

THE WIOA CURRENT

≡ A NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF IOWA WORKFORCE PARTNERS ≡

February 2020

Association of Iowa Workforce Partners Announcements

PATHWAYS PERSONAL SUCCESS

A WIOA Conference

REGISTER NOW FOR THE AIWP 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE!

March 26th-27th, 2020

Stoney Creek Hotel & Conference Center
5291 Stoney Creek Ct.
Johnston, IA 50131

Join AIWP for a fun, relaxing conference featuring Keynote Speaker Patty Hendrickson, Relaxation Expert Beth Freschi, and complimentary massages by Serenity Massage!

REGISTER NOW!

Resources Worthy of Your Attention

- **Employer applications officially open for the Future Ready Iowa Youth Internship Grant.** Iowa Workforce Development is urging employers, nonprofits, and educational institutions to apply for the Future Ready Iowa Summer Youth Internship program. The goal of the program is to take students ages 14-24 from lower-income communities and put them in internships primarily in high demand fields, such as construction, advanced manufacturing, and I.T. The application process is open now until March 11th.
- **Work requirement bill for Iowans on Medicaid and food stamps resurfaces in the Iowa Senate.** Reigniting efforts from last legislative session, Iowa Senate Republicans are advancing a bill that would require work requirements for Medicaid and Food Stamp beneficiaries. Under the bill, to qualify for Medicaid, able-bodied recipients would have to work, volunteer or participate in a work program for an average of at least 20 hours per week, or participate and comply with the requirements of a workfare program.

Case Studies in Collaboration

"Mark Buschkamp, executive director for the Iowa Falls Area Development Corporation, said one of his biggest priorities is helping area businesses expand their bottom line. In many cases, that means finding quality workers. In recent months, Buschkamp and Hardin County Economic Development Director Angela De La Riva have been visiting with city councils in Hardin County, promoting a program called Home Base Iowa."

Home Base Iowa connects veterans and their families with education and employment opportunities to ease their transition to civilian life. Many communities, including Hardin County are facing low unemployment rates, leading them to explore alternative options for local companies to hire qualified workers.

"They know how to show up for work, are generally organized and punctual. They may not have exact skills you need, but many of the soft skills are there," Buschkamp said.

"Veterans can fill in the gaps in our workforce that businesses need."

[Check out more about Hardin County and Home Base Iowa in this article by the Times Citizen.](#)

WIOA Success Stories: Impacting Iowan's Everyday Lives

My name is Amy Brown, I grew up in south eastern Iowa. I really don't remember to much of my childhood so I will skip ahead to my teenage years.

At an early age I realized my life was much different from the other kids I went to school with. Both my parents were addicts, and I would soon become one at the age of 12. In 2005, at the age of the 12 is when I first tried drugs. It was also the day I finally understood the world around me. At this point in my life I had already endured so much trauma, using drugs was normal to me.

Skipping a head, a couple years I would soon move out of my childhood home and never return. I had no place to go, so that is when I knew I had to support myself. Thinking back, I should have been getting my drivers permit but instead I was being court ordered into my first treatment program because of an overdose. After leaving treatment I got into some legal trouble which lead to my probation officer signing a paper that would allow me to drop out of school at the age of 15. So not only did I not have any education past 8th grade, I was deeper in my addiction more now than ever.

At that same time, I got into a relationship that would forever change my life. I was so used to being physically and mentally abused it came as no surprise when it started happening in my relationship.

For the next 8 years, I would continue to stay in this unhealthy drug saturated relationship. During those 8 years, I did what I had to do and the only thing I knew how to do so I could survive. However, it came with a price.

From the age of 18-23 I spent more time sitting in jail, prison and treatment centers then I did being free and out on the streets. Living in a structured environment incarcerated seemed to be the path I was going to live for the rest of my life. It wasn't until my last overdose in September 2017, that I would begin fighting for myself. I didn't have a plan, but I knew something had to change.

I was released from prison April 29th, 2018. After doing a little under a year. I moved to Des Moines to a halfway house and started working 60 hours a week at a local pizza chain. However, within a couple weeks I would soon be introduced to a program offered through **Children & Families of Iowa** called **Connect 2 Careers**. A program I'd like to say saved me in more ways than I could ever imagine.

During my journey with Connect 2 Careers, I completed the 2-week training program at Connect 2 Careers and started a paid work experience referred to as a WEP with Raygun at the end of the training.

During the time I spent in my WEP, I had no idea that my Career Planner at Connect 2 Careers and my supervisor at Raygun were talking weekly about my work ethic and dedication I was showing every day and how it would forever change my life. At the end of the work experience, I did not know but I would be offered an opportunity that I had no idea I would ever be offered.

I was challenged with many different tasks and the hardest one being to complete my hi-set, or high school education.

On top of getting to work with the staff at Connect 2 Careers, the same staff who helped build me up when I was at my lowest, but I was also allowed the opportunity to train to become a Certified Peer Support Recovery Specialist, to complete my Administrative Clerical Certificate Program through DMACC and then eventually become the Connect 2 Careers Administrative Assistant, which is my current full time job today.

When the Program Director at Connect 2 Careers offered me a position working with Connect 2 Careers, there were not enough words to express my sense of worth at that moment. I was finally able to take control of my life in a healthy way and show the world who I truly was.

When I first started into my work experience, I knew at some point it would come to an end, so I wanted to take in everything I could to represent who my inner person was and to showcase all of my real abilities with the hopes that the people overseeing me would see my abilities and know I was going to be great.

I wish I could begin to explain the way I felt, the love I was immersed with and the confidence that all of the Connect 2 Careers staff and leadership showed me during my time working to where I am now, but I can't.

The staff and the Program Director were always there when I needed them, were always fighting and advocating with and for me and always reassured me that I was amazing and could accomplish anything I ever set out to do. I had never in my life felt proud and at that moment I felt it, which changed me for the better.

These are the reasons that I will keep working with the same type of people who are experiencing the same types of barriers and struggles that I did and be able to let them know and believe that know there is hope and there are people offering programs that can change your life and make you feel like you are able to accomplish all life throws at you. The day I walked into Connect 2 Careers I had 19 known barriers and as of today I only have 5 but they are completely manageable. All the skills I have learn also opened other opportunities which have led me into my 2nd job as a full-time direct care staff with Dorothy's House, a program that works with victims of human trafficking.

I also just started my 2nd semester of college at DMACC and look forward to becoming a social worker one day. My hope is to one day be the face that drives and facilitates change in people's lives who are struggling and needing reassurance and confidence. Helping to support individuals who do not believe there is anyone or anything that would give them the perception within themselves that they are worth fighting for and do deserve a better life.

Programs that can help people move through change like Connect 2 Careers is just that, life changing, and I am forever grateful

Thank you to Jodi Spargur-Tate and Cheryl Johnson of Children & Families of Iowa Des Moines for sharing this month's success story!

Do you want to feature a success story of your own in The WIOA Current?



Ten Facts about Women in the Workforce

- 1) Women's labor force participation has stagnated and reversed since 2000.
- 2) The gap between wages of men and women has fallen over the past several decades, but a significant gender wage gap remains.
- 3) Almost 60% of women would earn more if they were paid the same as men with equivalent levels of education and work hours.
- 4) Disability and widowhood are major drivers of economic insecurity among older women.
- 5) A 10% expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit could benefit working mothers and families by lifting more than 600,000 people out of poverty.
- 6) Many women face a tax penalty when they get married, which reduces their labor force participation.
- 7) Women are more likely than men to stop working to care for elderly or sick family members.
- 8) The United States is the only industrialized country without a national paid leave policy for mothers.
- 9) The cost of childcare makes employment unrealistic for many working mothers of young children.
- 10) Post-secondary degrees lead to better labor outcomes, but many student mothers face significant barriers.

To learn more about the experiences of women in the workplace, [check out this article by The Brookings Institute!](#)

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