

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (DEI)

Quarterly Narrative Report

Grantee Name: Minnesota Youth DEI
Address: 332 Minnesota St. Ste E200
City/State/Zip: St. Paul, MN 55101
Grant Number : MI29688
Date Report Submitted:
Report Period: July – September 2017

Summary of Grant Progress: Describe the status of your state's implementation of the grant against the DEI workplan. Include major activities that address grant requirements (e.g., Integrated Resource Teams, Asset Development, Customized Employment, Self-Employment, Blending and Braiding Resources, or Guideposts to Success, as applicable). If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

Southwest Private Industry Council's (SWPIC) DRC has had the opportunity to meet with families who have children with disabilities. Families have expressed their frustration with working with various community, county, and school officials as their child navigates through these systems. The DRC takes this opportunity to explain the role of each agency that is involved with their child's success and discusses the ability to form an Integrated Resource Team including the necessary partners. This has proven to be successful in bringing key partners to the table in order to help the child and family navigate through various barriers.

SWPIC's DRC has created a partnership map of all the programs, agencies, schools, and colleges that SWPIC works with. These partners include State Services for the Blind, Diversionary Work Program, SNAP, ABE, Community Corrections, Veterans Services Offices, etc. This has been helpful for the DRC and youth counselors as they help youth participants identify necessary community partners to involve in IRT meetings. In addition, this has helped the agency identify areas where there is duplication of efforts and how duplication can be minimized.

The DRC for SWPIC passed her intensive Work Incentives Practitioner exams in July. This training will help her better work with youth with disabilities, especially once SWPIC establishes itself as an Employment Network.

SWPIC is starting a new Career Pathway this school year for Electronic

Controls. This will be offered at Marshall Alternative Learning Center through Minnesota West Community and Technical Colleges and Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. This is the largest section of the Mechatronics degree offered through Minnesota West. Individuals with disabilities are a focus of this career pathway opportunity. SWPIC's partnership with Advanced Opportunities, Adult Basic Education, Minnesota West Community and Technical College and the Marshall Area Alternative Learning Center has expanded to not only include Carpentry training but also training in Janitorial, Manufacturing, Food Service, Office Work, and Retail. These are all areas in which local businesses have identified as a high priority.

Rural CEP's DRC provided training to three new Youth Coordinators on how to take information from the Youth Profile (developed by PACER) and RMCEP Intake Application, and use graphics to represent each agency/individual identified by the participant that has provided any service or support in order to create a quick visual aid of IRT partners.

RMCEP has strong networks of partners across the 19 counties in the WDA. DRC, Team Leaders, and Youth Coordinators participate in 5 CTIC groups and a 6th has started up with a November meeting date. RMCEP participates and assists in CTIC events, workshops and expos, with tasks such as organizing, creating outreach materials, and hosting a booth to engage with families and community members to share specific DEI and RMCEP content.

The DRC has connected with Disability Coordinators at several post-secondary campuses, Minnesota State Moorhead and Central Lakes College, to facilitate conversations about referrals as well as blending and braiding resources to provide customized learning support and financial support for DEI participants. The DRC reached out to partners in The Brandon Project, an Innovative Foundation funded disability employment project that has potential for regional impact. Organizations managing this project include a school district, an educational co-op, county social services, and several local vacation resorts. Sixty transition students with disabilities ages 18-21 are expected to be served. Since entities associated with the Brandon Project are also a part of the Brainerd Lakes Area CTIC, VRS, and other collaborative partners, Rural CEP hopes to learn how this grant may intersect with services provided by RMCEP.

Rural CEP has earned a Ticket Revenue of \$137,519 since 2013 and currently, **two of Rural CEP's DEI participants are using their ticket to work.** CMJTS has a Ticket Revenue of \$75,000

The CMJTS youth team was awarded a Pre-ETS grant which serves youth with disabilities. The Pre-ETS grant is focused on serving students with disabilities who are potentially eligible for full Vocational Rehabilitation services. This grant provides CMJTS with the opportunity to increase outreach to schools, bolster partnerships with VR counselors, and co-enroll in the DEI project. Students in CMJTS' Pre-ETS project will receive services through a cohort model based on

the school they attend.

The PACER Center presented its webinar “Introduction to the Guideposts for Success” to youth program staff at Rural CEP and SWPIC on September 13th, 2017. This webinar was piloted with CMJTS youth program staff in June 2017. Between Rural CEP and SWPIC, 37 staff attended the webinar session. PACER Center also provided a post-webinar survey to participants. Of those that responded, 93% indicated that they expected to use information learned at the training. Moreover, 60% of respondents stated that the training had improved their capacity to provide services that will help youth with disabilities achieve their education and employment goals. Lastly, 87% of respondents said that they would feel comfortable contacting PACER Center staff for additional follow-up assistance on behalf of individual youth with disabilities. This workshop is an example of how the PACER Center trainings equip job center staff with quality tools to help youth with disabilities succeed in achieving their educational and employment goals.

Development and Implementation of Effective Practices and Program Model

Strategies: Identify any innovative strategies the state has undertaken or implemented to achieve DEI objectives. If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

SWPIC has created a Career Pathways Partnership group that includes members from the local community and technical colleges as well as Adult Basic Education. Through this partnership, SWPIC has been able to help Six of the individuals who participated in the Montevideo Alternative Learning Center Welding Certification course were DEI participants. Five of the individuals had a learning disability and one had a mental or psychiatric disability. Three were Hispanic/Latino and three were White. DEI was leveraged to pay for their tuition through Minnesota West Community and Technical College. In particular, this successful collaboration led SWPIC to be awarded a best practice award by the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA). See the attached document for more detailed information about the collaborative effort.

SWPIC in partnership with the local Carl Perkins Consortium, Community and Technical Colleges, Chambers of Commerce, and local economic development agencies to put on the 15th annual Southwest Minnesota Career Expo. 1,800 high school students took part in the two day event. Students had the opportunity to learn about a variety of careers and jobs that local businesses and service agencies are looking to fill.

Rural CEP’s WDB Youth Council met in September. Key priorities for 2017 are encouraging youth to engage with community organizations, provide soft skills and basic work skills at the post-secondary level, expand career advising, **increase youth ages 18+ using their Ticket to Work.**

Currently rural CEP has 5 certified Work Incentive Practitioners. The Brainerd

area is the strongest office in new Ticket to Work enrollments. The CWIP located in Brainerd is considered a mentor to others and will be tapped to provide coaching on the benefits planning aspects of the Ticket to Work program.

With input from the project's local DRCs, a mailing about the Youth DEI Project encouraging families to utilize the workforce center youth programs in their regions have been finalized. These will be disseminated in the next quarter by the PACER Center.

PACER staff are working with RMCEP's DRC to schedule additional parent training workshops in that region of the state. These would be beyond the scope of the work plan DEED and PACER have agreed upon and would be conducted under the auspices of other PACER projects focused on transition for youth with disabilities.

Key Issues and Technical Assistance Needs: Identify any specific barriers, lessons learned, or opportunities during implementation of DEI strategies in your state. If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

Two of the implementation sites have been diligently working through the arduous process of becoming an Employment Network. While this has been challenging for the implementation sites, they have received technical assistance from DEED, NDI, and DOL on completing the process of becoming an Employment Network. Rural CEP and SWPIC are still on track to successfully complete this DEI required element.

Significant Activities, Accomplishments, and Success Stories: Describe significant activities, accomplishments, and/ or success stories on the implementation of the Career Pathway elements or how different systems are working together to benefit the customer. If grantees have nothing to report, that should be specified.

Quarter 3 Data shows the following for DEI enrollments:

- 26% are Youth of Color
- 38% are Basic Skills Deficient
- 16% are from families receiving Public Assistance
- 10% are youth offenders
- 9% are foster youth
- 9% are high school dropouts
- 5% are receiving SSI or SSDI
- 3% are homeless youth
- 33% are co-enrolled in WIOA Youth or Adult
- 49% are co-enrolled in state funded Minnesota Youth Program

On July 27, 2017, DEED's Office of Youth Development hosted an in-person meeting with the Disability Resource Coordinators at the PACER Center. This meeting involved PACER Center staff who presented on the various, diverse resources that the PACER Center offers. In addition to PACER Center staff, DEED invited a representative from the Minnesota Department of Human Services who talked about the intersections of SNAP/MFIP and youth wages. This turned into a robust discussion about how the benefits affect or do not affect the family's benefits.

As requested by the DRCs, the State Lead researched information on Minnesota's newly implemented ABLER Plan. The State Lead developed a document for the DRCs to use that summarizes the most important elements of Minnesota's ABLER plan. Given that the ABLER Plans are new, the State Lead and DRCs will continue to attend webinars and various trainings on the benefits of ABLER accounts.

DEED hosted a monthly call in early September to cover various topics. DEED invited Kay Gregg from the FDIC to talk about the Money Smart curriculum and the upcoming changes the FDIC is working on. Included in the updated curriculum is information about ABLER plans and how people with disabilities can utilize them to save for the future.

Minnesota's youth-focused DEI project was invited to join the Connecticut youth DEI, Iowa adult DEI, and Alaska youth DEI projects on a best practices-sharing call in November 2017. This call will allow the DRCs to learn about strategies from other projects that they could implement in their local areas.

Year two work plans and budgets from the three DEI sites were submitted and approved.

In the fall edition of the PACESETTER, a PACER Center publication, Minnesota's youth DEI project is featured along with a success story of a youth receiving services from Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council. The overview of the DEI project and the success story can be found here: <http://www.pacer.org/newsletters/pacesetter/fall2017.pdf>

SWPIC in conjunction with the PACER Center hosted a parent night event. The event focused on career planning options and resources for young people with disabilities. Information was provided on navigating workforce centers and career pathways. There were 22 people in attendance including representatives from VRS, as well as 11 parents, and 2 students. PACER staff surveyed the participants, and they found that 100% of the attendees indicated that they learned something new at the workshop. Also, 100% of the attendees noted that they would use the information they learned at the workshop and that the materials they received were useful. See the end of this report for a mailing on this workshop. For more information, see the story published in the Marshall Independent: <http://www.marshallindependent.com/news/local-news/2017/09/starting-down-the-career-path/>

The State Lead is co-managing DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services' Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) grant. This has provided the State Lead a wealth of opportunities to make connections between the DEI project and local sites' Pre-ETS projects. Through this partnership, SWMNPIC noted that the DRC is working closely

with SWMNPIC's Pre-ETS project with their DEI project to better serve youths who have disabilities. In addition, the State Lead has had the opportunity to meet with other WDAs that are not participating in the youth-focused DEI project and share valuable practices gleaned from the DEI project with the Pre-ETS projects in other WDAs. Both of these projects have allowed local and state-level Title I and Title IV providers to align services and better serve youth with disabilities across the State of Minnesota.

PACER Simon Technology Center staff presented a Livestream training, "Supporting Youth on the Pathway to Employment: How Assistive Technology Can Help," on June 8, 2017. It can be viewed online at

<https://www.facebook.com/PACERCenter/videos/10155464097501941/>

PACER developed a letter to be sent to families of youth with disabilities in the Workforce Development Areas served by Minnesota's DEI Partners for Youth Project. See the attached letter.

Short-term Grant Goals (three - six months): Describe plans and activities covering the next three to six months that address the workplan and objectives of the grant.

Participate in the November 1st cross-state DEI call between Connecticut, Iowa and Alaska to learn from and share with those projects.

DEED will complete a monitoring visit and report with each of the implementation sites during the first quarter of 2018.

Final revisions to a new PACER publication for the DEI Project featuring Materials for a mailing about the MN Partners for Youth Project encouraging families to utilize the workforce center youth programs in their regions was finalized. These will be disseminated in the next quarter.

Rural CEP and SWPIC will submit their paperwork to become an Employment Network.

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION		
WDA: All three sites		Contact: Jenny Nelson
Phone #: 651-259-7308		E-mail Address: Jenny.nelson@state.mn.us
Time Period for Report (Cumulative): 1/1/2017- 9/30/2017		
PARTICIPANT SUMMARY INFORMATION (CUMULATIVE)		
Total Participants Served		94
Gender	A. Male	52
	B. Female	42
Age	A. 14 – 15	14
	B. 16 – 17	40
	C. 18	22
	D. 19 – 21	12
	E. 22 - 24	6
Ethnicity / Race	A. Hispanic/Latino	15
	B. American Indian or Alaska Native	2
	C. Asian or Pacific Islander	1
	D. Black or African American	6
	E. White	85
Primary Disability	A. Physical/Chronic Health Condition	5
	B. Physical/ Mobility Impairment	3
	C. Mental or Psychiatric Disability	42
	D. Vision-Related Disability	0
	E. Hearing-Related Disability	1
	F. Learning Disability	15
	G. Cognitive/ Intellectual Disability	28
	H. Did Not Disclose	0

Education Level	A. 8 th grade and under	1
	B. 9 th Grade – 12 th Grade	70
	C. High School graduate or equivalent	22
	D. Post-Secondary Education	1
Other Demographics	A. Limited English Proficient	1
	B. Youth From Families Receiving Public Assistance	15
	C. Youth receiving SSI or SSDI	5
	D. Foster Youth	8
	E. High School Drop-Out	8
	F. Youth Offender	9
	G. Pregnant or Parenting Youth	1
	H. Basic Skills Deficient	36
	I. Homeless or Runaway Youth	3
	J. Not Employed at Program Enrollment	82
PROGRAM SERVICES, ACTIVITIES, AND OTHER RELATED ASSISTANCE		
A. Participated in Activities Related to Guidepost 1: School-Based Preparatory Experiences	62	
B. Participated in Activities Related to Guidepost 2: Career Preparation and Work-Based Learning Experiences	94	
C. Participated in Activities Related to Guidepost 3: Youth Development and Leadership	58	
D. Participated in Activities Related to Guidepost 4: Connecting Activities	60	
E. Participated in Activities Related to Guidepost 5: Family Involvement and Supports	45	
F. Participated in Integrated Resource Team (IRT)	21	
G. Co-Enrolled in WIOA Youth or Adult	31	
H. Co-Enrolled in MYP	46	
INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE (EXIT-BASED)		
A. Attained Work Readiness or Education Goals	15	

B. Received Academic Credit or Service Learning Credit	11
C. Remained in School or Dropout Returned to School	13
D. Obtained High School Diploma, GED, Certificate or Degree	14
E. Entered Post Secondary Education, Vocational/Occupational Skills Training, or Apprenticeship	8
F. Entered Military or Unsubsidized Employment	0
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	
A. Number of participants rating experience as "Excellent"	6
B. Number of participants rating experience as "Very Good"	3
C. Number of participants rating experience as "Average"	1
D. Number of participants rating experience as "Below Average"	0
E. Number of participants rating experience as "Poor"	0
F. Total Number of Surveys Completed	10



MWCA Promising Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

WDB Name/WDA WDB 6 – SW MN Private Industry Council, Inc.

Submitted by Eriann Faris – Youth Program Manager

**Attach a description (no more than two pages) describing the innovative practice.
Please address the following points:**

- Overview describing the innovative practice
- Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)
- Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)
- Identification of those involved, including collaborators
- Leveraging/alignment of outside resources
- Ideas for replication/lessons learned

Information can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to:

Anne Kilzer

MWCA

125 Charles Avenue

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

Fax: (651) 224-6540

E-mail: akilzer@mncounties.org

DUE DATE: FRIDAY JULY 28, 2017

Criteria for Selection of Outstanding Practices	Maximum Points
Overview describing the innovative best practice	20
Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)	20
Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)	20
Identification of those involved, including collaborators	15
Leveraging/alignment of outside resources	15
Ability for use or replication by others	10
TOTAL	100

Program/Initiative Title:

WDA Name:

Overview describing the innovative practice

Thirteen (13) students from the Minnesota Valley Area Learning Center had the opportunity to take a Welding Class at MN West Granite Falls during spring 2017 as part of their education training plan. The demographics of the students participating included: Hispanic/Latino - 6; American Indian - 1; and White - 6. Students earned 6 college credits and they gained the technical skills needed to obtain employment in the high-demand field of welding. The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, Adult Basic Education, MN West Community and Technical College and the MN Valley ALC. The students attended welding class two - three days a week and also continued their regular classes at the MN Valley ALC. Included as part of the class were visits to several local businesses, employability skills, instruction in technical reading and welding math and opportunities to explore other mechanical trades. The students also visited AGCO Headquarters in Jackson and the educational programs at MN West Jackson. Several of the graduating students will be continuing their education in welding or similar occupations at various post-secondary institutions including MN West, Ridgewater, and St. Cloud Tech. Others will be using their skills on the job or finishing high school at the ALC.

Jobseeker impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

During the 2016-17 school year the students had a variety of opportunities to explore and research possible careers. They visited colleges, and heard from speakers from both public and private post-secondary institutions. The students were also provided an opportunity to learn new job skills as well as improve upon their existing job skills. Students gained insight into various careers through tours of businesses and production facilities and by having the ability to listen to representatives from a variety of local employers. The field trips, speakers and career exploration activities provided students with information and motivation to pursue education and training past high school. Topics discussed by local employers included communication, interpersonal skills, proper attire, having a positive attitude, dependability, work place etiquette and necessary academic skills. One of the barriers to employment and enrollment in post-secondary are the various necessary assessments and proper identification. Many of the students were able to obtain the proper identification, register for college, and complete the appropriate assessments to secure employment and/or become enrolled in college. Some of the events were designed for a few interested students while other events included entire area learning centers. Students' specific interests were catered to while also introducing students to a wide variety of career options. The experiences helped solidify choices for older students while giving younger students the opportunity to explore career choices.

As the student's progress along their career path, PIC youth staff provide post-secondary information sessions, to help identify post-training career options for optimizing skill achievement and continued career advancement. Staff assist in navigating the postsecondary system and provide career counseling to enhance the participants' opportunity for successful transition into the post-secondary environment. Ongoing support is a vital component for participants. Many are entering the workforce for the first time, some have had unsuccessful attempts at jobs, others may be reaching beyond what they have ever considered possible for themselves before. As part of the regions outreach to schools initiative, the SW MN PIC youth team is available on an ongoing basis to provide a connection, encouragement, and/or to serve as a general resource about all things career-related.

Employer/Community impact (ie: benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)

Employers in the region are challenged to recruit and hire employees with the skills needed for even entry-level employment. Without much new growth (or projected future growth) in the labor force, retraining the current workforce, and providing training to those who aspire to enter the workforce,

becomes critical. In addition to the labor market data showing low unemployment rates and high job vacancy rates, partners continually hear from employers about difficulties in finding workers.

There is an expressed need throughout each industry for the increasing demand for skilled labor with the ability to advance along the employer or industry career pathway, resulting in rewarding and successful career opportunities.

These needs were confirmed with over 145 community stakeholders gathered at two regional planning events to identify and prioritize current workforce issues. Priorities identified by stakeholders included the need to: 1) *expand career exploration for students* and share LMI with parents and teachers; 2) *strengthen collaborations between businesses and high schools to increase work-based learning opportunities*; and 3) *address the unique needs of students of color that will lead to higher graduation rates and stronger employment outcomes*. These services have provided our workforce development area to address employment disparities of a significant and growing population of youth of color, the urgent and stifling shortage of skilled workers, and the overall needs of communities.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

The class was sponsored by SW MN Private Industry Council, Adult Basic Education, MN West Community and Technical College and the MN Valley Alternative Learning Center. Business engagement included tours at J&D Construction, Friendship Homes and Spec System. The employer panel consisted of Sara Meyer, HR Manager for J&D Construction and Jamie Winters, Quality Control Manager at Friendship Homes. At J&D Construction in Montevideo, the students had the opportunity to tour the office and welding shop and met with three welders, the HR manager and the owner to hear about welding careers and ask questions. At the Friendship Homes facility in Montevideo the students were able to see a home being built from beginning to end. Friendship Homes has a unique advantage compared to other companies because their home construction is done indoors under controlled temperatures. The students learned first-hand what it would be like to work as a welder for the company when they visited the welding shop and saw the various welds and materials used. At Spec Systems in Granite Falls the students were introduced to a variety of projects and inspected welding blueprints they would need to follow if employed there. An employer panel was held at the Montevideo Workforce Center. The students welding instructor Dennis from Minnesota West offered great insight for the students and asked specific questions of the employers. The students also found out about summer employment opportunities and full time job openings after they complete high school.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

The welding class provided to the MN Valley Alternative Learning Center student was a result of the local Youth/Adult Partnership. The project was possible due to funds leveraged and aligned through various funding sources administered by MN West, PIC Youth and Adult funds (Youth Competitive Funding, Youth Intervention Prevention, Minnesota Youth Program), MN West (TAACCCT AMP, and Customized Training Pilot Program MN West CTC), MN Valley ALC, and local employers.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

The partnerships will continue to be expanded upon as a result of the positive youth/adult Career Pathway partnership success. Other areas can easily replicate, by developing a strong partnership between the key stakeholders. Financial contributions, leveraging of funds and commitment and alignment from all partners is key to success.

INDEPENDENT

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Starting down the career path

Workshop focuses on workforce transition for youth with disabilities

LOCAL NEWS

SEP 14, 2017

DEB GAU

Staff Writer

dgau@marshallindependent.com

TWEET SHARE



Photo by Deb Gau Judy Moses, a speaker with the PACER Center, talked about career planning and resources with area young people and their families Wednesday night.

MARSHALL — Planning for a career and going out into the working world are important steps in life, Judy Moses said. But it's not always easy

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to figure them out, and for young people with disabilities, there can be extra factors to consider.

Moses and other presenters at a Wednesday night workshop hoped to help area residents answer some of those questions.

“Tonight, we’re going to be talking about career paths,” said Moses, a presenter with the PACER Center, a training and information center for families and youths with disabilities.

The workshop, held at the Marshall Area YMCA, talked about career planning options and resources for young people with disabilities. The event brought together speakers from the PACER Center, as well as the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council and the Minnesota Workforce Center.

The workshop was a new event for the Marshall area, said Leah Hastad, disability resource coordinator with the Private Industry Council. It was made possible with the help of a three-year Disability Employment Initiative grant, Hastad said.

“The purpose of the grant is to increase the number of people served” through youth career programs, she said.

Wednesday’s workshop brought together around 20 people, including educators, young people with disabilities, and members of their families.

Presenters at the workshop talked about some

of the resources available to help young people with disabilities plan careers and find jobs or training. Those resources include vocational rehabilitation counseling and other services.

“Vocational rehabilitation is a state-run program that helps people with disabilities figure out what they want to do for careers and jobs,” said Camille Raymond, a rehabilitation counselor with the Marshall office of the Minnesota Workforce Center. For high school students with disabilities, vocational rehabilitation counselors can help with planning for the transition into a job or career path.

Hastad said the Private Industry Council and the Minnesota WorkForce Center have resources that can help young people transitioning into the working world.

“We do offer several career pathway trainings,” Hastad said, including training for some in-demand job areas like health care, welding and woodworking. Other available resources included career counseling and exploration services, and paid work experience programs.

Of course, a lot of career planning work starts at home, Moses said. Families can help young people prepare for applying for jobs, interviewing and plan to manage disabilities. Families can also help build the support network that can help young people find a good job or career training.

When it comes to networking and job searches,

“Usually it’s the family or extended family first,” Moses said. “You start with (a young person’s) interests, and look at people who might have something similar.”

Career exploration for young people with disabilities can include things like neighborhood jobs, job shadowing or hands-on training, Moses said.

Having hands-on training or other work experience can be a big plus in career planning, Raymond said.

“It very much helps to have that work experience,” she said, because it helps young people figure out what their interests and strengths are.

For most of us, Moses said, our first job is not our last job. It’s important to remember that sometimes jobs don’t work out, and people’s interests and goals change over time. Those experiences can help shape a person’s career path.

COMMENTS

LOCAL NEWS



PACER partners with State of Minnesota on career pathways for transition-age youth

One of PACER's significant partnerships is with the State of Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). "Currently, we are partnering on a very exciting pilot project for at-risk youth with disabilities," said PACER transition specialist Deborah Leuchovius. "The Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) is focused on providing pathways to careers that build on the interests of individual youth and are needed by employers: job-driven training opportunities."

Leuchovius offered an example. "A young person might have a goal of becoming a registered nurse (RN), a career where there is a shortage of workers. With DEED education and training support, the person's career path could begin with a position as a home health aide, and eventually progress to the career goal of RN," said Leuchovius.

DEI focuses on three rural areas, and centers on youth who have been historically viewed as harder to employ, said Kay Tracy, Director of Youth Services at DEED. "We have a special focus on youth with disabilities from culturally



diverse communities, as well as youth who may be low income, homeless, involved with the juvenile justice system or teen parents."

Tracy said PACER's involvement is key to the project's success. "PACER is a national expert on the Guideposts for Success. PACER has helped us have high expectations for youth, as they transition from school to adulthood. PACER has helped us in viewing them as youth first, youth with disabilities second. PACER brings a youth-driven, person-centered focus that helps in individualizing planning with youth."

One of the reasons for the rural focus is the additional challenges workers in these areas face, Tracy said. "One of our areas covers 18 counties. It's not just transportation to a worksite, it's that there are fewer overall opportunities for private sector internships and apprenticeships."

Tracy hopes to eventually replicate parts of the program statewide. She views people with disabilities as a valuable resource with talents that are often overlooked. "We have a skill shortage in Minnesota," she said, "And we have talented individuals. We have to make sure we utilize that talent."

PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment is located at PACER.org/Transition. For more information about the DEI, go to mn.gov/deed/programs-services/office-youth-development/special/disability-employment-initiative.

A blue rectangular graphic with white and purple text. At the top, a white banner with a scalloped edge contains the text "RAISE A GLASS * A TOAST TO PACER" in a bold, sans-serif font, with "A FRIENDS OF PACER EVENT" in a smaller font below it. Below the banner, the words "happy hour event" are written in a large, purple, cursive font. Underneath that, "SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The date and time "THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 6 P.M." are centered in a white, sans-serif font. Below the date, another white banner with a scalloped edge contains the text "SURLY BREWING CO. * 520 MALCOLM AVE SE MPLS." in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the graphic, the text "BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW!" is written in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, the URL "PACER.ORG/RAISEAGLASS" is written in a white, sans-serif font. The entire graphic is set against a solid blue background.

Paris is on her way to the career of her dreams

It was just seven months ago that Paris Clifton walked into the Minnesota WorkForce Center in Marshall, Minn., referred by the special education department of her high school. Paris, who is diagnosed with an emotional/behavioral disorder, entered a program for young people with disabilities through Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, a WorkForce Development Area that trains workers to fill needed positions. PACER is a partner in this DEED program.

Paris told Leah Hastad, the Council's Disability Resource Coordinator, that her dream was to one day own a restaurant. Together, the two mapped out a plan that combined training, education, and practical experience. Hastad and her colleagues work with individuals, tailoring programs to fit their needs and skills.

Hastad said, "When I first met Paris, she had just graduated from high school." Hastad placed Paris in a job at a long-term care facility in the dietary department. "This provided her with work experience on a job site," Hastad said. The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council paid Paris' wages through their work experience program, and the employer mentored and coached Paris, who worked with the cook and took food orders from the residents.

The job was a success. After the trial period, Paris was hired by the facility — first part-time, then full-time. "She is even helping to train some of the new employees," Hastad said. "She has come out of her shell and really flourished. She's picked up extra shifts. Paris has her own apartment and although she is working full-time, she also has a second job at a convenience store.

"Paris' employer reports that she has grown in her



Paris Clifton

position, and that the residents and the staff are very glad to have her there," Hastad said.

Part of the work of the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council is building on career pathways. College is in Paris' future, Hastad said. "Paris wants to work on her basic skills to get into college. She will first work toward an associate degree online; if that goes well, Paris may be interested in transferring to the culinology program at Southwest State University," Hastad said. Culinology is a new discipline; it is a blend of the culinary arts and food science.

Though Paris' apartment has wi-fi, she doesn't have a laptop — something every college student needs. Hastad says that is something the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council can help with. Right now, Paris is so busy with work that finding time to complete her FAFSA (federal financial aid form) is a bit of a challenge. However, Hastad has no doubt it will happen. It's in Paris' plan.

PACSETER

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(Alternate format is available upon request.)

PACER Center enhances the quality of life and expands opportunities for children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities and their families so each person can reach his or her highest potential. PACER operates on the principles of parents helping parents, supporting families, promoting a safe environment for all children, and working in collaboration with others. PACER is also the National Bullying Prevention Center, offering innovative resources for students, parents, educators, and others.

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A free workshop for parents of youth with disabilities ages 16-24



What Families Need to Know about Youth Career Pathways and WorkForce Centers

**Wed., Sept. 13, 2017
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**

YMCA
Multi-purpose Room
200 S. A Street
Marshall, MN 56258

Pizza & pop
at 6:15 p.m.!

To register, contact:

PACER CENTER
952-838-9000 (Voice)
800-537-2237 (Toll free)

PACER.org/workshops

*If ASL is needed,
call 952-838-1338
with 48 hrs. notice*

See reverse side for more information...



Parents, find out about
new WorkForce Center
opportunities for
youth with disabilities
in your area!



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Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2017, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Learn about career planning options for in-school and out-of-school youth with disabilities and where you can find help launching your youth on their path to employment.

This workshop will highlight:

- What families can do to build employment skills at home
- How to begin a career path in high school
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services for youth with disabilities
- New MN WorkForce Center Career Pathway programs available to youth with disabilities age 16 to 24

A \$20 gift certificate will be provided to attendees who complete a confidential survey on their family member's employment support needs.

Co-sponsored by the Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council

Dear Families,

We would like to share an exciting new opportunity that may help your son or daughter be better prepared for a successful future. PACER is working with Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development on Partners for Youth, an initiative that is focused on increasing the number of youth with disabilities (ages 14 through 24) served through Minnesota's youth workforce system.

This new way of working together to launch youth with disabilities on a path to meaningful employment is currently available in three select regions of the state, including YOUR County. Youth with disabilities, ages 14 through 24, are eligible to receive Partners for Youth services, including youth who have spent time in foster care, become teen parents, dropped out of school, experienced homelessness, or have been involved with the juvenile justice system. We want to particularly encourage youth with disabilities who have dropped out of school or youth who have graduated but are not currently going to school or employed to take advantage of this opportunity.

Partners for Youth takes a new approach to helping youth with disabilities prepare for employment by offering access to a variety of resources that can launch youth on their career pathway by helping them to identify and achieve their employment goals. Depending on individual needs, services could include assessment, vocational rehabilitation, job training, education, help finding employment and benefits planning.

Your youth may have access to enhanced services to prepare them for a successful future. Please read the enclosed flyer for more detailed information about the available services. There is also a map of counties served by the project.

PACER believes Partners for Youth could be a wonderful resource for your youth's employment goals. We encourage you to learn more about this opportunity by contacting the Disability Resource Coordinator (listed below) who serves your county. You are receiving this letter because you are on PACER's mailing list. Rest assured that PACER does not share family names and addresses with any other agency.

Sincerely,

Deborah Leuchovius
PACER DEI Project Coordinator
952-838-9000/ dleuchovius@pacer.org

Tera Brooks, Disability Resource Coordinator
763-710-0999; tbrooks@cmjts.org
Serves Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, McLeod,
Meeker, Mille Lacs, Pine, Renville, Sherburne, and
Wright counties

Leah Hastad, Disability Resource Coordinator
507-706-0199; LHastad@swmnpic.org
Serves Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson,
Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles,
Pipestone, Redwood, Rock, Swift, and Yellow
Medicine counties

Nancy Stensgard, Disability Resource Coordinator
218-847-0716; NancyS@rmcep.com
Serves Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clay, Clearwater,
Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Hubbard, Lake of the
Woods, Mahnomen, Morrison, Otter Tail, Pope,
Stevens, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin
counties

Minnesota was one of several states selected by the U.S. Department of Labor to conduct a three-year Disability Employment Initiative project. Minnesota Partners for Youth is administered by the Minnesota Department of Economic Development. PACER is a major partner in this important initiative and is providing staff training and parent workshops around the state.