



New IWIB committee seeks to connect business with workforce resources

Raising awareness of available workforce services is key mission for Business Engagement Committee

Illinois companies, large and small, face many new and evolving challenges as they look to navigate the difficulties of doing business in 2020. However, one challenge that is not new is the need to seek, find, train and retain the most productive and dynamic workforce possible. While Workforce Inno-

vation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs are designed to assist job seekers obtain the skills necessary to access living wage career opportunities, they are also intended to provide companies with the resources they need to remain competitive in a global economy. WIOA is an employer-driven sys-

tem that supports economic growth and commercial expansion by providing private firms services such as work-based learning and other training assistance.

Through its ongoing strategic deliberations, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) – the business-led advisory board for

the WIOA system in Illinois – determined that employers should be made more aware of the services, programs and opportunities available to them through the WIOA partners' programs. The IWIB also concluded that employers should be

--see BEC, page 3

How a single mother of four became a phlebotomist in just 10 months

LaMyka McGuire dreams of becoming an ER nurse, and she is well on her way thanks to her experience with the Youth Career Pathways (YCP) program offered through Asian Human Services. Even more importantly, LaMyka now has the benefit of a financially stable career while she pursues her ultimate goal.

Her training as a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) and Phlebotomy Technician (PTC) have been a natural step to building on the credentials she has already achieved while supporting her family.

Her story exemplifies what's possible through a shared commitment between the workforce system and a driven and determined job seeker.

LaMyka declared at the start of the

program that she always finishes what she starts, despite the barriers she faced as a single mother of three who was pregnant with her fourth child. She made good on her promise by posting high test scores and nearly perfect attendance in her training program, even while giving birth a few months into her training. Amazingly, she was back in class with her work made up within the same week her fourth child was born.

Now, just six months later, she is certified and employed full time as a phlebotomist. LaMyka's success has been buoyed by support she received through the program. She was able to secure free childcare, get bus pass-

--see Phlebotomist, page 3



Tianna M. thrives in LWA2 Young Adult Program

Approach leverages her skills and interests in pursuing education, career goals

Tianna is a single mother who came unemployed to McHenry County Workforce for assistance. Tianna was working on getting her GED and job searching. She had some customer service experience with fast food and retail.

Her goal was to get into business management. An assessment of Tianna's skills and characteristics showed her to be personable, humorous and assertive. In spite of not having her GED she presented herself to be intelligent and full of potential.

In her past work experience Tianna had developed transferable skills for working in a business environment. The job search plan focused on a distal career goal of business management. Her academic goal was to complete her GED and then start Administrative Office management courses at the community College.

The proximal goal was to return to work with a position in an office environment.

Tianna was placed in a



Tianna hard at work for McHenry County.

WIOA work experience as an Administrative Assistant intern in the McHenry County Administration office to work on a tax rebate project.

She was given the re-

sponsibility of processing applications for county residents to receive property tax rebates which required multidimensional organization and analysis skills.

The complex project

was estimated to last three months. Because of her demonstrated interpersonal and communicative skills it was requested that she extend her internship to take on a customer service role in answering resident's questions regarding the rebates.

As the internship began to come to an end, a position in the office became available. As part of the internship, Tianna was required to complete an informational interview to meet the academic and occupational education component of the work experience.

Instead of completing one interview she took advantage of the opportunity to interview four employees in different positions within the office. She became more familiar with the duties of other staff and they got to know her better. She applied for the position and when all the interviews were completed she was offered the full time position of Administrative Specialist II with McHenry County Administration.

Finds place as welder in manufacturing sector

Erika Scott is a 23-year old single mother who grew up in the Austin area. Erika was referred to Business and Career Services, Inc. by her mother Lucy, who has been involved with other organizations like the Young Manufacturing Association and strongly supports involvement in the manufacturing industry. Erika had completed several internships while

in high school and started working shortly after graduating.

However, those jobs did not seem to be taking her anywhere and she felt as though there was no opportunity for advancement. After Erika had her son, her responsibilities increased as she had to provide for her baby and herself. This made her realize she not only

needed a job, but a career.

When Erika was referred to the MCIP program she immediately said, "I need to get a stable job, so I'm in."

We explained the different career pathways in manufacturing and the leadership development component, which makes this program unique. Even when several people tried to make her second guess pursuing

the Welding track, because it was "Dirty Work," Erika asked all the necessary questions and kept saying "Why not?"

Erika was facing many obstacles, which kept getting in the way to a successful job. She did not have reliable transportation, lacked stable childcare, had poor reading

■ **BEC:** *Industry-led, sector-based regionalism will be top priority*

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more involved in the development of industry-led partnerships designed to address the needs of companies within key sectors. IWIB's response was to establish a business-focused standing committee, known as the IWIB Business Engagement Committee (BEC). Through this committee, the board seeks to gather input from businesses around workforce skills and education priorities and focus workforce development efforts on their identified needs. Its mission will be to provide guidance and direction to help connect the dots between Illinois' important economic sectors and employers and the Illinois workforce development system.

The BEC is still in its formative stages, but will eventually include 15 to 20 members, with a majority of its membership coming from private-sector regional representatives drawn from Illinois' key industry sectors. IWIB has selected co-chairs for the committee, Tom Hacker and Tom Wendorf, both of whom are IWIB members. Mr. Hacker is President of C&L Supreme, a Des Plaines-based manufacturer of precision CNC machined components and assemblies. Mr. Wendorf is a retired business professional and is the Board Chair of Career Connect Metro

West, a Glen Ellyn-based training and social services provider.

In early discussions between the co-chairs and IWIB staff, three main priorities and several possible activities have been identified for the committee's consideration.

The first priority for the BEC will be to engage Illinois' employer community in the creation and direction of regional industry-led sector partnerships. These partnerships are designed to bring together companies, workforce development professionals, and other regional institutions and partners. They seek to coordinate investments, align workforce and education systems, and promote the growth of key industry sectors in planning regions across the state. Towards that end, the committee might look to identify target industries to focus on – based on existing industry analysis – and bring together small and large firms with the Illinois workforce development system to discuss what is needed to create new opportunities. Development and maintenance of a directory of existing talent pipeline management projects and other employer-driven sector strategies could be a mechanism to promote and assist employer-led workforce development projects to high-growth sectors in all regions in Illinois.

A second committee priority will be

to develop and improve communication mechanisms between employers and the workforce development system, in order to increase their awareness of the services that are designed to provide companies with the skilled workforce they require. Activities in support of this priority might include expanding private sector knowledge of the workforce and education systems, engaging enterprises to identify and communicate training and workforce needs, developing a common database of employer information and contacts from workforce development partners and the creation of policies to support engagement between the private sector and the workforce/economic development system.

A third committee priority will be to assist the IWIB and Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) with outreach and recruitment. Under this priority, the BEC may also seek to develop and expand consistent and timely communication mechanisms between LWIBs and the IWIB. This has started with issuance of the monthly IWIB Newsletter, which will be a vital mechanism to assist the IWIB, BEC and other standing committees to meet all their goals. Expect to hear more about the activities of this committee as it forms, convenes, and begins its important work.

■ **Phlebotomist:** *Credentials stack expands career options*

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es to commute to class, and use Asian Human Service's computer lab facilities to complete her coursework. She did so well that at the end of her CNA and Phlebotomy training requirements, LaMyka went back for another tier of credentials and passed the state exams for EKG to become a certified Patient Care Technician.

Once credentialed, LaMyka entered the final phase of the program: paid work experience with Community First Medical Center. Very quickly, multiple nursing managers requested

she be permanently placed on their respective teams, but she held out for a higher-paying position as a phlebotomist.

"Without a paid work experience, I never would have gotten in the lab as soon as I did," LaMyka reflects. "A lot of people have to do PCT [Patient Care Tech] for six months first."

LaMyka was able to leave behind the night shift she was pulling at a bank and step into her new career in healthcare. "I'm working towards my goals now rather than just a nine to five," she says. "I'm one step closer to being able to apply to nursing school."

EARN AND LEARN SUCCESS STORY

NAME

LaMyka McGuire

ORGANIZATION

Asian Human Services

PROGRAM TYPE

Youth Career Pathways

CAREER PATHWAY

Health Science

CREDENTIALS EARNED

Certified Nurse Aide

Phlebotomy Technician

EKG Technician

Patient Care Technician

■ **Welder:** *Work experience results in job offer, more training options*

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and math skills, and lives in a high poverty area with limited resources. She also lacked interviewing and work readiness skills which prevented her from going past the initial interview screening.

When Erika started boot camp, she was extremely shy and did not want to participate in group discussions or lead reading. As the days went by, she began to feel more comfortable and understood that everyone in the room had much in common, and it was ok to ask questions and make mistakes. After all, everyone in the boot camp is facing some type of barrier and one of the purposes is to polish and deliver interpersonal skills, which are essential in any workplace. During the 4 weeks, Erika went through the "A Game" curriculum, which promotes the importance of attendance, attitude, appearance, ambition, acceptance, appreciation and accountability. Erika was always encouraged to

ask questions during the employer "lunch and learn". We asked everybody to look at it as if they were interviewing the employers. Erika was able to manage her fear of public speaking and when she toured different local manufacturers, she always asked questions, which helped her stand out with the employers.

Towards the end of Boot Camp, Erika made her final decision about the career pathway she wanted to pursue, which was the Welding Track. Erika learned how to perform labor market re-

search during boot camp. With this, she not only identified the career path, but was able to choose a specific job she wanted to pursue in the next 5 years and the company where she wanted to work. Everyone was able to see Erika's ambition by the end of the boot camp; hence she was chosen to complete a paid work experience at the employer that she had picked.

Erika was placed at The Metraflex Company and was working 3 days a week while attending Welding Classes at Daley College.



The employer had great feedback during her evaluations and we even heard back from the company's president saying she was a "promising intern". Erika kept learning and improving during her internship, that by the end of it she was offered a full-time position. Erika then started an "On the Job" training program at Metraflex. She was also given time to complete the Welding Classes, as they have planned to give her the opportunity to weld in the near future.

Erika is now looking into additional training options to acquire specific Welding Certificates, which she can use at her current worksite.

EARN AND LEARN SUCCESS STORY

NAME

Erika Scott

ORGANIZATION

Business and Career Services, Inc.

PROGRAM TYPE

Apprenticeship Illinois

CAREER PATHWAY

Manufacturing

CREDENTIALS EARNED

Powered Industrial Lift Truck

IWIB summer meeting events will be staged electronically

As government and the workforce system continue to evolve to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, clarity is beginning to emerge as to how the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) will continue to conduct its necessary business.

There will be no physical meetings for the June 18 quarterly meetings of

IWIB, but members will still be engaged via webinar and conference calls for committee meetings as well as the general quarterly IWIB meeting. The membership retreat that typically takes place at the summer meeting has been canceled. Committee meetings will be organized and scheduled by the committee leadership, but are planned to take place the

afternoon of June 17, in order to gather and assess information for reporting out to the general IWIB membership on June 18, at an electronic "business only" meeting from 1 to 2 p.m.

IWIB committees, working groups, and leadership continue to percolate through electronic means in the midst of the pandemic, while maintaining open meetings and public

records compliance. In accommodation to the medium, planned meetings have been limited to an hour in length to sharpen and maintain the focus of participants.

Look on the next page for a tentative calendar of upcoming meetings and target dates.

It goes without saying that everything is subject to change.

For a complete listing, or to track changes, reference the [IWIB Calendar](#) on [Illinois workNet®](#).

IWIB ELECTRONIC SCHEDULE FOR MAY, JUNE

Here are some tentative meeting dates and deadlines for various IWIB activities through June. IWIB members are invited to attend any of the meetings, along with members of the general public. All telephonic or webinar meetings are subject to and will be compliant with Illinois Open Meetings Act requirements.

| Calendar | Activity /Group | Purpose |
|------------------------|---|---|
| April 18 – May 7, 2020 | IWIB Committees | Finalize Priorities |
| May 4, 2020 | IWIB Executive Committee | SP Modifications Update |
| May 15, 2020 | IWIB Leadership Meeting | SP DRAFT Priorities Discussion |
| May 18 – May 20, 2020 | IWIB Committees | Final Priorities Deliberations |
| May 20, 2020 | IWIB Committees Chairs | Submit Final Priorities to IWIB Staff |
| May 22, 2020 | IWIB Leadership Webinar | Committees Finalize Priorities for Approval |
| May 29, 2020 | IWIB Member Webinar | Presentation of SP Priorities |
| May 29, 2020 | Board Member Webinar | Meeting Tutorial |
| June 8, 2020 | IWIB Executive Committee | Request to Approve SP Modifications |
| June 10, 2020 | IWIB Meeting Prep | Materials Distributed |
| June 16, 2020 | IWIB Quarterly Meeting | Board Updates, Announcements |
| June 18, 2020 | IWIB Leadership Meeting | Routine Discussions |
| June 18, 2020 | IWIB Quarterly Meeting | IWIB Business Discussions |
| June 19 - 26, 2020 | Staff finalize 2020-2022 Strategic Plan Modifications | |
| June 27, 2020 | 2020-2022 Strategic Plan Modifications Distributed | |
| July 1, 2020 | 2020-2022 Strategic Plan Modifications Implementation | |

TAA program paves way for new career

In the fall of 2016 Marcheita Richard was working as a billing administrator for a major corporation. She had just been notified that, after 15 years of employment, she would be laid off from the job that had helped support her family for most of her teenage son's life. Her job search quickly revealed that her substantial experience alone would not be enough to replicate her wages at lay-off, or even come close.

She had been working on an Associate Degree since 2013 and really wanted to finish, but it hardly seemed like a step she could take while unemployed. Marcheita was notified that, because her former job was trade impacted, she might be eligible for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program.



She attended TAA Orientation and learned that the program could not only pay for training but also provide extended unemployment benefits (Trade Readjustment Allowance, TRA) and transportation support. Suddenly what had seemed nearly impossible looked not only feasible but inviting

as well.

Now seeing the possibilities, Marcheita set out to develop a plan. After substantial research, she proposed a plan that would result in her not only attaining her Associate Degree, but also a bachelor's degree. Her plan was approved, and she completed her Associate Degree in July 2017 and her Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration in August 2019.

The best news of all, though, was that she got a job earning more than she was earning at lay-off a month before completing her bachelor's degree. Because of the accomplishments Marcheita made through the TAA program, she moves toward a future with greater certainty with respect to both having a competitive edge in the job market and earning a livable wage.

EARN AND LEARN SUCCESS STORY

NAME

Marcheita Richard

ORGANIZATION

National Able - Pilsen

PROGRAM TYPE

Trade Adjustment Act

CAREER PATHWAY

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

CREDENTIALS EARNED

B.A. in Business Administration

IWIB member braids advertising expertise with personal experience in employing persons with autism

As this issue goes to publication, David Friedman is able to breathe a tentative sigh of relief. His business, AutonomyWorks Associates, like so many other businesses in the time of coronavirus, has been transitioning from a congregate workday at its facility in Downers Grove to a work-from-home platform. "Change can be hard for people with autism," said David, "and most of our employees had never worked from home before. While there have been a few bumps, I am incredibly proud of them all."

One of those employees is David's son Matt, 24, a student at College of DuPage and the reason David left behind a 25-year career in business to start AutonomyWorks. Matt has autism. "In many ways, Matt is a typical kid," says David. "He ran track and cross country in high school. He likes video games. Like a lot of people with autism, Matt is good at a lot of things, including numbers, details, and patterns. And like a lot of people with autism, some things are hard for him, including bilateral social interactions and executive functioning."

When students with disabilities turn 14 1/2 years of age, schools begin a

Why We IWIB.

In which members explain their reasons for serving workforce.

APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH



process called transition planning that involves the school, the student, and parents as they prepare for life beyond high school. "While Matt has a lot of talents," said David, "college probably wasn't going to be the best destination for him immediately after high school. His social and executive functioning skills weren't likely to be ready for that environment." David and his wife recognized Matt's talents and marketable skills and assumed he would be able to enter the workforce in some capacity.

"When we started looking, we were stunned," said David. "The unemployment rate of adults with autism approaches 80 percent, and many of those who are working are in low skills jobs



David Friedman

rather than in roles that take advantage of their unique abilities."

The scale of the crisis will expand tremendously in the future; over the next decade, 500,000 people with autism will enter the workforce.

With workforce options limited for his own son, David started AutonomyWorks in 2012 specifically to create jobs that leverage the skills and talents of people with autism.

AutonomyWorks outsources common processes and tasks from businesses of all sizes, taking on projects like testing web sites, processing orders and financial transactions, and managing data. For example, the firm tests several thousand automotive web sites and provides hundreds of marketing reports each month.

"In most cases, our clients see significant improvements in quality and productivity by partnering with AutonomyWorks," said David.

AutonomyWorks employs about 40 people, some 80 percent of whom have autism or similar abilities. Most of its Associates are hired in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services (DHS-DRS). After DRS identifies and refers candidates with the appropriate skills, AutonomyWorks assesses, hires, and trains candidates for roles with the company.

David and AutonomyWorks also take their advocacy role seriously in motivating and educating other organi-

Call For Content

We publish this newsletter to celebrate the accomplishments of the workforce system and its clients on both the employer and job-seeker sides, and also to share ideas and best practices for fully actualizing federal and state workforce resources to promote economic development and transition targeted populations into meaningful careers.

We welcome the input of those in the system. If we do not explicitly solicit your participation, that does not mean we don't value it. Ideas for future stories in the IWIB newsletter should be directed to Dr. Scott Shook at Illinois State University (sashook@ilstu.edu) or IWIB board member Mike Conley (mike@trentonsun.net).

It is our goal to highlight each local workforce area in Illinois and the unique regional approaches they take to workforce development, to shine a light on each business member of IWIB and contextualize their reasons for serving in this volunteer capacity, and to lift up the many inspiring stories from around the state of job seekers leveraging the workforce system and alkalyzing it with their own initiative, responsibility, and accountability to overcome barriers to career pathways.

■ IWIB Member: *Friedman joined IWIB in 2015*

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zations to employ those with disabilities. A couple of years ago, David was invited to testify before a Congressional committee on Small Business as part of a hearing titled, "Ready, Willing, and Able to Work: How Small Businesses Empower People with Developmental Disabilities."

Through his partnership with DRS, Dave was introduced to and joined the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) in 2015, to represent the business community general and people with disabilities in particular. He has participated on the Strategic Planning Committee and chaired the board's Technology Committee. He is currently a member of the board's Career Pathways for Targeted Populations (CPIP) committee. He recently accepted the appointment as the IWIB

representative on the Illinois State Rehabilitation Council, the group that advises the Department of Human Services secretary and head of DRS on issues affecting people with disabilities and provisions for rehabilitative services.

"The passion and energy of citizens and communities throughout the state have consistently impressed me during my time on the IWIB," said David. "When individuals, businesses, and institutions work together they can accomplish amazing things." Three of David's favorite workforce programs are the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center to train returning citizens for employment, the Walgreens collaboration with DRS to employ disabled populations in Mt. Vernon, and the Apprenticeship 2020 program in Chicago.

David is a Minnesota native who grew up in Maryland. He moved to Illinois to



Autonomy Works at work.

attend college and never left. He lives in Hinsdale. He and his wife have four children and a dog: Matt along with Stacey, a senior majoring in public policy at Washington, D.C.-based American University; Jenna, a sophomore at the University of Maryland-Baltimore, where she majors in Computer Science; and Helene, an 18-year old senior at Hinsdale Central High School who plans to

attend Brandeis University outside Boston this fall; and Xena, a part beagle and part terrier ("We think she's 7," says David).

Prior to launching AutonomyWorks, David worked in digital marketing, headed a global digital advertising agency, and ran marketing for Sears Holdings, in addition to about ten years in management consulting.



The AutonomyWorks team prior to COVID-19 Social Distancing requirements.