instrumental in providing additional support for students during remote and hybrid



Shown from left to right: Catherine Peterson, Dean of AU Woodstock Center; Diana Frisbie, Director of Elem Ed and Initial Licensure; Andrea Garcia, 5th Grade Dual Language Teacher/20-21 Teacher Resident; and Keely Krueger, District 200 Asst Superintendent of Early Childhood & Elementary Ed.

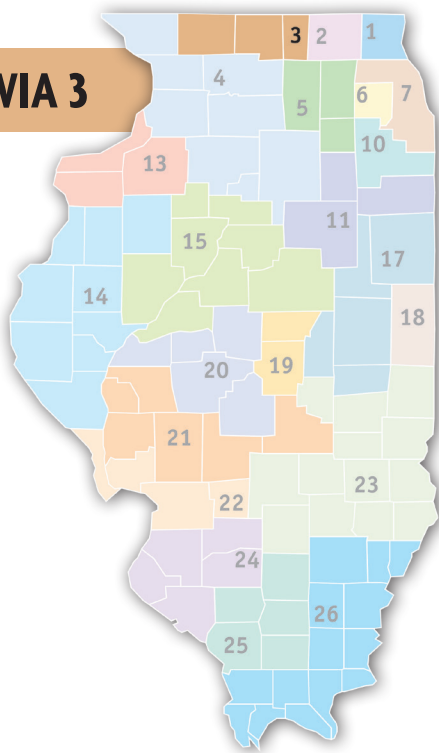
learning challenges of the 2020-21 school year, working and learning alongside expert teachers to provide solid instruction during unprecedented times.

- 7 of the 8 new teachers remained with District 200 and presented themselves as exceptional candidates through the interview process.
- The Teacher Residency program was purposefully developed to address the most acute shortages in McHenry County. The first decision was to focus the program solely on Elementary Education.

Keely Krueger, Assistant Superintendent for Woodstock

Community Unit School District #200 stated in conclusion "The 7 residents that we hired as permanent teachers in the school district for the 21-22 school year, the transition has been seamless. The training that they received throughout the year-long residency program has allowed them to hit the ground running as they begin their first year as a teacher. I haven't had to "worry" about them as much as they know our District, procedures, curriculum, etc. We have a great group of teachers who are committed to their new role and the students that they are educating. It's been great! Thanks so much for your support of the program."

## LWIA 3



### BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

#### Alpha Controls & Services LLC

Alpha Controls & Services LLC is a local business, providing energy efficient & cost-effective solutions for building heating & cooling management, that helps companies eliminate barriers through the leveraging of technology to assist them in achieving their business objectives.

Alpha Controls & Services' co-owner, Frank Rotello, has served on The Workforce Connection Board since 2015 and is currently serving his second term as Board Chair. Mr. Rotello advocates for the workforce system, promoting the services to regional employers and career-seekers. He is in the business of growing businesses and finds value in serving on The Workforce Connection Board as a means to grow local organizations and represent the interests of the regional economy. Alpha Controls & Services reflects the pillars of the workforce system as a business that focuses on training and advancing their talent, providing opportunities to current and potential employees, and sees the potential in their own.

The Workforce Connection (TWC) is committed to providing a workforce that meets the needs of the business community now and in the future, by providing a fully integrated and accessible workforce development system that balances the needs of individuals and businesses to ensure our region has a skilled workforce to effectively compete in the global economy. TWC serves Boone, Stephenson, and Winnebago counties of Northern Illinois.

#### Website

[www.theworkforceconnection.org](http://www.theworkforceconnection.org)

#### Facebook

[www.fb.com/theworkforceconnection](http://www.fb.com/theworkforceconnection)

#### Twitter

[twitter.com/workforcetwc](https://twitter.com/workforcetwc)

#### LinkedIn

[www.linkedin.com/company/the-workforce-connection](http://www.linkedin.com/company/the-workforce-connection)

#### Podcast

[www.theworkforceconnection.org/workforcewisdom](http://www.theworkforceconnection.org/workforcewisdom)



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## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Julian Hernandez-Castillo

Julian Hernandez-Castillo's goal when he entered The Workforce Connection's Elevate Program was to earn his GED and then pursue post-secondary education. Julian started GED classes in January and successfully completed his GED training in September, all while navigating the educational changes brought on by the pandemic. After his GED graduation, Julian attended a 6-week welding training, which provided an industry-recognized credential by the American Welding Society, and then entered into a Work Experience where he could utilize his welding training and continue to grow his skills. Julian is now working full-time in a welding shop, accomplishing all that he set out to do when he enrolled in Elevate.



## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### AAR and The Workforce Connection (TWC)

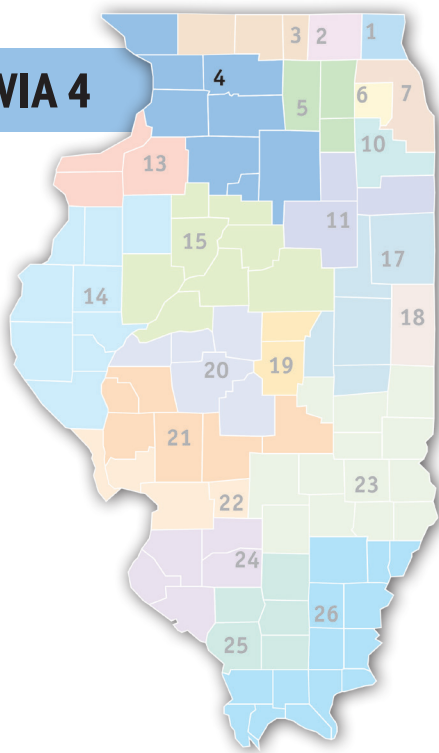
AAR and The Workforce Connection (TWC) have a well-established relationship working together to build the local talent and provide opportunities in Aviation Maintenance. The Workforce Connection's business services team worked with AAR to fill their needs and get creative in ensuring a strong pipeline of talent, while also working toward workforce equity for the community. With the increasing pipeline challenges faced during

the pandemic, our organizations joined even further to develop innovative solutions.

AAR diligently united with us to create strong solutions and help individuals obtain training with their business. It began as helping more individuals access opportunity, advocating for transportation solutions with public transit, private entities, and business partners, and creating strong pipeline programming. As

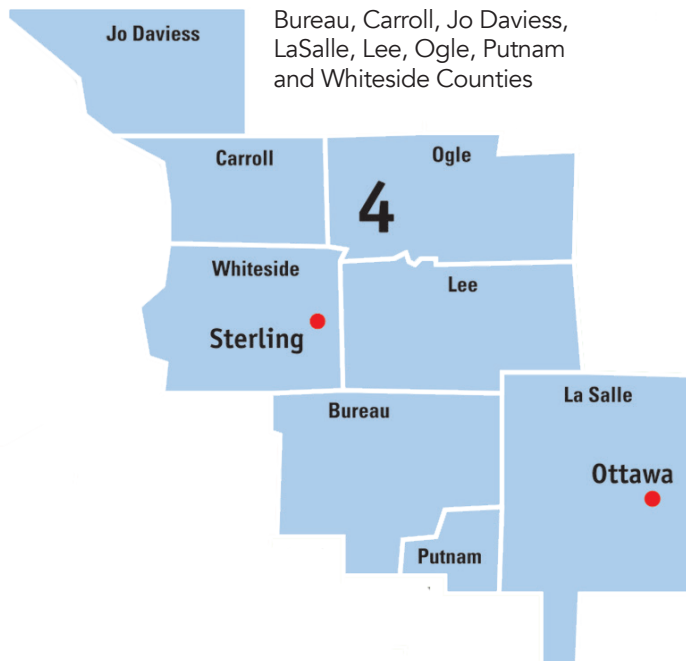
the partnership developed, we created a comprehensive pipeline development plan, including an innovative Sheet Metal Apprenticeship program. This apprenticeship kicks off in October 2021 and will provide employment and training with livable wages to individuals, and already has over 20 individuals signed up. As a result of this collaboration, AAR is receiving \$2.6 million in appropriated funding for this workforce endeavor.

## LWIA 4



### Business Employment Skills Team, Inc.

Bureau, Carroll, Jo Daviess, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Putnam and Whiteside Counties



LWIA Information (LWIA 4) Business Employment Skills Team, Inc. (BEST, Inc.) is a non-profit agency that administers the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) program in Bureau, Carroll, Jo Daviess, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Putnam and Whiteside Counties. With offices in Oglesby, Ottawa, Dixon, Princeton, Sterling, Mt. Carroll and Oregon its focus is assisting adults and youth gain meaningful employment through training, job search assistance and work experience as well as providing services to area businesses that allow them to compete.

**BEST, Inc. website is located at:**  
[www.best-inc.org](http://www.best-inc.org)



**BEST, Inc.**  
 Business Employment Skills Team  
 Serving Northwest Central Illinois  
[www.best-inc.org](http://www.best-inc.org)



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## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Jose Montanez of Sterling, IL

In March of 2021, Jose contacted the BEST, Inc. office in Sterling to inquire about getting assistance with job training to help him enter the workforce. He had recently been released from prison after serving nearly 25 years and wanted to train for a career that would offer stable employment and a self-sufficient income.

Knowing that his options for employment were limited due to his felony record, Jose was interested in enrolling in the CDL program through Midwest Safe Driver at Sauk Valley Community College. In June, Jose was determined eligible for WIOA services and was able to get help from BEST, Inc. with tuition assistance and mileage reimbursement.

Jose did very well in class and successfully completed his training and licensing exam in August. Shortly thereafter, he



was hired at Queen's Trucking in Rochelle, IL where he began working with a pay rate of \$18.50 per hour.

Jose has repeatedly expressed his gratitude to BEST, Inc., Midwest Safe Driver & Sauk Valley Community College,

and Queen's Trucking for their willingness to give him an opportunity to better his life in spite of his felony record.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

John Spencer: Starved Rock Media, Oglesby, IL

Starved Rock Media, one of the primary sources for news and information in our area, and BEST, Inc., along with our local workforce board (NCI Works), have worked together and benefited from this partnership in a number of ways. John Spencer, President and General Manager for Starved Rock Media, has been an active member of the local workforce board for over 10 years and for the last 3+ years has been the host of Getting to Work, a podcast of NCI Works. John has played an active role in the selection of relevant topics and guests (which has included most workforce partners from IDES to multiple economic development entities), designs and directs the actual interview, and does the initial editing prior to turning the recording over to

Workforce 180 for final editing and uploading to the workforce board's website. The podcast series, which focuses on helping job seekers get to work and companies hire and train, has had over 10,000 downloads and a lot of its success is due to John's contributions to the effort. John has donated his time and professional experience/expertise to making the podcast series the success it is today. Through this partnership, and John's desire to give back to the community, Starved Rock Media's "listeners and online readers have come to recognize us as a trusted source for workforce news that affects them, their businesses, and their communities."

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, while also trying to keep Starved

Rock Media's 3 radio stations operating under state and CDC pandemic mitigation standards, John was able to take the time to record special edition episodes of Getting to Work to inform workforce customers that partners were still available to assist them with their needs. Episode after episode was devoted to strategies and information concerning how businesses and job seekers could continue to be successful under the growing concern for personal safety and business disruption. Starved Rock Media itself found it necessary to obtain a Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant from DCEO, that BEST, Inc. was administering, which enabled them to make essential technical upgrades to avoid layoffs by allowing some

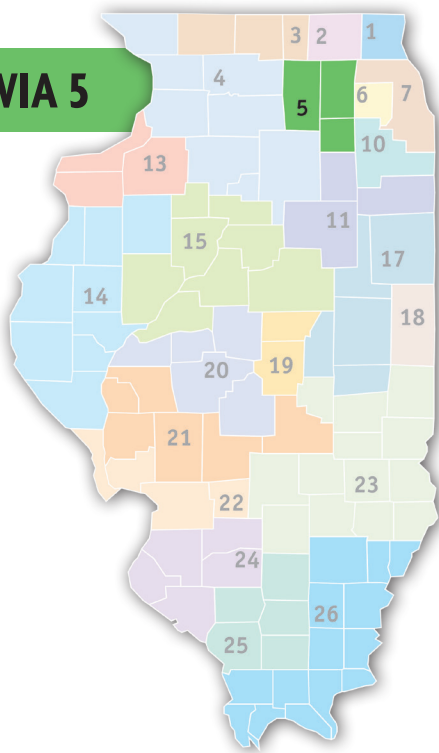


employees to work remotely.

Whether it is recording a podcast, PSAs for workforce partners, or setting the example for embracing remote work, Starved Rock Media is a committed workforce innovation system partner. A partner with whom LWIA 4 is proud to be associated with, along with John Spencer its President and General Manager.



## LWIA 5



### workNet Batavia

Kane, Kendall and  
DeKalb Counties



LWIA 5 serves Kane, Kendall and DeKalb Counties and provides WIOA-funded employment and training services for area youth, adults and dislocated workers, which includes network of providers that are connected through a local workforce system branded as workNet Batavia.

**Service information  
can be found at:**

[www.worknetbatavia.com](http://www.worknetbatavia.com)



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Diamonique Brown

**Participant:**

Diamonique Brown

**Program:** Associate in Applied Science – Criminal Justice

**Provider:** Kishwaukee College WIOA Youth

When Diamonique began with WIOA, she was a single parent to a toddler and was also currently pregnant with her second child. Even as she was put on bedrest and confined to the hospital while her son received additional care, she never stopped taking classes and continued to demonstrate her dedication to her program. Diamonique knew she wanted to pursue a career in Criminal Justice, and she was determined to see through her goal. The case manager with WIOA's Youth Program at Kishwaukee College have remained impressed with Diamonique's commitment, from when she elected to take online classes as she oversaw her kids e-learning during the pandemic to her decision to take a heavy caseload in her last summer semester to accelerate her graduation date. She has accepted the assistance of WIOA support in the form of emergency utility bill assistance, childcare, car seats and food cards while also pursuing outside resources such as book loan programs and Two Rivers childcare to make ends meet and support her family's needs. She has applied to scholarships and overcome her self-described aversion to writing essays to further her chances of being accepted into a Bachelor's program so that she can become a Parole Officer, which is her ultimate goal. Now that Diamonique has achieved the Associates Degree that she has worked so long and hard for, she reflects upon her journey:

"The challenges I experienced prior to receiving WIOA services were being a single mom,



working a full-time job and then being unemployed, as well as struggling with childcare and transportation. WIOA helped me in so many ways to overcome these challenges. When I started to open up to my counselors, I was granted assistance with childcare, a bus pass for transportation, assistance with my resume, job searching, and a lot of help with figuring out my classes, schedules, and times that would work best for me. My new career has not taken off just yet. However, I have enrolled back into Kish to obtain my Associates degree in Arts so that I can transfer and obtain my bachelor's degree. WIOA was most helpful to me with achieving my success in many ways. The counselors were the most helpful. They went above and beyond to make sure I was sure taking the classes I needed to take and made sure to tell me if they felt that I was taking on more than I could handle. Their consistent check-ins every week to make sure I was doing okay, or if I needed anything, kept me afloat throughout the years. In my last three semesters, my counselors saw my determination, so they pushed me to finish but also encouraged me not to overload myself. I have always said that this program has changed my life for the better, and I recommend it to everyone."



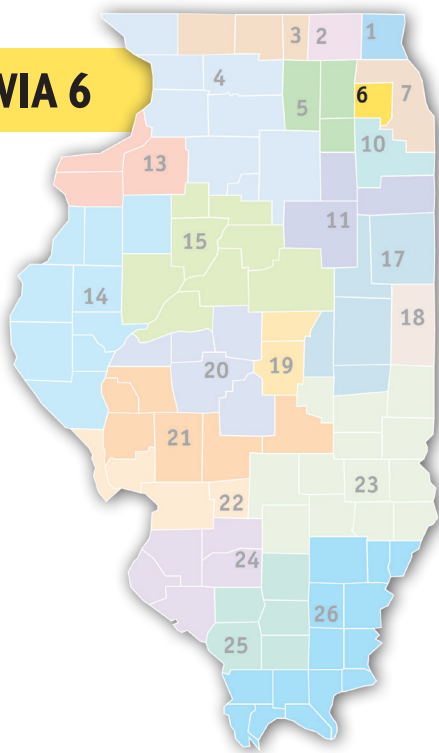
### THE CHALLENGES

I experienced  
*prior to receiving WIOA services*  
were being a single mom, working a full-time  
job and then being unemployed, as well as  
struggling with childcare and transportation.

### WIOA HELPED ME

*in so many ways to*  
**OVERCOME**  
*these challenges.*

## LWIA 6



### INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

#### workNet DuPage American Job Center

Laid-off and furloughed workers turned to the Lisle-based workNet DuPage American Job Center to participate in From Layoff to Launch, a first-of-its-kind communications program amongst workNet offices in the State of Illinois. Live weekly online seminars delivered critical information: how to file for unemployment benefits, what to expect after filing, and how to obtain health insurance coverage and rent assistance.

At a critical period of historic job loss, From Layoff to Launch offered hands-on solutions for affected workers. The virtual program expanded the center's Rapid Response Program to the general public to ensure all county residents had access to immediate support. Eligible residents accessed federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding and a wide range of assistance to take back control of their careers. By adapting to the urgent needs of job seekers through remote technology solutions, workNet DuPage played a crucial role mitigating the economic fallout from an unprecedented pandemic. The webinar's live Q&A forum was a lifeline.

Like millions across the country, DuPage County resident Carolyn Wilson, 64, became unemployed due to COVID-19 in March 2020. In



her words, Carolyn was "sending out applications all over the place" until she attended workNet DuPage's From Layoff to Launch. Through the webinar, she connected with job search workshops and individualized career coaching. In short order, Carolyn secured a new job as the Grants Coordinator for Advocate Aurora Health Care Foundation in Illinois. "I believe it was just a direct result of my interaction with workNet DuPage," says Carolyn.

"It was crucial for us to seamlessly guide individuals losing their jobs once it became clear we could not do so in person, and From Layoff to Launch allowed us to do that," said workNet DuPage Career Center Executive Director Lisa Schvach.



Serving job seekers and employers in Illinois' second-most populous county, workNet DuPage is the comprehensive One Stop Center for DuPage County. From entry to executive levels, workNet DuPage helps people from all walks of life develop their skills in the key industries of DuPage: Healthcare, Information Technology, Transportation Distribution Logistics, and Manufacturing.

Through the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA), workNet DuPage provides job seekers with funding for career-related education and businesses with grants to train their workers.

The Lisle-based job center spearheads notable initiatives such as the award-winning Recovery and Manufacturing a Path Up (RAMP-UP) program providing individuals in recovery marketable technical skills and a Breaking Boundaries career series to steer more women into high-paying, in-demand technology and trade careers that have traditionally been male-dominated.

In collaboration with the DuPage County Jail, workNet DuPage provides hope and purpose to inmates through an opportunity to earn in-demand certifications. Most recently, at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, workNet DuPage established From Layoff to Launch, a virtual communications program to connect residents with federal, state, and local workforce programs.

For more information about workNet DuPage, visit [worknetdupage.org](http://worknetdupage.org).





## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

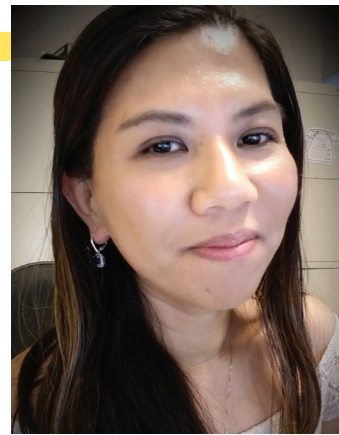
### Dovie Baguio

Dovie Baguio applied for WIOA funding in August 2020. She had recently been laid off from her programming job at American Family Insurance in June.

She described her situation as "I used to drive six hours a day to work in Madison, Wisconsin before the pandemic, and although the driving was physically brutal, especially during snowy days, I stayed because I always thought my career background hailed from old technologies and it would be hard for me to find a job closer to my home in Naperville. I always felt that I was stuck, but never had the courage to look for a new opportunity." After more than four years on the job, Dovie was laid off due to COVID. She described her day of layoff notification as having "fear

of the uncertainties - what was going to happen- news everywhere of the number of people all over the country losing their jobs. No one is hiring."

At that time Dovie's job, plus her part-time job at Amazon, were the main source of income for her family of three. In addition, being a Filipino immigrant, she was sending money home to support family in the Philippines. Dovie was approved for a grant to fund IT certifications from Microtrain. She had this to say about the training: "I didn't know there was a program that the government funded for someone in my situation. When I got accepted, and through the help of my career counselor - I received career development assistance, assistance paying for training, resume help and



career mentoring. Finally, after months of being in the dark, WIOA gave me hope. I knew it is my chance and I have to give my best to learn as not everyone was given the same opportunity to make themselves better."

Dovie was hired in February 2021 at RKON Inc. as an IT Operations Engineer. Dovie received a return call from RKON one hour after applying. The hiring managers were

impressed that Dovie had taken advantage of her layoff period to gain new skills. "For me the best thing about WIOA are the people - the sincerity of it," she says. "They not only became my career advisor, but also my source of encouragement- they helped me out from loaning me a laptop, because my old one doesn't have the capacity to download study programs, and they listened to all my concerns. They never failed to check up on my progress and were sincerely happy when I secured a new job, especially knowing that I wouldn't need to drive six hours a day anymore, or commute, as this new job allows employees to work from home 100%. I will always be grateful for WIOA and to all the people behind it. The work they do is changing people's lives without even realizing it."

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Edward Elmhurst Health and workNet DuPage

Faced with a dire need for Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs), Edward Elmhurst Health and workNet DuPage designed a career pathways program to train entry-level non-patient care employees to fill the much-needed positions. Food service, housekeeping, customer service and patient service staff attended the College of DuPage basic nursing certification course. The highly reputable program teaches the 21 performance selected skills that guide the Illinois nurse aide competency evaluation. WorkNet DuPage covered all tuition costs for the program which culminates with a CNA credential. The outcome: Trainees received pay raises and promotions to a newly assigned role - Patient Care Technician. Participant Yuri Dia said "My passion was always helping people, but I never knew I was able to do something like this."

Yerty Jurado said, "Becoming a CNA has definitely changed



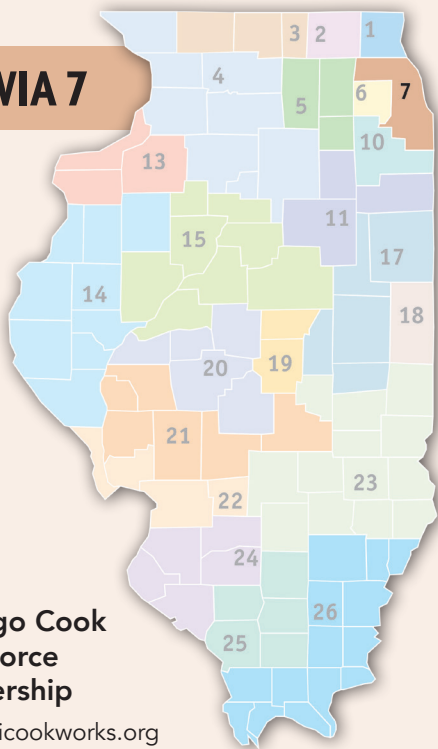
the direction of my career. It's a foot in the door." Edward-Elmhurst Health reduced a labor shortage, increased employee satisfaction, and reduced turnover. "We created a wonderful partnership program with workNet DuPage," says Michelle Einfalt, System Director, Talent Acquisition.

"This program allowed employees to advance their skill sets and achieve promotions while also helping our hospitals fill a critical role."

"The partnership between Edward-Elmhurst Health and the College of DuPage has been instrumental in providing opportunities for career

growth and advancement," says Beverly Wendell, System Director, Nursing Education and Leadership Development. "Our partnership has allowed individuals who may otherwise be unable to return to school, to return to school and be eligible for certification as a Certified Nursing Assistant."

## LWIA 7



### Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

[www.chicookworks.org](http://www.chicookworks.org)

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership operates the public workforce system in Chicago and suburban Cook County. This includes a network of 91 delegate agencies, American Job Centers, satellite sites, and sector-driven centers, providing services to more than 140,000 people and 1,000 businesses a year. Many of The Partnership's services target communities with high rates of poverty and individuals facing barriers to employment. More than 80% of The Partnership's customers are people of color.

The Partnership connects residents to employment through innovative programs with a demonstrated track record. More than 70% of The Partnership's low income and barriered adult customers are placed in employment; more than 80% of youth served advance to either a job or post-secondary education; and 85% of laid off worker customers return to employment. Customers receiving intensive service increase their earnings by between 7% and 20% when compared with non-participants.

In addition to our annual Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formula allocation from the Department of Labor via the State of Illinois, The Partnership has raised more than \$128M in philanthropic and competitively awarded funds to support workforce initiatives since our inception 9 years ago. These more flexible funding streams have allowed The Partnership to build innovative and evidence-based programming that is guided by the values of family economic mobility; community stability; racial, gender, and digital equity; and collaboration.



CHICAGO COOK  
WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

A proud partner of the [AmericanJobCenter](#) network



### BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

Freedman Seating Company



**FREEDMAN**<sup>®</sup>  
SEATING COMPANY

Freedman Seating Company has been a long-time partner of JARC, but in the last year, has gone above and beyond to support the mission of JARC, as well as the manufacturing sector and Westside community at large. In September 2020, JARC launched our facility on the Westside, on the second floor of Freedman Seating Company's building. FSC knew JARC was struggling to find a Westside space and offered up their unused space, free of charge. JARC worked closely with FSC staff to build the space to suit our needs and be able to launch an impactful program. FSC has also worked closely with JARC to create a new training program in Mechanical Assembly that included input of their industry knowledge, as well as allowing JARC to use their blueprints as an example to be incorporated into the curriculum. This will ultimately set up graduates out of the program for jobs not only at Freedman Seating Company, but other manufacturing companies in the area because they now have relevant industry knowledge. Freedman Seating also continues to hire JARC graduates across all departments. In the last two years, FSC has hired more than 12 JARC graduates, and since 2017 has hired 32. FSC also promotes JARC training opportunities to its current staff in order to help with advance in their careers. Freedman Seating also hosts regular events and tours for those interested in working in manufacturing, or in program wanting to learn more about what working in the industry is like. At this time, FSC is working with Manufacturing Renaissance to host tours you young adults interested in the field, and Skills for Chicagoland's Future.

Freedman Seating is located in an area of Austin and West Humboldt Park. These areas are known for their manufacturing corridors, which

hold economic opportunity for residents. Freedman recognizes this and prioritizes being a leader in the community as a large employer.

JARC focused on the Austin community because it is Chicago's largest community area and also one of its most underserved. Austin ZIP codes 60644 and 60651 rank 5th and 6th respectively for number of citizens returning out of prisons. Lack of opportunity and life chances are the greatest predictors of recidivism. JARC focused its efforts in the Austin community because its workforce programs in manufacturing provide pathways to background-friendly employment. Employer partners like Freedman Seating are crucial to providing opportunity for those deserving of a second chance. As long as a JARC graduate possesses the skills needed for the job, Freedman understands the value of hiring those with the stigma of criminal records and the affirmative implications this has for a community that is historically over-policed and under-funded. When Freedman hires an Austin resident that trained at JARC, they know that they are positively impacting not just the individual but the whole household -- and community. Freedman understands the weighty responsibility of being a progressive employer in Austin, and encourage other employers to follow suit.

Freedman Seating is dedicated to remaining located in Chicago's west side. They employ 600+ people in production/manufacturing, engineering, sales and other administrative roles. Of all employees, 75% live in the city of Chicago, as do both the CEO and Chairman. They are most proud that minorities and women make up 85% of our workforce, reflecting racial and gender diversity.



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Tupac Barfield

South suburban Cook County resident Tupac Barfield, initially approached Business and Career Services (BCS) to learn about new careers that offered growth and opportunity. Tupac had previously held small jobs in the past performing janitorial work, but felt that this type of work was dead-end, and did not use or grow his skills. He didn't want to be a janitor forever; he was unemployed and looking for a career, "not just a job." Tupac enrolled in the Manufacturing Careers Internship Program (MCIP). He was interested in learning about the manufacturing industry and what this new field could offer to him.

As an individual with a documented disability, Tupac has had to overcome his fair share of challenges. Because of his disability, he struggles with communication and self-advocacy. As a result, Tupac first came to BCS with a limited set of skills

and experience. Despite the daily challenges he faces, Tupac's positive attitude and bright spirit shine through. The new skills he gained during boot camp, supported Tupac's growth and success into the manufacturing industry.

During the boot camp foundational skills sessions, Tupac was able to tour different manufacturing facilities. He stepped outside of his comfort zone to engage with manufacturing employees by asking questions. Although the traditional boot camp was interrupted by COVID-19, Tupac was still determined to continue learning about manufacturing. He completed the OSHA-10 class virtually and received his OSHA-10 certification. He also learned about financial literacy, workers' rights, and how to be an outstanding, successful employee.

Tupac finished MCIP boot



camp with a strong sense of confidence and accomplishment, as well as a polished resume. The Manufacturing Careers Internship Program enabled him to develop new skills and learn about the manufacturing industry, and how it can lead to a solid career path.

After completing boot camp, Tupac was unable to be placed in an internship because of COVID-19 limitations. Yet he still found a job opportunity, and took advantage of BCS resume enrichments, and interview coaching, ultimately landing a position with American Kitchen Delight, a premier manufacturer of custom-prepared, fresh-

frozen foods and contract food processor/packer located in South Holland. He is currently employed there as a production line worker, making and boxing products for distribution. Tupac said, "I feel good about going to work every day – want to grow my skills!"

Tupac is determined to continue his manufacturing career and is currently saving up for a car, and studying to earn his driver's license, which will help him further his independence. His Career Advisor smiles when describing Tupac, because she said she knew he would be successful because he is reliable, dependable, hard-working and dedicated – evidenced by the fact that he showed up to boot camp every day, on time and really paid attention.

Tupac feels he is making his life into what he wants it to be – thanks to the Manufacturing Careers Internship Program.

## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center, operated by Pyramid Partnership, Inc.

Pyramid Partnership, Inc., operator of the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's (The Partnership) Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center has been nominated for its innovative work and dedication to the public workforce system during the Covid-19 pandemic.

When the pandemic reached Illinois, The Partnership and Pyramid immediately began planning for the effect it would have on the Hospitality and Tourism industry and pivoted to assist affected businesses as well as transition employees, with in-demand skills across industries, into other jobs. Together they were involved in several collaborations that addressed the needs of employers and job seekers. For example,

Northwestern Hospital reached out to The Partnership for assistance with filling positions in customer service, food service, hospitality, and security. The Partnership and the Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center hosted weekly working groups with other partners, collaborating

on candidate referrals and screening, as well as other business services. In October and November 2020, two virtual events were held on behalf of Northwestern, with more than 200 customers screened for the available positions. Currently, Northwestern is working exclusively with The Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center for recruitment, referral, and business services for all non-medical positions, including the creation of a customized, online application portal for jobseeker referrals.

In addition, The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership's Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center collaborated The Illinois Hotel Lodging Association and 15 employers to host a large-scale, in-person Hospitality Hiring Event at the Swissotel on July 21, 2021.

Despite the heavy toll that the Covid-19 Pandemic has had on the Hospitality and Tourism Industry, Pyramid Partnership, Inc., with its strong partner collaborations with other

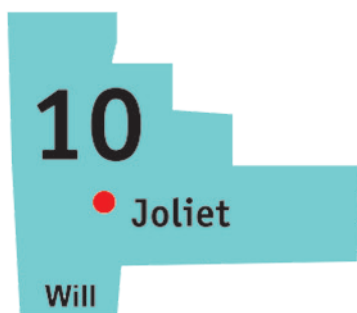
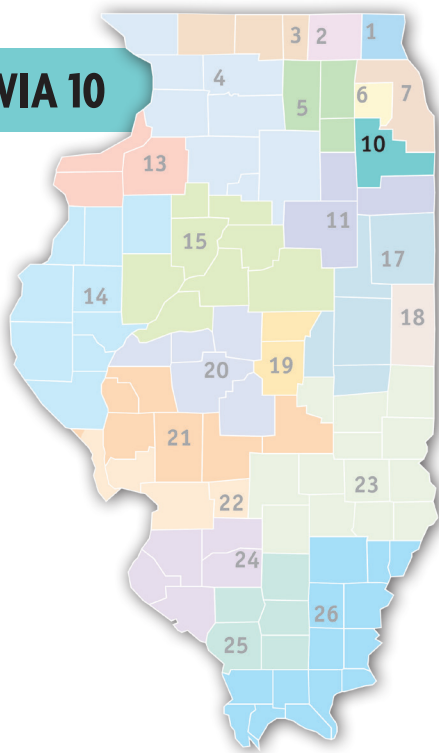


agencies, and its quick pivot to online platforms, was able to easily transition its services to the virtual setting without losing quality of service. As a result, during the contract year of July 2020 -June 2021, The Chicago Cook Workforce

Partnership Hospitality and Tourism Sector Center placed over 300 jobseekers, brought 43 new Hospitality and Tourism businesses to the workforce system, and assisted 133 businesses with 293 individual job orders.



## LWIA 10



## The Crossroads of Mid-America

Will County is located in the northern part of Illinois and is one of the fastest-growing counties in the United States. Will County is a major hub for roads, rail, and natural gas pipelines.

With the opening of the CenterPoint Intermodal Center in 2002 Will County established itself as a Global Transportation Center. Since the opening of BNSF Logistics Park Chicago intermodal facility in Elwood and the Union Pacific's Global IV intermodal center in Joliet, Will County has become the **Largest Inland Port in North America**, handling over 3 million TEU containers annually.

With its strategic location, access to global markets, and impressive quality of life, Will County continues to have much to offer to both businesses and residents.

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County plays a key role in the economic vitality of our County. The Board brings together a myriad of employment, training, and educational services, transforming them into a comprehensive and easily accessed system that supports the development of a world-class workforce.

The Board established an integrated workforce system or "one-stop location" with the Workforce Center of Will County. This location brings services to employers and job-seeking customers provided by several workforce partners under one roof.

**Workforce Center of Will County**  
will.works

**Workforce Investment Board of Will County**  
willcountyworkforceboard.com

## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Patrick O'Brien

Pat's story is like many others' who seek assistance at Job Centers throughout the state. He had been employed since high school and found himself suddenly out of work the first time ever. He realized quickly that the hiring process has changed dramatically over the years, and didn't know where to begin.

Pat gained confidence from the Career Certified workshops he attended prior to attending training. During Career Certified, which operates in cooperation with Joliet Junior College, Pat was able to take several assessments, update his resume, participate in a mock

interview, and learn job search techniques. "From the onset, the staff at Workforce Services reassured me that I was not alone in the process and that they would be with me every step of the way. Having been out of work for a few months and experiencing a lot of self-doubt and angst about being able to provide for my family, I felt immediately re-energized and engaged again while attending their WIOA pre-certification program. There, I was able to connect with others just like me. That was huge!"

Pat's career planner, Lisa Borrelli, encouraged him to build on his



skills with additional training. Pat enrolled in IT training for Project Management/Tableau at Microtrain. He believes having these updated skills and certifications on his resume stood out to his new employer and helped to secure his role as a Pricing Manager for Navistar.

"If there was one roadblock that this program helped me overcome on the path

to employment, it was the opportunity to network. My personality leans toward me being an introvert, and with the techniques taught I was able to engage with others who were in the same situation. I was pushed outside my comfort zone and it was an invaluable part of helping me land the right position."

Pat would like to encourage others to take advantage of the services available. "I don't even want to imagine what life would be like now for my family had I not participated in this incredible program. Wonderful support, deeply caring staff."

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Omni Gear & Machine Corporation

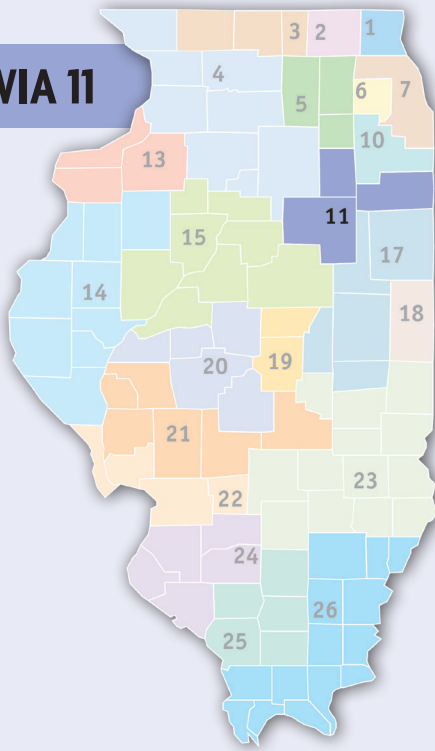
In November of 2020, Omni Gear & Machine Corporation, a company in Joliet, reached out to the local Workforce staff for assistance with their recruiting. Omni Gear is a local business that specializes in the manufacturing of precision-machined custom gears in a variety of sizes and types. They have been in the Will County community for over 32 years. As many companies have experienced with the current pandemic, they were struggling to find candidates to fill their open positions. The owner of Omni Gear, Keith Mellen, was introduced to Cleopatra Cook, Business Services Rep., with Employment & Employer Services, who facilitates the On The Job Training (OJT) Program. Cleo met with Keith at his facility for a tour and to learn more about their needs and how the Workforce Center of Will County could assist with their hiring.

After accessing their needs, Cleo and the OJT staff started screening candidates who would be a good fit at their facility and then sent over resumes for Keith to review. Within weeks the first OJT placement was made for a Gear Cutter and a great relationship formed between Omni Gear and the OJT program. After they saw how seamless this process was, especially with the referral of candidates, they asked for assistance in filling a CNC Machinist position, and a second OJT placement was made in April 2021. In June of 2021, Omni Gear requested to see additional resumes for a CNC Machinist position. Cleo then sent the resume of the candidate, Michael McGuire who had an Engineering degree, worked in the Aerospace industry, and was looking for a new opportunity. Upon interviewing Michael, the company knew they liked him even though he did not have the skillset for the position they were hoping to fill. Once the company decided where they could fit him in, they offered him a position so they would not lose the potential to hire him. Michael has proven to be a very dependable team member and enjoys his work.





## LWIA 11



The Grundy Livingston Kankakee Workforce Board, herein referred to by Workforce Board, in partnership with Kankakee County oversees and administers federal public workforce programs for local workforce area #11. Our workforce area is comprised of three counties that include Grundy, Livingston & Kankakee Counties. The Workforce Board has made a commitment to individuals & employers to provide a fully staffed local workforce services office in each county which we serve. For more information about our workforce service offices, see below websites.

### Grundy Workforce Services

[www.grundyworkforce.com](http://www.grundyworkforce.com)

### Livingston Workforce Services

[www.livingstonworkforceservices.com](http://www.livingstonworkforceservices.com)

### Kankakee Workforce Services

[wioa.kcc.edu](http://wioa.kcc.edu)



## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### The Gardens at Park Pointe



Business Leadership Nomination: The Gardens at Park Pointe

The Gardens at Park Pointe which is a premier senior living community in Grundy County. They have exemplified Business Leadership. As an extension of Park Pointe, The Gardens fills a need that was missing in Morris. Since the residents of The Gardens may not be able to get to the community, they bring the community to the residents. Whether it is through their Grand friends program with Morris Elementary, Furry Friends, 4H kids activities, or a special Veterans Day celebration, The Gardens makes sure their residents' days are filled with fun.

Through an internship program with Grundy Workforce Services, several dozen students in training to earn their Certified Nurse Assistant license have completed internships at The

Gardens. They are the greatest internship site supporter for the Grundy Workforce Services office and always open to take on new interns with or without any work experience. Key team members from The Gardens mentor interns to help them increase their work readiness skills and gain valuable, hands-on training before applying their new skills and knowledge in the workplace. Since the start of our partnership in 2018, 14 youth customers have completed internships at The Gardens. In several experiences, the interns were offered permanent employment through The Gardens. A win-win for both the intern and the site.

By building successful programs within the community, The Gardens at Park Pointe ensures both the residents and The City of Morris will continue to thrive.



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## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Alexandra Pennington

Alexandra Pennington is a single mom of two sons and underemployed as a CNA. She realized she wanted to pursue the next step in her career and reached out to the Livingston Workforce Services for help. After getting some experience in the healthcare industry, she knew that the nursing field was for her and quickly got accepted into the nursing program at Heartland Community College, a rarity for many individuals. The Livingston Workforce Services office was able with her on her career pathway journey. After talking with Alexandria and creating an employment plan, Livingston Workforce Services was able to provide a training scholarship to cover the

training costs. In addition, Livingston Workforce Services was instrumental with providing funding for childcare assistance to help her succeed.

Despite many challenges she faced especially this past year as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, she excelled in her classes earning a spot on the college's Dean's List on more than one occasion and being inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa honors society. She recently passed her NCLEX exam and obtained her License Practical Nursing (LPN) license. Her and her two young sons have since moved out of public housing and obtained full time employment at the Urology Clinic at Carle Hospital in Urbana.



## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### Workforce Services

The Innovation Solutions award goes to the Workforce Services offices in Grundy, Livingston and Kankakee Counties. Traditionally, workforce services is a very hands on approach and involved face to face interaction to truly provide the best services for the customer. The COVID-19 pandemic created an opportunity for workforce services to be innovative in their service delivery. Workforce Services had to pivot to learn on how to use technology to provide services and other creative ways to ensure workforce services were provided to both employers and jobseekers.

Innovative programming included:

- Job fair in a bag. Since regular job fairs could not be held, workforce service offices received

the job posting information from local employers & placed it in a bag which was distributed to local jobseekers.

- Developed an online application for training services which provided jobseekers to immediately apply for training scholarships. Though this online application, workforce service offices saw an increase in individuals seeking workforce services
- YouTube videos about scholarships, eligibility, FAQs
- Provided Rapid Response virtually
- Provided workshops through Zoom platform.
- Worked one on one with clients through technology such as Zoom to help them with navigate online training & continue to provide

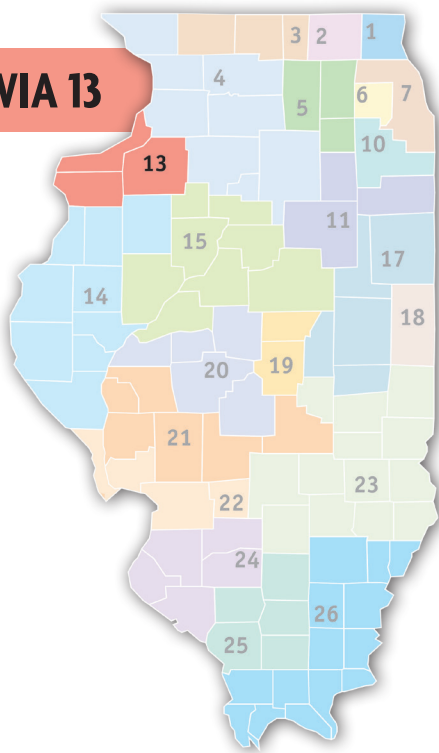
support so they could be successful

- There were numerous other ways that we continued to adapt to the ever changing pandemic environment.

Through all these different methods, our workforce services offices excelled which is substantiated by the fact that there were 100 more individuals enrolled in the workforce program than the prior year. In addition, there were more individuals in training than the prior year which wasn't affected by COVID.

Congratulations to Workforce Services staff for all your hard work and dedication to helping employers and job seekers with their workforce service needs.

## LWIA 13



Local Workforce Investment Area 13 operates as a public / private partnership, in Rock Island County, Henry County, and Mercer County, in Quad Cities Region of Illinois and Iowa, as well as Great Northwest Region of Illinois.

Rock Island County is grant recipient. Rock Island Tri-County Consortium is fiscal agent. Workforce Development Board is a not-for-profit corporation.

Special projects / grants, during recent years, have included

- Life Skills Re-Entry Centers and Local Workforce Areas State-wide Coordination and Innovation Project for Returning Citizens
- COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Grant, Emergency (IE) Assistance Application in Response to COVID-19 National Health Emergency
- Disaster Recovery and Employment Recovery Grant
- Great Northwest Region (Economic Development Region 6), Apprenticeship Navigator

## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Courtney Hill

### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Career Planning, Mentoring, and Occupational Training Paves the Pathway to Success!

**Client Spotlight:** Courtney Hill, Medical Assistant

"I was told about the American Job Center by my advisor at Midwest Technical Institute. I immediately reached out them and was given an appointment. I completed a short application and met with an American Job Center Representative, who provided me an overview of the WIOA Program. I attended an orientation and a skills assessment. After that I met with my assigned Career Planner, Teresa Andresen. She guided me throughout my training. I was a new mom when I decided to jump into college feet first and this program absolutely set me up for success. I have gained a career since starting this journey. I

was provided with not only tuition assistance but supplied with quality instruments, uniforms and even shoes. During my Externship my Career Planner reached out to me several times to make sure I did not need anything and just to check in on me. I felt like I had a great support system through American Job Center. Once I graduated, I was able to immediately find a job and was again, offered continued Career Services from my Career Planner. Since graduating in January of 2020, I have worked as a Dual Certified Medical Assistant in a clinical setting. My passion is Pediatrics, I love my kiddos & building a unique relationship with each of them. My education was successful and so much less stressful because of the help and support that I received from the American Job Center. I recommend this program to anyone who wants a career and is dedicated to becoming the best version of themselves."

**AMERICAN JOB CENTER  
COMPREHENSIVE CAREER ONE-STOP**  
500 42nd Street, Suite 4  
Rock Island, Illinois 61201-2155  
309.788.7587  
Opportunity@AmericanJob.Center

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
American Job Center  
Business Engagement Services  
309.883.4039  
Innovation@AmericanJob.Center

American Job Center Access Sites are inside Black Hawk College and inside Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center.

AmericanJobCenter®

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

Brothers Parris LLC Wake Brewing



### Lay-off Aversion Helps Brewery Survive, Grow During Pandemic

Wake Brewing was awarded funding under IE Layoff Aversion to assist with expenses related to COVID-19. COVID-19 caused a major shift for the local brewery when doors became closed to the public, threatening the sustainability of the business. This challenge encouraged owners, Jason and Justen Parris, to realign their business model to remain open by increasing production and distribution of canned brews. This endeavor was quite successful, and the team was able to remain open and successfully avert layoffs.

Wake Brewing is in process of applying for Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) funding to upskill staff to the brewery's production line. These upskills will likely provide staff with an additional \$2.00 per hour wage and create 2-3 additional positions.

Wake Brewery's Jason Parris shares his WIOA experience in the two columns at right:

"The Incumbent Training Grant will help provide 6 of my employees with a new job skill that will not only help secure but also create new positions within Wake Brewing. This canning line will increase total jobs, and wages for our employees as it will offer us to expand outside of what we are able to provide to our customers' needs.

Since Covid hit us and forced us to not offer anything inside sales wise our business model was forced to change from 90% over the counter sales to 10% cans to go, to 100% to go sales only for almost 6 months. Since opening back up we are still moving 25% of total sales by way of cans to go, which is almost triple of what it was pre covid to the point we are missing sales due to not being able to can enough to customers.

With the help of Workforce Development and the grants provided we were able to navigate ourselves in real time through this business model shift and see a new avenue of growth that without the assistance we would have never been able to

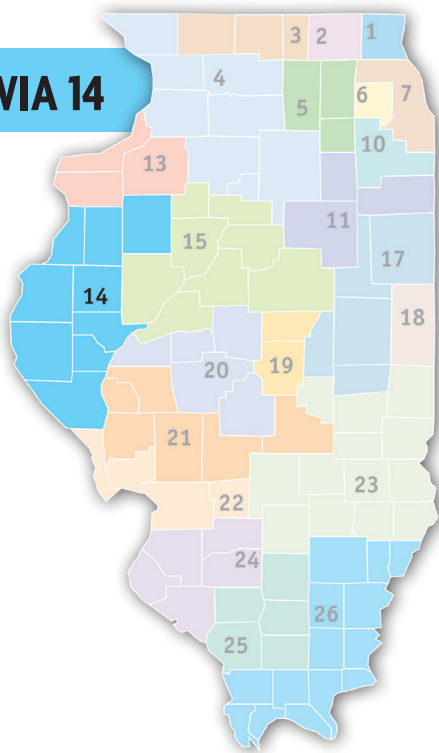
form into real job growth. We are seeing this trend of To Go style beers staying and maybe becoming upwards to 40% of total sales per month once we can utilize this new canning line.

The training that will be received to our employees is on how to start up, operate, troubleshoot, and provide routine maintenance to our new canning line, this is a job skill that after completing training and operating for some time any employee could take with them to almost any brewery or beverage company in the country and secure a job.

At Wake Brewing it is important to us to help set up real grounded job training and trade skills to employees who don't fit the everyday college mold, we believe in second chances to those that have made mistakes in the past and want to offer a better future for those who otherwise might get overlooked. We are trying to help provide training and skills that anyone could make a real career out of if they put in the time, effort, and dedication to learning the craft of the brewing industry."



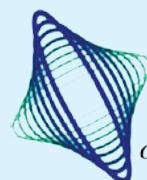
## LWIA 14



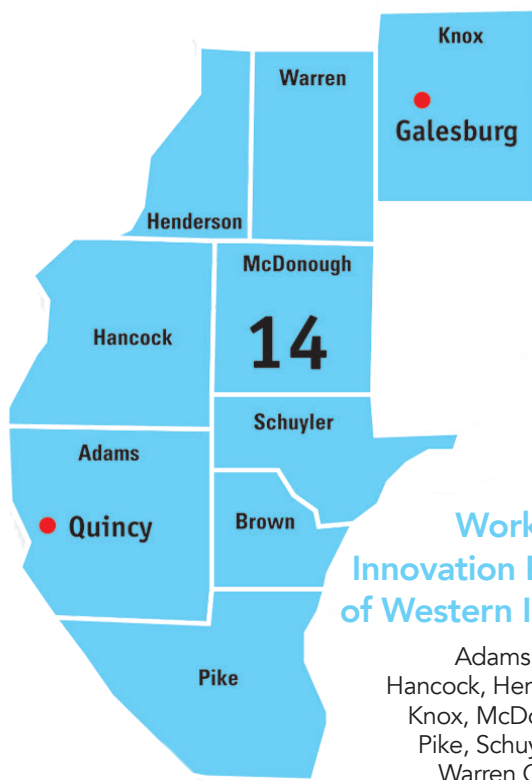
Western Illinois, Local Workforce Area 14, is a nine-county region encompassing Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox, McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren. This region relies on a combination of employment sectors to support a diverse economy. The primary and emerging industry sectors include manufacturing, health care, TDL (transportation, distribution and logistics), construction trades, agri-business and utilities.

Under the direction of the Workforce Innovation Board of Western Illinois, resources are directed to the current, potential and future workforce. The WIB provides a forum for the discussion of major workforce challenges and future trends; convenes decision-makers to address workforce matters; and, promotes solutions to ensure Western Illinois has a quality workforce that will meet the skill requirements of Western Illinois employers and provide career opportunities with self-sufficient wages for our citizens.

Western Illinois has the distinction of being designated as a Great Region by the US Department of Agriculture. Due, not only to the location, but also to the collaboration among the Tri-State area of Western Illinois, Eastern Iowa and Northeast Missouri. This collaborative attitude is visible within Western Illinois region, as well. Supporting the efforts to achieve the quality workforce envisioned by the WIB are the Chief Elected Officials Consortium of Western Illinois, numerous businesses and agencies throughout the region. Economic Development entities, Chambers of Commerce, secondary education, community colleges, community-based organizations and WIOA partners contribute time and talent to create a quality, flexible and responsive workforce system. Programs and services are designed to provide access to employment by raising awareness of career pathways; promoting essential workplace skills and job requirements; and, training to meet skill demands.



*Workforce™  
Innovation Board  
of Western Illinois*



### Workforce Innovation Board of Western Illinois

Adams, Brown,  
Hancock, Henderson,  
Knox, McDonough,  
Pike, Schuyler, and  
Warren Counties

## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Mawule Mensah

It was a good day when one of Mawule's (pronounced 'Molly') fellow students told her about WIOA and referred her to the Knox County Workforce office. Mawule had started the Associate Degree Nursing (R.N.) program at Carl Sandburg College in Galesburg on her own in Fall, 2018. A single mom with three children, working as a CNA on weekends while in school, Mawule was having a difficult time making ends meet. The financial stress of worrying about paying her bills was impacting her ability to do her best in school and that bothered her a great deal.

Since Mawule received SNAP benefits, she was enrolled in WIOA starting the next semester, Spring, 2019. She credits WIOA assistance with the jump in her Fall, 2018 semester GPA of 2.36 to her Spring, 2019 semester GPA

of 3.20. She was able to concentrate on her studies without the constant worry of not having enough money.

Mawule moved to the United States from Togo, West Africa. She has no family in this country but said that a "kind neighbor" sometimes helped her with the children. Her native language is French. She speaks English perfectly but found reading and writing English to be more of a challenge. It is in no way an exaggeration to say that the ADN program is extremely demanding and difficult. The language barrier made Mawule's dedication and accomplishments even more laudable. Sadly, Mawule also dealt with the passing of her beloved mother in Togo during this time. It was even more difficult because she couldn't be there.

March 23, 2020 will be a date



few of us will forget. The campus closed, the public schools closed and many of us found ourselves working from home. But as a CNA, Mawule continued working at a local nursing home. She said it was somewhat scary but the nursing home was locked down and taking all precautions that were available at the time. At home, Mawule and her three children found themselves all immersed in online learning at the same time. (At this point, I would like to recognize the incredible job that Carl Sandburg College did in pivoting to all online

instruction, literally on a dime. Even nursing clinicals were conducted using an interactive e-format which, according to the students, took some getting used to but was surprisingly realistic). The good news is that the students were able to complete the last semester of their ADN program. The sad news is that both the all-important pinning ceremony, as well as the graduation ceremony, were cancelled. To quote Mawule, she "so wanted my children to see me walk across that stage".

Mawule passed her NCLEX Board Exam and received her Professional Registered Nurse license on August 27, 2020. She was immediately promoted to R.N. at the nursing home where she worked. Mawule is very grateful for the boost WIOA provided to help her accomplish her dream.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Knapheide Manufacturing

Knapheide Manufacturing Company is the nominee for the business leadership award in Western Illinois – LWA 14. Knapheide manufactures truck beds and bodies that help companies of all sizes operate at maximum efficiency. Serving industries such as utility companies, construction businesses, telecommunications, municipalities, and more, Knapheide plays a key role in keeping the economy moving day in and day out.

This company employs 1250 individuals from the tri-state area - Illinois, Iowa and Missouri. They are committed to assuring that their employees have the necessary skills to perform the tasks required for the job. They have utilized the WIOA incumbent worker training program to upskill their workers. The training provided employees with the Automation and Robotics Technician certification and resulted in opportunity for promotions and pay increases as well as

advanced job knowledge. This training was provided by John Wood Community College. Knapheide's Engineering staff participated on the advisory team that developed the curricula.

This company has always been an active participant in programs for youth. They have provided classroom speakers for both colleges and high schools, presenters for the WIB's workforce academy, interactive displays at Makerfest, and participated in Junior Achievement.

Knapheide is one of several Quincy companies participating in the Adams County Empowered initiative. This pilot project provides job opportunities for individuals on probation in Adams County. Knapheide sees this as an opportunity to help these people become productive members of the community by teaching them a useful skillset as well as being able to grow the company and meet



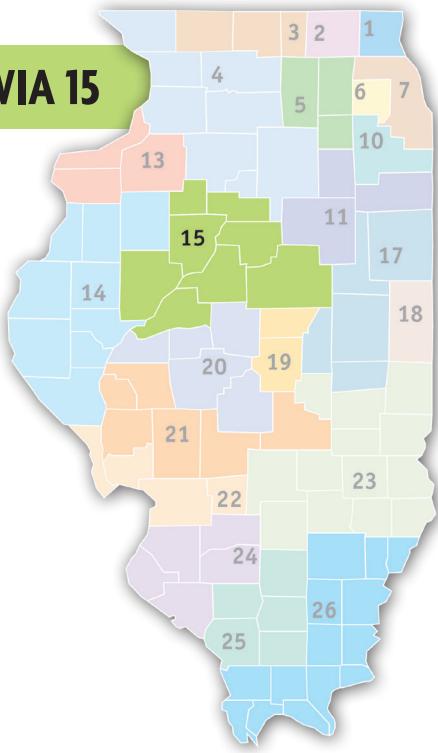
customer needs.

Knapheide has supported the Workforce Innovation Board of Western Illinois by designating staff to serve as an active member of the Board who serves as the Vice Chair of the WIB and Chair of the Business Engagement Task Force, participating in sector initiatives and providing leadership in manufacturing initiatives.

"Since 1848, The Knapheide Manufacturing Company has dedicated itself to being the leader in providing high

quality work truck solutions for America's tradespeople. Six generations of the Knapheide family have overseen the substantial growth and perseverance of the company through hardships and obstacles such as the flood of '93, the economic downturn of 2008, and more. For 173 years, the company's determination to "Never Settle" has continually placed them at the forefront of the industry, supplying work truck bodies for customers in countless trades throughout North America."

## LWIA 15



### Career Link

Canton, Marshall,  
Mason, McLean, Peoria,  
Stark, Tazewell and  
Woodford Counties

Career Link is a non-profit organization that has administered federal job training programs in Central Illinois since 1975. Our mission is to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of our community by linking individuals with employment opportunities through training and services. Career Link provides career services and training assistance to the public at no cost. Funds are provided through the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) administered by the federal Department of Labor and the Illinois Department of Commerce. Career Link serves eight counties that include Canton, Marshall, Mason, McLean, Peoria, Stark, Tazewell and Woodford.

#### Website:

[www.careerlinkil.com](http://www.careerlinkil.com)



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## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Alexander Norman

Alexander Norman was laid off from his full time job, in 2020. This was a difficult challenge.

He has a family of seven to support, and did not know if his employer would hire him back to work.

He requested information about Career Link Services, in March 2020.

Alexander's Assessment and Individual Employment Program, determined his ability to successfully complete Driver Training, and obtain his CDL.

Career Link/WIOA Workforce provided Training and Support Services to Alexander. His

tuition and fees for training was paid. In addition, he received transportation support, so he was able to drive to and from classes/training every day. In addition, Alexander was able to keep his unemployment insurance. This helped him continue to support his family, while in training. Last of all, Career Link/WIOA Workforce provided job search assistance, which helped the client receive immediate employment. These services assisted Alexander in meeting his Training and Employment goals.

On 8/26/2020, Alexander completed his Driver Training



Certificate, and obtained his CDL A License.

In September 2020, Alexander began working full time for RJ Distributing, as a CDL A Truck Driver.

He is currently working for Expo, Conway Freight INC., Normal, IL. He is a Line Haul Truckload Driver. He has

obtained all his endorsements and drives Dry Van Doubles, at night.

Alexander was promoted this past year, as a Professional Truck Driver. He remains a full time employee, making well above, self-sufficient wages.

Alexander believes success is all about choices. He was determined to obtain his credentials, get full time employment, and earn self-sufficient wages for his family. Career Link/WIOA Workforce Services provided Alexander Norman the Training, Support, and Assistance, to meet his goals.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Alcast Company, Peoria, IL

Alcast Company in Peoria, IL is being nominated by Career Link for the Business Leadership award. Alcast Company has proven to be a leader in the local workforce system by partnering with both Career Link and with IDES when looking to fill open roles. Alcast Company has utilized the Incumbent Worker Training program on multiple occasions to keep their workforce skilled, and to teach new skills required for daily job duties.

Alcast Company benefits from partnering with local workforce system by finding quality local employees that help maintain and expand local business. Finding employees locally allows Alcast Company to invest into new employees with training and compensation. Alcast Company believes in the value of employing candidates that may have multiple barriers, and will invest time into training them so they can succeed.

Alcast Company has recently invested in a local candidate that is attending an Apprenticeship at Illinois Central College, another



workforce partner. This will benefit the trainee by providing knowledge in a high growth occupation and will improve their skillset and wages.

Alcast Company benefits from working with Career Link by getting funding for training and education that would not be in the company's budget without our assistance. Alcast Company's employees benefit

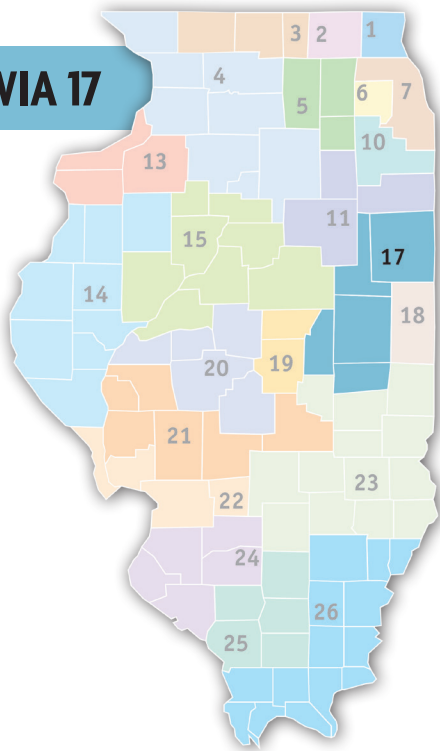
from the partnership with local workforce by allowing them to take on more responsibility, earn higher wages, and be eligible for promotions. The local workforce also benefits from this company since Alcast Employees are up-skilled and lower level skill employees are hired to take their place.

All these things have helped Alcast Company grow in the Peoria area. August 2021

was a record sales month for Alcast Company, and the local workforce partnership had a hand in making that possible. Alcast Company's partnership with Career Link helped solve the challenge of funding training and education of our employees. Without this partnership, less training would have occurred. This would result in lower growth in the company.



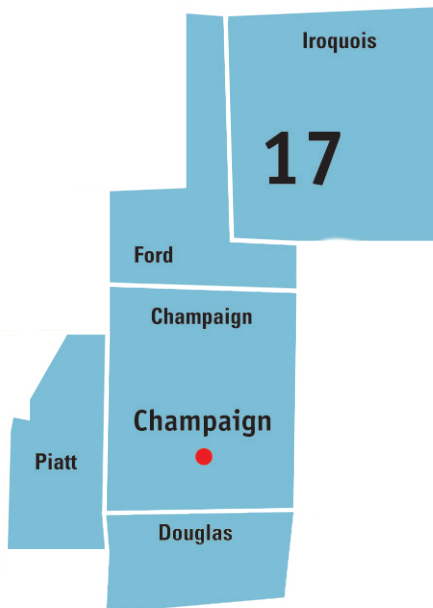
## LWIA 17



### East Central Illinois workNet

Champaign, Douglas, Ford,  
Iroquois, and Piatt counties

Serving employers,  
job seekers,  
and young adults.



**LOCATION:** East Central Illinois

#### COUNTIES SERVED:

Iroquois, Ford, Champaign, Douglas, Piatt

**WEBSITE:** [www.eciwork.net](http://www.eciwork.net)

This year was more or less about getting in alignment with WIOA reforms (strategic alignment for workforce development programs, promoting accountability and transparency, foster regional collaboration, improve the AJC system, improve services to employers, provide access to high-quality training, make key investments in serving youth and other vulnerable populations, and strengthens the role of the local Workforce Development Board).

To get in alignment, we started off by getting a shared understanding for the vision and direction of workforce development of our region (first page, attached). This was developed at the end of 2020, and we (chief elected officials, WIB, WIB standing committees, stakeholders, community organizations, partners) having discussions about what it meant to use sector partnerships, talent pipeline management, career pathways, and apprenticeships to serve our target sectors of manufacturing, construction, logistics, healthcare, and IT.

We spent 2021 having CEO and WIB meetings where we got training on the first four aspects of our plan and talked about how they related to our work and target industries. We also discussed in our standing committees (youth and business) what we could do to improve services and collaboration. Out of those conversations, we have a plan for 2022 that includes aligning our youth services with WIOA elements of career readiness, employment, and postsecondary education, and aligning business services with the needs of employers, labor market information, and critical jobs.

WIOA has historically been on the frontline of DEI initiatives, and this year was no different. Most of our clients are minorities, and we work hard to support high school graduation, postsecondary education attainment, and gainful employment. Additionally, we recruited minority-owned businesses to serve on our WIB, and engaged community organizations with a social justice mission to serve on our standing committees. We also partnered with the University of Illinois-Champaign to lead a committee to explore racism and its impact on workforce development. This committee included university representatives (program directors, faculty, and administration) and community leaders. As we worked through the issues, we found that WIOA addresses most of the priority issues: soft-skills training and mentoring for youth, career training for struggling adults, connection to resources for communities. We are proud of WIOA's role in making a difference in diverse local communities. One such story was highlighted in this past month's newsletter (see attached, first page).

Throughout the pandemic, while our workNet partners were closed to the public, we stayed open to serve clients by appointment and host orientations and workshops. We continued to place youth in work experiences, provide support services to adult completing job training, help job seekers find a better-paying job, and worked with employers on training grants and on-the-job training. We look forward to 2022 as we continue to grow as a reformed, strategic local workforce area.

## OUR AREA

Local areas support job seekers and employers with training and employment services while collaborating, planning, and targeting leading industries



### County Officials

Ensure the delivery of workforce services in communities and help develop a regional plan



### Workforce Innovation Board

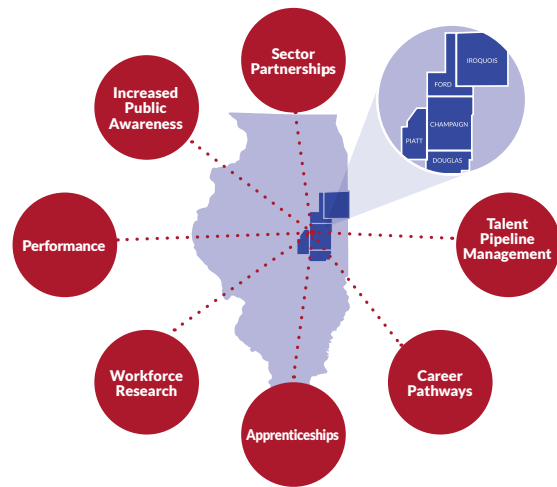
An industry-driven board that strives to achieve local goals and build sector partnerships



### Local Partners

Public and nonprofit organizations align programs with county and industry needs

## OUR PLAN

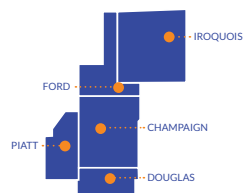
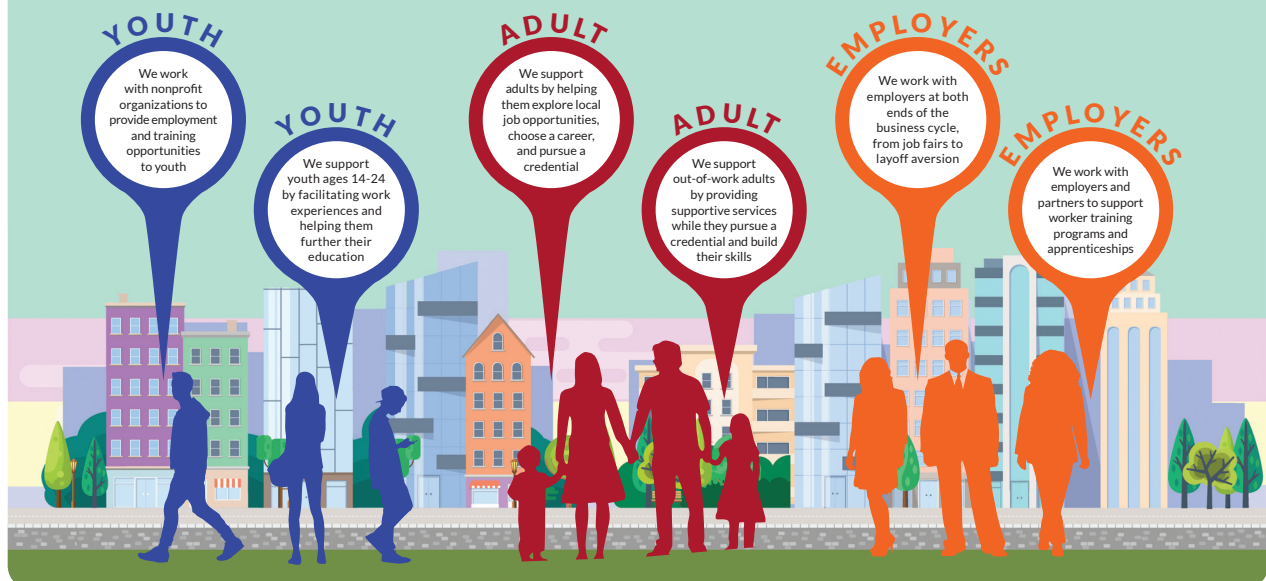


## OUR INDUSTRIES



1307 N. Mattis Ave,  
Champaign, IL 61821  
(217) 531-8282  
[www.ECIWork.Net](http://www.ECIWork.Net)

## RPC'S WORK READINESS & TRAINING SERVICES



### COUNTY OFFICES

- Champaign (in Champaign)
- Douglas (in Tuscola)
- Ford (in Paxton)
- Iroquois (in Watseka)
- Piatt (in Monticello)

### WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Schools, nonprofits, chambers, economic development corporations, and local leaders:

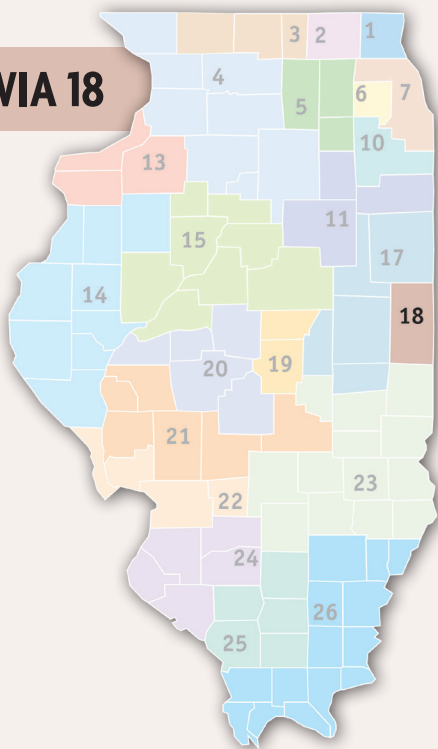
**Help us get work readiness and training services to job seekers and employers.**



1307 N. Mattis Ave,  
Champaign, IL 61821  
(217) 531-8282  
[www.ECIWork.Net](http://www.ECIWork.Net)



## LWIA 18



In Vermilion County, Vermilion County Works (VCW) administers the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB programs. Our goal is to help Vermilion County become more economically competitive through strengthening our workforce.

Through providing accurate labor market information, offering educational opportunities in high-demand occupations, and providing support for those looking for work; we strive to help job seekers achieve their career goals.

We are a partner of the Vermilion County American Job Center, one of 12 partner agencies that operate employment assistance activities locally. The partner agencies work together to develop innovative programs designed to connect job seekers and employers.

With 40 years of experience in workforce development, VCW continues to provide training and career opportunities to Vermilion County residents and businesses.



### INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

#### John Mowery, Dislocated Worker

John Mowery first contacted the Vermilion County American Job Center (AJC) in July of 2017. He came to our office to file his unemployment claim after being separated from his job as a Service Advisor at a local Harley-Davidson dealership. While at the AJC, he learned about the available training services through Vermilion County Works (VCW). John was a displaced worker and was eager for a career change. VCW staff met with John to explain our services and to discuss possible career paths. John decided to begin his career pathway in healthcare by starting with Certified Nursing Assistant C.N.A. training while working to become a Registered Nurse. With available funding at VCW, John was enrolled into the program and received tuition assistance and supportive services for his training. VCW was able to assist with book charges, application fees, testing fees, and required items for clinical training.

John enrolled in classes at Danville Area Community College (DACC) in August and began taking prerequisite courses for the nursing program.

At that time, he also began the C.N.A. program at DACC. He obtained his C.N.A. certificate and license and immediately began employment as a C.N.A. Though John struggled at times with his coursework, his persistence and determination enabled him to continue on with his classes, and he was accepted into the Nursing Program at DACC. He continued to work full-time as a C.N.A. while he completed his training. John was a very determined student with a strong work ethic and continued to work in the healthcare industry during the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. Through perseverance and hard work, John obtained his Associate's Degree in Nursing in May of 2021 from DACC. John passed his NCLEX-RN exam and obtained his Registered Professional Nurse license. John is now employed at OSF Sacred Heart Medical Center in Danville, IL as a Registered Nurse. Congratulations to John on his accomplishment of successfully completing his training and achieving his career goal.

## LWIA 19

LWIA #19 is located at:  
757 W. Pershing Rd.  
Decatur, Illinois

Serving Macon and  
DeWitt Counties

**Phone:**  
(217) 875-8751

**Website:**  
[www.worknetdecatur.org](http://www.worknetdecatur.org)

**Facebook:**  
[www.facebook.com/workforceinvestmentsolutions](https://www.facebook.com/workforceinvestmentsolutions)

Workforce Investment Solutions (WIS) is a Department of Macon County government and is federally funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) providing funding for employment and training services to Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth (In-School and Out-of-School).

WIS is part of a consortium with the IL Division of Rehabilitation and the IL Department of Employment Security to operate the Decatur workNet Center. A variety of employment/career services (resume development, interview skills, job search techniques etc.) are offered at the Center. Services are free and open to the public.

In 2019, WIS received a National Dislocated Worker Opioid Grant. Partnering with Crossing Healthcare in Decatur, WIS is able to 1) assist customers who have an interest in working in substance abuse counseling by providing wages and/or tuition assistance and 2) introducing those in the recovery process back into the workplace by offering work experience and/or on-the-job training.

Recently, WIS was approved for a special Youth Career Pathways grant. This grant will provide an opportunity for Out-of-School youth to enter a pre-apprenticeship program for the Trade/Construction industry; preparing them for entry into an apprenticeship program. This funding will provide supportive services (transportation, childcare, stipends for attendance) as well as a paid work experience once training is completed.

WIS partners with the Community Foundation of Macon County. The Community Foundation provides funding for services otherwise not approved for through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Funding for Child Care Instructor Certifications and LPN and RN training for those who do not qualify for WIOA training dollars.

WIS and Richland Community College Adult Education entered into a consortium offering Adult Education services at the Decatur Public Library. Services include, English Language Learner classes, High School Equivalency (GED), Bridge Programs, and Basic Nursing Assistant. Bridge programming offers skills to those who need to refresh their reading and math skills while learning about careers in industry sectors such as Healthcare, Customer Service/Hospitality and Manufacturing.



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

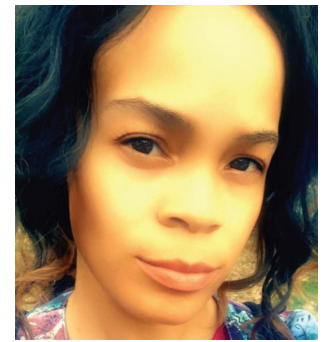
### Kanimah Abdullah

Workforce Investment Solutions has been a life saver. I used the services in 2014 to obtain my C.N.A. They helped me in 2020-2021 to obtain my LPN license. The services made a difference for me and my six children. I am a single parent and Workforce opened a door for me that I couldn't have walked through on my own without their tools.

The Workforce team is awesome and the mission they have is one that is carried out and speaks for itself. I was prepared with tests, assessments, tutoring and a Career Planner. They don't just throw you out blindly, if you don't meet certain criteria, they don't want to see you fail. You work to meet the criteria and then move on to the next process. I had to get my math scores up before getting services so I was provided with much needed tutoring services. I received funding after I demonstrated I was capable of passing the nursing program after first quarter. It made me work harder and I kept the same work ethic after I received funding.

I was provided with an excellent Career Planner who strives to see her customers succeed. It shows in her work and she works until she gets the job done. I can't thank Sherrie Manney enough. I appreciate her more than anyone on my journey because she was my support system along with my mother. The intake was a process getting the initial case developed but it was smooth sailing after that. My Career Planner answered every concern I had, encouraged me when I felt discouraged, and helped me put my best foot forward.

The services I received were more than I could have

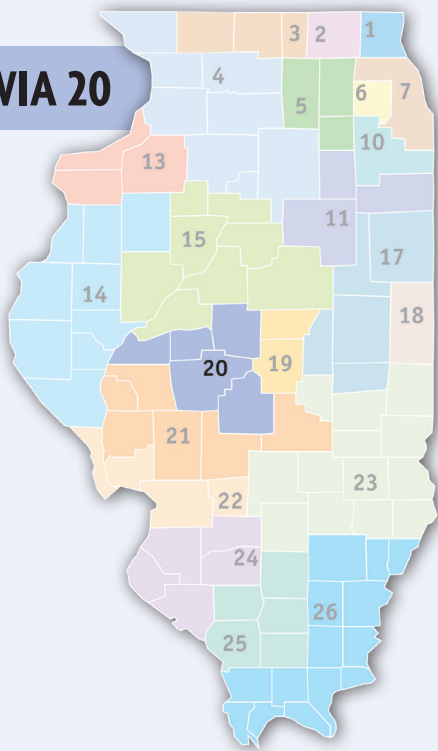


ever imagined. I received tutoring, resume help, fees for nursing school, transportation assistance, U-World to help me prepare for my NCLEX PN, and the one I appreciated the most was the assistance with getting my car fixed when my transportation to school was at risk. Many times, I've cried because I appreciated everything Workforce provided me with. I would recommend Workforce to everyone. I have been doing it since graduating my LPN program and letting everyone know it is not too late to better themselves. Whether it's school or a higher paying job, Workforce will get you there.

I currently hold a full-time job at Prairie Creek Village. I got employed right after obtaining my LPN license. I am also a PRN employee at Fairhaven's Senior Living. I am blessed to hold two jobs straight out of the LPN program and it changed the lives of me and my children. No more working two full-time jobs and no more crying about living check to check with little to no spending money. Workforce really gave me the keys such as financial stability and being able to get off government assisted programs. I am currently working on my credit and hope to own a home. Workforce has changed my life forever.



## LWIA 20



Land of Lincoln Workforce Alliance, located in the heart of Illinois in Springfield, comprises the counties of Cass, Christian, Logan, Menard and Sangamon. LWIA 20 has a strong historical significance and touts its state of the art medical facilities, a low-cost of living, and a central location with access to many large metropolitan areas. Sangamon County has long been associated with State government, but the private sector, specifically the areas of health and life sciences, technology, manufacturing and heavy industry, agribusiness, and business and professional services continue to develop. Land of Lincoln Workforce Alliance will continue to focus on education, training and economic development in an effort to create a collaborative response to economic and labor market challenges on the state and local level.

### Website:

[www.worknet20.org](http://www.worknet20.org)

### Phone:

217-558-1495

**LLWA** | Land of Lincoln  
Workforce Alliance



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Angerlin Davis

After high school graduation, Angerlin worked unloading trucks and in a few retail positions. These jobs did not offer him the opportunities that he was looking for to succeed, to be a role model to his three younger siblings, and to make his mother proud. Due to individualized career services and his caring nature and desire to help others, Angerlin decided to enter the Health Sciences career pathway. When he enrolled in the evening cohort of the Pathways to Success Youth Program at Fishes & Loaves Outreach in Springfield, he had been helping his mother provide for the household and care for his younger siblings, which placed a lot of responsibility on him.

The Pathways program provided career planning, tutoring, leadership development, guidance/counseling, financial literacy, support services and a C.N.A. credential. The following month LLWA staff placed him into an OJT with a local senior care facility where Angerlin flourished loving his job with even more enthusiasm realizing he could not stop here.

Angerlin's Career Planner help guide him through the admissions process at the Capital Area School of Practical Nursing. He wasted no time and was accepted. Although he had to cut his work hours to part-time, and be in clinical instruction all across the region, with additional guidance and occupational and support services, Angerlin excelled.

He graduated in June of 2021 with honors and was the Florence Nightingale Award recipient for his class. He passed his NCLEX on the first attempt, became an LPN in August of 2021, and is employed at a specialized care facility in Springfield earning \$30.00 hour.

Meanwhile he's also finishing prerequisites so that he can bridge into a local BSN program. Nursing is a tough job, a calling. Angerlin will be an exceptional nurse.

"Angerlin started working here during a very challenging time as we are in the middle of the COVID 19 Pandemic. His interview was done through FaceTime and his maturity, professionalism, and personality shone through. I have received only positive feedback and compliments on his work ethic, excellent communication style, and caring nature from staff and residents alike. Angerlin is thoughtful, dependable, and flexible, takes initiative on work assignments and provides excellent patient care. He has a great skill set. I have no doubt that if he chooses to, Angerlin can continue his education and career goals and would make a wonderful nurse." - CNA, OJT Supervisor

"Angerlin Davis lights up a room with his bubbly personality and enthusiastic demeanor, which makes him a joy to be near. Angerlin takes that joy into each patients' room as he makes his rounds at the assistive living facility where he works as a C.N.A."



## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Friendly Chevrolet

Friendly Chevrolet has been in business in Springfield, IL since 1965. When Susan Langheim took over the dealership from her father, John Schroeder, in 1995, she was one of only 116 female dealer-operators, among nearly 4,400 Chevrolet franchises nationwide.

Friendly Chevrolet is a leader in our local workforce by assisting those individuals who are new to the auto tech field with hands-on training through programs like the WIOA On-the-Job Training (OJT) program. When one of our auto tech trainees was desperately looking for an employment opportunity during the pandemic, we contacted Friendly Chevrolet's Service Manager, Randy Powell, to explain the benefits of partnering with our OJT programs. This is an important program to further the education of automotive technicians. Powell hired the



trainee into a full-time position.

Friendly Chevrolet demonstrated a continued leadership role with our various partners including Lincoln Land Community College

(LLCC). Powell sits on the LLCC Automotive Employer Advisory Group to help the school stay abreast of various changes to the auto industry and to communicate the current

automotive skills needed.

We were proud to partner with Friendly Chevrolet on the OJT project and hope to continue to assist them with recruiting needs in the future.

## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### Trade Program

In January of 2019, the Ardagh Group, a glass manufacturing company in Lincoln, Illinois relocated its operations to Canada, leaving more than 150 of its current employees without work. Charles Leevey was one of these employees. As an established Mold Maker with Ardagh Group, Charles, who would once weld and inspect mold equipment used at the local plant would now be without a job and forced to look for work.

Charles was fortunate and landed employment less than 3 months after his job loss with Ardagh Group. Less than a year later, Charles' new employer would close their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He remembered that some of his former "Ardagh" co-workers had enrolled in training funded through the Trade program, administered through the Land of Lincoln Workforce Alliance (LWIA 20).



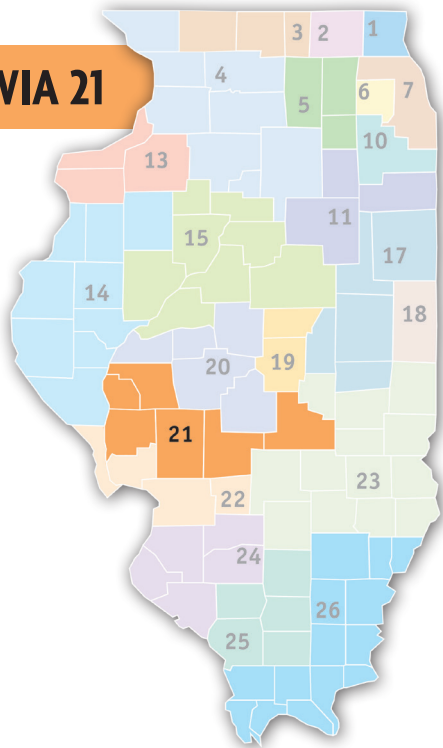
His job searches and labor market research suggested that heating and air-conditioning would be a good fit for him. While in school, Charles excelled earning straight A's in all modules. On April 1, 2021, Charles was recognized for his hard work and was nominated for Student of the Month. After passing all of his exams, he was offered employment with AireServ, a heating and air conditioning company. Charles Leevey is truly a success story.

Through his successes and unbelievable loss of his mother to the COVID-19 virus while beginning his employment, Charles has constantly displayed strength and courage.

**Charles writes:** "Following the closure of Ardagh, and then finding another job only to be laid off due to COVID, I applied to several jobs and nobody was hiring during the pandemic, I thought I was done for. The program through LWIA

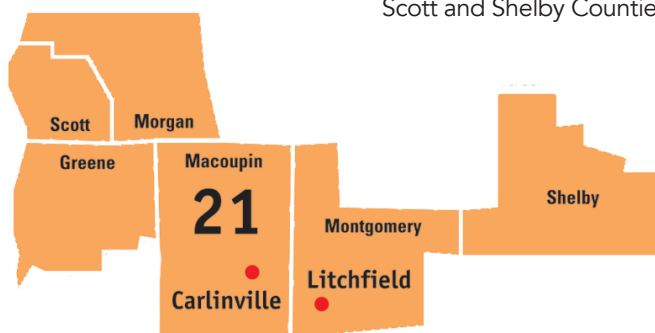
20 was still available to me due to the plant closure so I opted in to the program thinking that schooling for HVAC would land me a good job even during a pandemic. And it did, the program was a game changer, a life saver! After graduating, Chris Williams from Aire Serv hired me practically on the spot! It's a great job with great benefits! Thanks again to Diana Lathan for getting me into the program and working with me throughout the process!"

## LWIA 21



### West Central Development Council, Inc.

Greene, Macoupin,  
Montgomery, Morgan,  
Scott and Shelby Counties



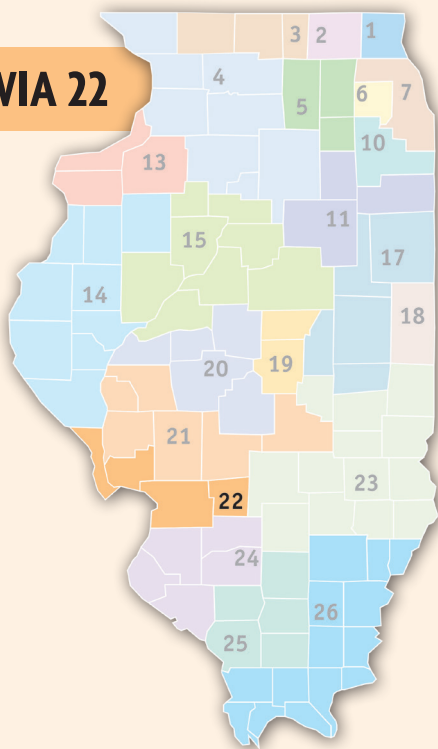
The counties in LWIA 21 are Greene, Macoupin, Montgomery, Morgan, Scott, and Shelby. Our agency name remains West Central Development Council, with our one-stop center located at 116 South Plum Street, Carlinville. We currently have satellite offices in Jacksonville, Litchfield, Shelbyville, and Carrollton.

Website:  
[www.west-central.org](http://www.west-central.org)





## LWIA 22



Full service One-Stop Center  
serving Madison, Bond, Jersey  
and Calhoun Counties.

Our Administration Office is located  
101 East Edwardsville Road  
Wood River, Illinois 62095  
(618) 296-4445

**General email address:**  
MCETD@co.madison.il.us

**Our website address:**  
[www.co.madison.il.us/departments/  
employment\\_and\\_training](http://www.co.madison.il.us/departments/employment_and_training)



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Donald Rommerskirchen

### 1. What challenges were you experiencing prior to receiving WIOA Workforce Services?

I had been employed with the Federal Government at a job that I really enjoyed, at 57 which is the mandatory retirement age I was forced into retirement and I still wanted to work in a field that I enjoyed. I had learned that out in the private sector you needed to have a certificate to work in the field (HVAC/R) that I had been working. I had no idea where to turn except they had given me a paper to go to the unemployment office. I did not want to draw unemployment, but I went anyway. When I explained my situation to them, I was directed to the WIOA office where I met a wonderful person named Tina Leonard, a Career Specialist with the Madison County Employment and Training Office, she was able to place me in the right program and get me back to a career.

### 2. How did WIOA Workforce Services help you to overcome these challenges and did you also receive other assistance?

The WIOA Workforce Services, Tina Leonard, guided me in every step I needed to take to gain a certificate, directed me on how to apply for training as a Dislocated worker, receiving unemployment, while I was in training, paying for all tuition, books, and tools. My responsibility was to obtain good grades and to attend the training classes. I thought that since they are paying for the tuition and books I would give them the best that I can give, which was straight A's, and completing the program at the top of the class, which I was able to accomplish.

### 3. Describe your new career and highlight the WIOA Workforce Services that were most helpful to you with achieving this success.

I was lucky enough to become one of the instructors at SWIC Southwestern Illinois College after completing the Heating, Ventilation, A/C, and Refrigeration program and to start my own business as a Heating and Cooling Specialist. Now, I teach students who were just like myself, looking to start a new career in the private workforce and I am able to relate to some of the challenges they are facing, Thank God I had the WIOA Workforce Services program because I can help the ones that are struggling



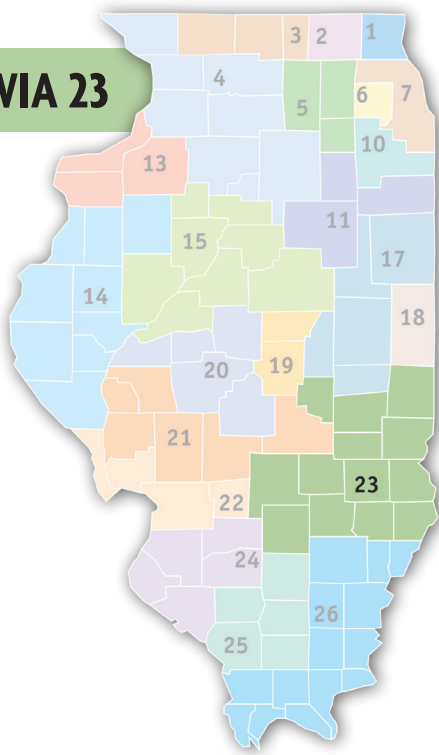
and direct them to the right services they need to succeed. Without the WIOA Workforce Services, I would not be where I am today.

Tina Leonard-Career Specialist  
Comments: Don is an enthusiastic, mindful customer and always seeking out the positive during the COVID-19 challenges of in-classroom training. He learned how to utilize remote learning, various communication methods with instructors while navigating on-site equipment training. He mastered these challenges and was awarded the Superior Student award this last summer from South Western IL College/ SWIC. During our conversations, Don would speak of wanting to help others and giving someone a chance, in his words to renew hope. He worked in the prison system and met young adults just needing someone to believe in them. This is one of the reasons he wanted to start his own business to assist individuals with second chances or provide for a family. He couldn't believe the college asked him to become an instructor. Well, I can, he truly deserves this honor. Don has always been a strong supporter of the WIOA program. He would tell his classmates "get on down there, they will help you out"!!

Now he can be an advocate as an instructor and meet a larger population. Don created a YouTube video explaining his experiences and how his journey may have been a forced retirement but the outcome has been rewarding. I encouraged to view YouTube video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLrbumPmUFC](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLrbumPmUFC)

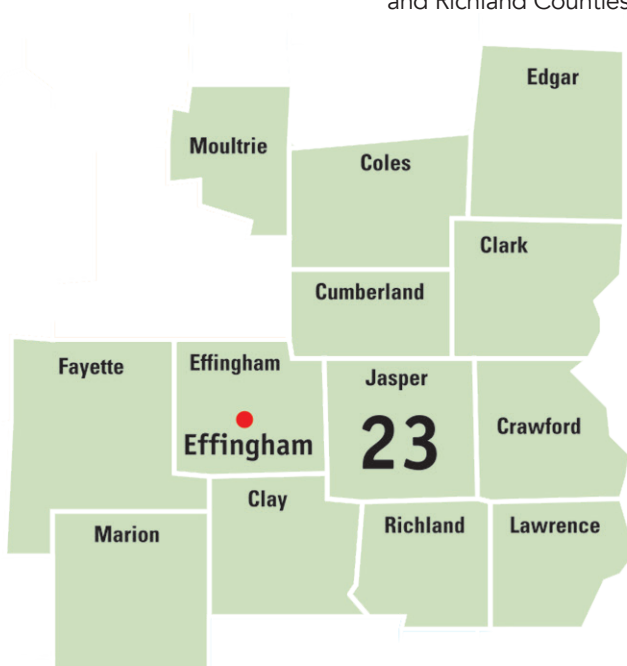


## LWIA 23



### LWIA 23

Clark, Clay, Coles,  
Crawford, Cumberland,  
Edgar, Effingham, Fayette,  
Jasper, Lawrence,  
Marion, Moultrie  
and Richland Counties



*Connecting the local workforce with sustainable growth opportunities through our services for businesses and individuals.*

LWIA 23 aims to develop and support a skilled talent base as well as data-driven solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the regional and state economies. Local Workforce Innovation Area 23 serves individuals and businesses in 13 Illinois counties: Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Lawrence, Marion, Moultrie, and Richland. We are committed to making a positive impact on the local and state workforce through our programs, resources, and dedicated staff. C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation has been the program service provider for decades. Their Career Planners work closely with participants providing resources, guidance, information, mentoring, and encouragement.

**Find us at** [www.LWA23.net](http://www.LWA23.net)

## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Stephanie Lowe



Stephanie came to the WIOA office in May 2018 needing assistance with classroom training in the Radiologic Technology program. As a single mom, she wanted to pursue her education to reach a self-sufficiency level. She heard about our program through her sister who was also receiving classroom training assistance.

While in the program, WIOA provided case management, tuition assistance, books, uniforms and mileage reimbursement. With these expenses take care of, she was able to better provide for her child, work and attend school full-time.

No matter what she has on her plate—single mom working full-time between 2 jobs as well as attending full-time classes with out-of-town clinicals—Stephanie is always smiling and doesn't allow circumstances to keep her from her ultimate goals, one of which is graduating with her Associate's Degree in May 2021. She recently won the "Living the Dream" award through the Soroptimist organization with a prize of \$1,000 for this top award and recognition. She is close to reaching her dreams and becoming self-sufficient. She is a positive role model for her daughter and proves that through adversity, there is strength.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

Magura - Olney, IL

Magura, Inc. develops and produces high-performance motorsport and bike products and components, hydraulic and mechanical controls, as well as technical plastic parts for the biking industry. In the Fall of 2019, Magura was looking to bring manufacturing to the US. Due to the global market situation at that time, and the political tension in Asia, this decision made sense. Magura has manufacturing capacity in 2 of their 3 business units (Asia & Germany) and it is/ was their goal for the USA to

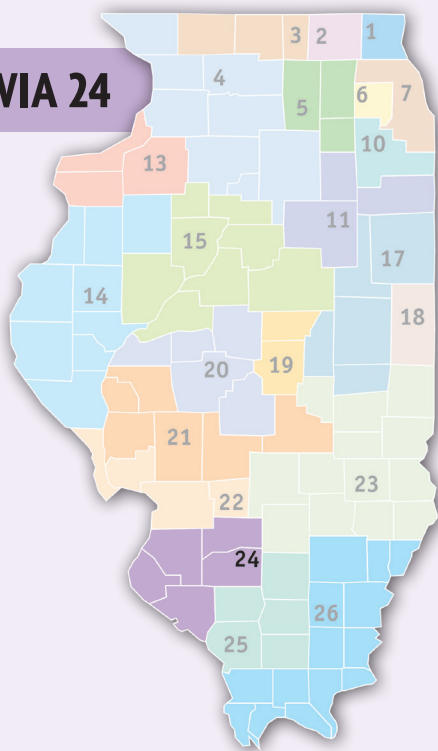
have this capacity as well. The company was going to see an increase in expenses if they outsourced or hired someone with manufacturing experience. Matt Enlow was willing to take on the responsibility to save the company money. Magura worked with Tony Logue, WIOA Operations Coordinator, to obtain the funding and Matt was able to enroll into a Manufacturing Management program at the University of Minnesota. Tony made this process easy and was amazing to work with. Matt and Tony



# MAGURA

spoke regularly and helped keep Matt on track. As a result, Matt received the support and experience he needed to succeed! Magura just took advantage of the Incumbent Worker Training program again, to go through a Value Stream Mapping with a consultant. Due to both of these opportunities, Magura has seen a huge increase in efficiency, production, and cost savings.

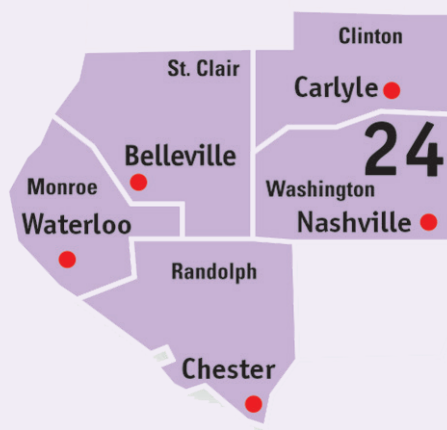
## LWIA 24



### LWIA 24

St. Clair, Clinton, Randolph,  
Monroe & Washington Counties

St. Clair County Intergovernmental  
Grants Department –  
Workforce Development Group  
19 Public Square, Suite 200  
Belleville, Illinois 62220  
[www.co.st-clair.il.us](http://www.co.st-clair.il.us)



## INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS AWARD

### Soulcial Kitchen

**Business:** Soucial Kitchen. The ownership, led by John Michel, is establishing a food truck court and facility in Swansea, Illinois. The restaurant will serve as a commissary and training facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities, veterans, and re-entry offenders that are WIOA funding eligible. Once trained in the commissary, individuals will have the opportunity to enter a three-year registered apprenticeship that is currently being developed with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship. Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship program, the individual will receive the title to the food truck and have

an established business and established route to market. The owner has also developed a program called The Currency of Caring, which allows patrons to purchase discounted meal tokens from any Soucial Kitchen outlet (restaurant and food trucks) and subsequently provide these tokens to anyone they encounter experiencing food insecurity, homelessness, etc. Recipients can redeem these tokens at any Soucial Kitchen food truck and receive a free hot meal of their choosing. This is all part of the large community footprint envisioned by Soucial Kitchen and its CEO & Co-Founder, Retired USAF Brigadier General John Michel.



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### McKayla Wright

McKayla was referred to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) by Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) in Belleville. McKayla worked in the Adult Education Department as a student worker. When McKayla and I met, she was very quiet and continued to smile at all times. She informed me that she was already accepted into the Nursing Education Program at SWIC and was excited and passionate to become the Nurse that she had dreamt of as a small child. Viewing her transcript along with eligibility documentation, I

was astonished that she had all A's and a grade point average 4.00. I knew at that point that she was an impressive and incredible participant who would become a successful nurse in the future.

McKayla didn't have sufficient transportation and had to use the city transit to get back and forth to training, which was very inconvenient for her and her family. Therefore, SWIC's staff was kind enough to bring her to the WIOA Office or just drop off her time sheets. McKayla had great support

and encouragement from her co-workers and all of the staff. It was exciting to hear and witness how she was progressing so well at SWIC.

Unfortunately, as a student worker she was not able to continue working due to a lack of funding. However, McKayla was determined to find employment while she participated in the RN Training Program. It was determined that McKayla was eligible for WIOA Program and Paid Work Experience. Her dedication and commitment to her education



and job has been evidenced by the fact that she is employed by Gateway Regional Hospital as a Registered Nurse and enrolled in Chamberlain School of Nursing for the BSN Program.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### The Perfect Pop Gourmet Popcorn

Eddie and Stephanie Williams are the proud owners of The Perfect Pop Gourmet Popcorn. They were inspired to start their business after treating warehouse workers with their delicious caramel pecan popcorn. The Perfect Pop immediately started to receive requests for more of their product line. A short time later, and during the COVID pandemic, a business was born out of the owner's home. They also use locally grown fresh kernels and combine them with homemade recipes to give taste buds a reason to smile. The business has grown so fast that their popcorn products, which now includes 15 different flavors, can be found not only at their popcorn shop (5112 N. Belt W. Belleville, IL 62226), but at Fresh Thyme Stores (IL and MO locations), Belleville Farmers Market and The Freeburg Country Mart.

Naturally, opening a business and growing means needing assistance, especially with workforce. Ms. Williams was informed that there may be assistance available through St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants

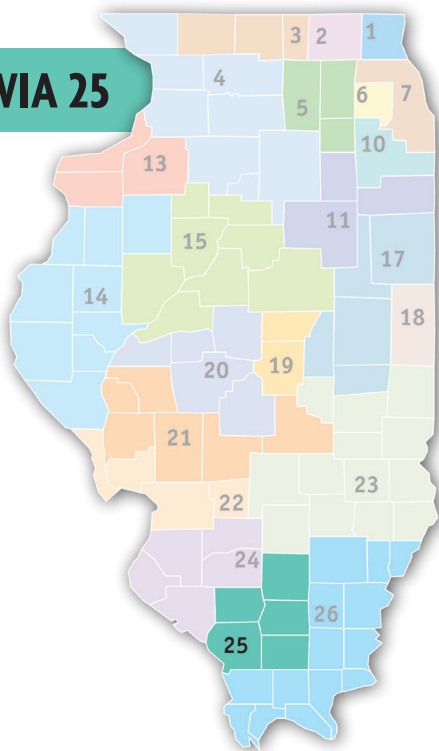


Department – Workforce Development Group. She reached out and learned about the services and resources that could help meet her needs. As a result, one new employee has already been hired

utilizing On-the-Job Training (OJT) and she is helping to grow an individual in the community by utilizing the Paid Work Experience (PWE) youth program, also funded by WIOA and the Workforce

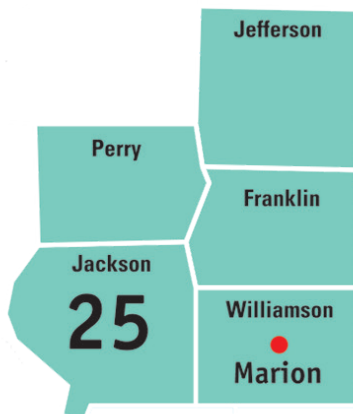
Development Group. The Perfect Pop's website states that "making popcorn is our passion", but they are also great community partners and a vital member of the local business community.

## LWIA 25



### Man-Tra-Con

Franklin, Jackson,  
Jefferson, Perry  
and Williamson  
Counties



At Man-Tra-Con, we support the economic health of southern Illinois by providing services designed to build a quality workforce. We devote special effort to identifying the needs of local employers so that we can provide the quality workers each needs. With guidance from our Chief Local Elected Officials and the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board (SIWDB), we work to improve the quality of life for all the customers we serve.

Man-Tra-Con's primary mission is to collaborate effectively with our workforce partners to create quality workforce solutions throughout Local Workforce Area 25, comprised of Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry and Williamson counties. In addition, Man-Tra-Con collaborates with innovative partners in economic development, healthcare, community and social service and education to create unique solutions to the workforce challenges we face.

It is a privilege to serve the region and to work with passionate leaders committed to a brighter future in beautiful southern Illinois.

#### Website:

[www.mantracon.org](http://www.mantracon.org)





## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Lucy Dunn

Lucy Dunn contacted Man-Tra-Con in July 2020, after seeing Facebook posts about remote training opportunities that might allow her to increase her computer skills while staying at home in the midst of a global pandemic.

After working a series of minimum wage jobs as a personal care assistant and hotel desk clerk, Lucy had been out of the workforce for 12 years. She was on disability from 2008 to 2018, and had been job searching for nearly two years without success. Lucy's lack of income had forced her to move in with her daughter, and, at 55 years old, she was growing concerned that she may never find a job again.

Man-Tra-Con had contracted with non-profit training provider Creating IT Futures to offer a remote, live-instruction User Support Specialist course, leading to the CompTIA A+

Certification. Lucy had always been interested in technology, and she jumped at this chance to deepen her tech knowledge and enrolled. The course was difficult for Lucy, and she spent many hours working with the training software and study materials provided. Lucy successfully completed the course in November 2020.

As the course was winding down, Career Specialist Amy Blocker recognized Lucy's need to have recent work experience on her resume, and began talking to Man-Tra-Con's Business Services Department about potential Work Experience Program placements. Lucy interviewed with Natural Enrichment Industries, a food additive manufacturer located in Herrin, for an administrative customer service position.

Lucy was not selected by the employer for Work Experience Placement based on that



interview. However, Man-Tra-Con staff went to bat for Lucy, and NEI agreed to place her in a short-term Work Experience Program for a few weeks, while Man-Tra-Con continued to work with her on interview skills and job leads.

Lucy blew them away at NEI. The company quickly decided to hire her permanently, and WIOA funds assisted the employer during an On-The-

Job Training period. Lucy is now a full-time member of the NEI customer service team, earning \$14 per hour.

"Lucy is doing really well! She is certainly a success story for NEI fitting right into our office and sales team. She takes responsibility and has earned our trust," said Brenda Malone, Senior Business Director for NEI. "So happy we have this chance to work with Lucy."

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AWARD

### Intertape Polymer Group Inc. (IPG)

Manufacturing is a priority sector of the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board in Southern Illinois. Intertape Polymer Group Inc. (IPG) is a recognized leader in the development, manufacture and sale of a variety of paper and film based pressure-sensitive and water-activated tapes, stretch and shrink fills, protective packaging, woven and non-woven products and packaging machinery for industrial and retail use. Headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, and Sarasota, Florida, IPG employs approximately 3,700 employees with operations in 32 locations, including 21 manufacturing facilities in North America, five in Asia and one in Europe.

While many businesses had to shut down during the pandemic, IPG was considered essential and remained open. The new Plant Manager, Aaron Christ, heard about Man-Tra-Con providing workforce services and invited staff to a meeting. IPG was having difficulties finding employees. ManTraCon offered to conduct several on-site hiring events and explained how the work based learning and on-the-job training programs could help IPG find great employees. Aaron agreed to give these programs a try, and several hiring events were held on the company premises.

The hiring events included a presentation about the company, the benefits the company has to offer, and a

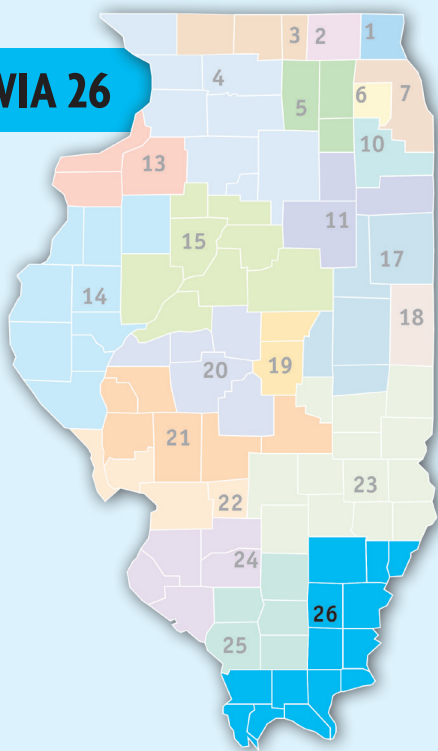
tour of the facility. At the end of the presentation, all job seekers were provided an employment application and screened for WIOA eligibility. Aaron hired several job seekers with experience, directly from the hiring event. ManTraCon provided a four-month work experience program for eight individuals who were selected by IPG and eligible for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) eligibility. Aaron hired several job seekers with experience, directly from the hiring event. ManTraCon provided a four month work experience program for eight individuals who were selected by IPG and eligible for WIOA services. The entry level wages for the

work experience trainees were \$14.00 per hour. At the end of the work experience, three were hired and entered an on-the-job training program earning \$16.00 per hour with great benefits. During this on-the-job training, WIOA services reimbursed IPG 50% of the employee's wages during the training period. Although five individuals were not hired, they gained valuable work experience to place on their resumes.

Aaron continues to use workforce services to find and train job seekers for IPG. He has also recently volunteered to serve on the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board. To learn more about IPG, visit their website at IPG - Intertape Polymer Group ([itape.com](http://itape.com)).



## LWIA 26



Area #26 or LWIA 26, encompasses 14 counties: Alexander, Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, Wabash, Wayne, and White. A landmass of 4,855 square miles.

LWIA 26 is known as Southern 14 Workforce Investment Board, Inc., Based in Carmi, (White County), IL. The OneStop center is located in the David L. Stanley White County Center (Southeastern Illinois College-Carmi site).

We have two service providers who work directly with our clients:

- **Wabash Area Development Inc.** services Wayne, Edwards, Wabash, Hamilton, White, Saline, and Gallatin Counties
- **Shawnee Development Council, Inc.** services Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Alexander, Pulaski, and Massac Counties.

Since we cover such a wide geographical area, we have local access sites for all 14 counties to make it easier for our clients and Career Planners.

Our website is [www.so14lwib.com](http://www.so14lwib.com)

You can find Information about Southern 14:

- Current Programs
- Special Projects
- Request for Proposals
- Local Policies
- Board Member information
- Links to several Partnering sites.
- And more



## INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Michael Boren

Michael Boren told his career planner, "I always wanted to get my CDL but was never able to afford the \$4,000 to do it without taking out a loan. And now I'm making more money than I ever have in my life!" You can still hear the excitement in Michael's voice as he talks about how the WIOA program changed his life.

When Michael came to the WIOA program, he was laid off from work and receiving unemployment. He and his family came to WADI originally for utility assistance with the LIHEAP program, and a few months later, Michael started his CDL class at Rend Lake College with the aid of the WIOA Career Education program.

Previously, Michael had been working as a backhoe operator at a mining site. When oil prices went down, there was no work for him. If he had had his CDL at the time, he might have been able to keep working for the same company as a driver at another location. Instead, he was laid off from work, leaving him to struggle to find a way to support his family.

The WIOA Career Education program was just the answer he had been looking for. Not only could his classes be paid for, but the extra help with mileage reimbursement for gas expenses enabled him to attend CDL classes and make himself more employable!

In seven weeks, Michael applied for the WIOA Career



Education program, earned his Certificate in Truck Driver Training, passed his CDL licensing requirements, and started work at his new job! In fact, he was offered a job before he had even finished his training.

Now Michael is working for a local excavating company and earning enough money to support his family. He still operates a backhoe at times but has diversified his skills and often drives large trucks. He has earned a Tanker Endorsement for his license so that he can handle even more equipment!

When asked if he had anything special he wanted to add about his nomination, he replied that he highly recommends everyone that can, use the program. he even encouraged a coworker to get his CDL and told him that he knew a great program that would help him!

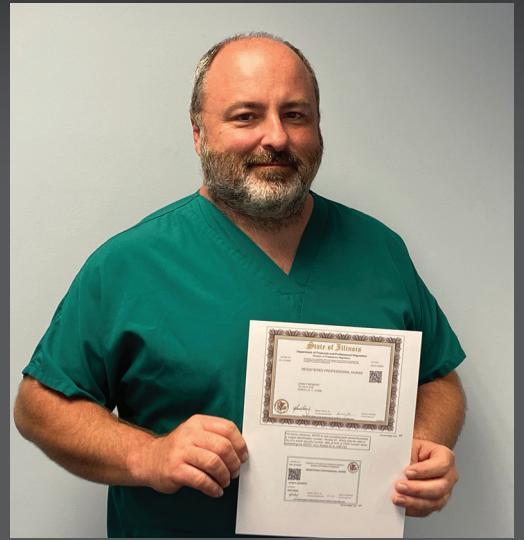


# Winner's Circle

See the  
faces  
of 2021  
honorees  
Pages 45-47







Congratulations



# Congratulations





**[Illinoisworkforcepartnership.org](https://illinoisworkforcepartnership.org)**

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*This report was created by the Illinois Workforce Partnership  
in collaboration with Shaw Media.*