

Annual Report

July 1, 2021—June 30, 2022



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Prepared by the Business Liaison & Marketing Committee of NCI Works!
Funds were provided under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA)

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Greetings!

As always, the staff of the one-stop system continue to strive to provide the highest quality services to all of our customers, youth, adult, dislocated workers, businesses and the general public. While many staff returned to the office after a year of CoVid imposed work from home scenarios, most offices continued with by appointment only/limited staff options so as to continue to provide a high level of services to all customers while maintaining safeguards against CoVid 19 exposure. We applaud all partner staff for the ongoing commitment to the residents and businesses of our workforce area and recognize the vital role they play in preparing the workforce and helping businesses find trained employees.

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Linda S. Burt

Cary Robbins



Grand Toward The Future

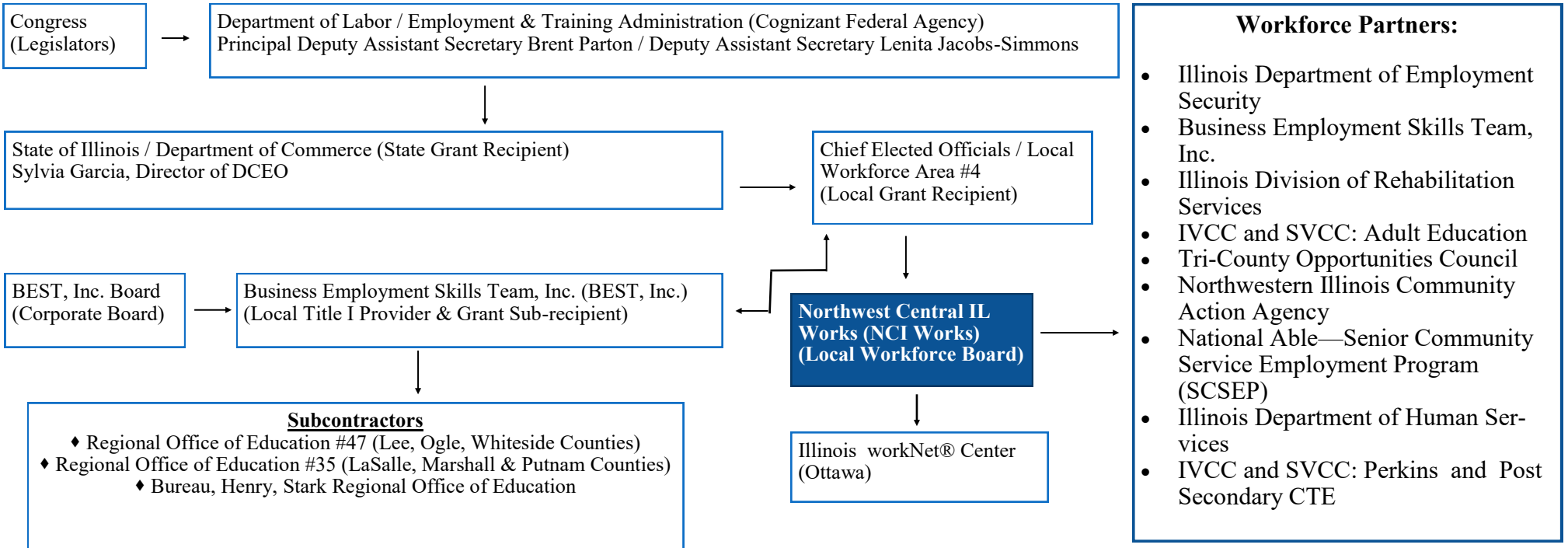
NORTHWEST CENTRAL ILLINOIS **WORKS**



NCI Works One-Stop Center
1550 First Ave
Ottawa, IL 61350

www.nciworksamericanjobcenter.com

815-640-9407, TTY 800-526-0844 Monday-Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm
Closed State Holidays



Year in Review

Adult Education

To inquire about Adult Education Services log on to the following websites or call the contact listed below.

Illinois Valley Community College:

<https://www.ivcc.edu/adulted.aspx?id=2884>

Or Call 815-224-0358.

Sauk Valley Community College:

<https://www.svcc.edu/community/adult-education>

Or Call 815-835-6310

Highland Community College:

<https://highland.edu/adult-education>

Or Call 815-599-3460

Highland Community College

FY 22 Statistics

Adult Education served the following:

July 2021 to September 2021	3
October 2021 to December 2021	2
January 2022 to March 2022	7
April 2022 to June 2022	6

Illinois Valley Community College

FY 22 Statistics

Illinois Valley Community College FY 22 Adult Education Statistics:

The Adult Education department created an approved Bridge to Careers program in fall to encompass all careers and allow Integrated Career and Academic Preparation Students (ICAPS) students to transition into various career tracks for stackable credentials. As a result, the career opportunities were endless, and students were not limited in their ability to transition.

The IVCC Adult Education Department enrollment numbers for FY22:

Total students served - 263

Breakdown:

ABE-HSE students - 148 ESL students- 115

Bridge to Careers Completers – 8

ICAPS completers- 7

CNA	3
Phlebotomy	2
Welding	2

Sauk Valley Community College

FY 22 Statistics

Program participation:

Adult Basic Education (ABE grade levels 4.0 – 8.9)	49
Adult Secondary Education (ASE grade levels 9.0 -12.9+)	71
ESL – All levels	43
Total students (Unduplicated)	163

The Adult Education program at Sauk Valley Community College provided in-person instruction for the program year as well as virtual instruction for both GED and ESL students. At the end of the year, we served 163 students.

Some highlights from the past year include:

24 students complete their high school equivalency certificates (GED graduates)

1 student enrolled in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) ICAPS Program

The ICAPS program consists of dual enrollment in Adult Education and the CNA certificate program at SVCC. The successful completion of the ICAPS program results in the completion of the high school equivalency (GED), a college credential and/or college credits, as well as the CNA certification.

1 student completed the Health Careers Bridge Course

The Health Careers Bridge Course introduces students to the various careers and training opportunities in healthcare. By the end of the 8-week course, students will determine the health career they wish to enter. Students also develop study strategies, math skills, science knowledge as it relates to health careers, communication skills, and time management skills for college and career success.

5 students completed the College and Careers Success Course

The College and Careers Success Course provides students with the opportunity to explore their college and career options. Students will also work to improve their reading, writing, vocabulary, technology, and math skills needed for future college classes and for employment. By the end of the 10-week course, students select their college program of study and enroll in Sauk Valley Community College for the next semester.

Additional Partner Reports: July 2021—June 2022

Program	July – Sept. Cumulative	October – Dec. Cumulative	January – March Cumulative	April – June Cumulative
Title III Wagner-Pyser				
Ottawa	2,508	4,242	8,604	16,064
Sterling	118	174	237	463
Title IV – Vo- cational Reha- bilitation				
La Salle	Not Available	262	297	Not Available
Sterling	Not Available	Not Available	153	Not Available
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families				
DHS/TANF LaSalle County Office	515	1032	1926	2442
DHS/TANF Bureau County Office	130	274	431	593
DHS/TANF Ogle County Office	186	359	548	753
DHS/TANF Whiteside Coun- ty Office	437	854	1219	1586



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Apprenticeship Navigator Grant: BEST, Inc.

We have meet with a total of 179 individuals/companies either one on one or through our group events. In our original apprenticeship grant proposal we anticipating developing 5 new programs and expanding 3. As of June 30th we realized the expansion of 1 program and 4 new programs. Our 5th new one is finalizing their standards with US DOL but would not be signed by the end of the grant period. The grant period ended June 30, 2022.

Our plan is to continue to promote apprenticeships and are currently working with Martin Engineering to establish some new programs for them through an online provider Tooling U and RCBI Institute. Martin continues to assess where additional apprenticeship programs will fit within their organizations. The efforts with Putnam County High School, which would like to establish a number of Youth Registered Apprenticeship opportunities for their juniors and seniors, will begin with the school surveying the students on their areas of interest and the Illinois Valley Chamber reaching out to area businesses on their interest in signing on as participating employers. BEST will continue to be available to provide technical assistance and linkage to US DOL.

While we had hoped that Label Mills would actually sign their standard before the end of the grant period, we are happy to report that the training outline has been finalized with Highland Community College and the company has tweaked their OJT portion with DOL assistance. We counted this as a success since the bulk of the work had taken place within the grant period. The only thing left as of June 30th was DOL review and approval/signature.

During our most recent regional business services team meeting we announced the end of the grant period. However, with no other workforce area having any-one on staff with experience with apprenticeships, We offered to lend them any assistance they might need with a company interested in developing or expanding their interest in apprenticeship. Staff have managed to establish and maintain a very strong working relationship with Dr. Nakeya Womack, our current DOL Office of Apprenticeship representative, so offering to be that liaison for areas 3 and 13 (region 5 and 6 respectively) seemed to be a natural extension of the efforts we established during the grant period.

BEST, Inc. – Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth
Program Year 2021 (July 1, 2021—June 30, 2022)

Incumbent Worker Training

For Program Year 2021 a total of 141 employees were trained through the Incumbent Worker Training program. Total expenditures and obligations for the year ending June 30, 2022 were \$143,682.12.

Rapid Response

PY21 saw no new Rapid Response events in LWIA4.

Education Outreach Program – Lee Ogle Whiteside Regional Office of Education #47

Lee Ogle Whiteside Regional Office of Education Provides youth with academic instruction toward completion of high school equivalency, career information, job search assistance, supportive service and training for in-demand occupations Services are provided to youth ages 17-24 who have dropped from school and live in Lee, Ogle, and Whiteside Counties. The program served 111 youth this year. Site locations include Sterling, Oregon and SVCC.

Step Ahead – Henry Bureau Regional Office of Education

Henry Bureau Regional Office of Education Provides youth with academic instruction toward the attainment of a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate and also provides work-based learning opportunities. Instruction is provided, usually one-on-one, at the local library in each youth's community. Youth are 17-24 years old, have dropped from school and live in Bureau County. Program served 21 youth this year

Regional Work Study – Regional Office of Education #35

Regional Office of Education #35 Provides youth from Putnam and LaSalle counties with academic instruction toward the attainment of a high school diploma and also provides employment opportunities. Instruction is provided at IVCC and at the library in Mendota. Youth are 16-21 years old and have dropped from school. Program served 76 youth this year.

Opioid Grant

Final report of the Opioid Dislocated Workers Grant, there were a total of 29 participants since starting in November 2019. All of these participants have been exited from the Grant with 10 placed into employment and 2 are still being provided additional services through WIOA – BEST Office in Whiteside County.

2 OJT's were completed with Perfectly Flawed which helped to support their placement of a Program Manager and Peer Coordinator into Full-Time employment on December 1st and July 1st.

3 participants that were working in a paid Work Experience at Lutheran Social Services in Sterling are now Full-Time employed with benefits as of July 1st as Peer Support Specialists.

BEST staff are still in constant contact with Perfectly Flawed and Arukah Institute of Healing where they are providing referrals for our services. These Organizations cover LaSalle, Bureau, and Putnam Counties. If referrals are eligible for BEST Program, then the information is given to the appropriate Career Advisor for their County.

The Opioid Dislocated Workers Grant was able to support the evidence that there needed to be more training available to our Participants in Counseling for SUD (Substance Use Disorder) and OUD (Opioid Use Disorder). These services had not been part of our Training Provider List previously. Now, with these occupations currently added, Staff are working with a Client to further her Education in CADC (counselor of alcohol and drug counseling).

The Grant had provided some amazing opportunities to many that had been impacted by the Opioid Crisis whether themselves or by family member or friend. These relationships with these clients was an awesome experience and though there were many hiccups, staff are pleased by how many lives they were able to assist, to plant the seed and help break their generational cycles.

Adult Redeploy Workshops

BEST partners with LaSalle County Probation to provide Job Search workshops for job-ready clients referred by the department. In program year 2021 BEST held workshops for 4 Adult Redeploy clients.

The workshops cover job search basics, resume writing, and interviewing. Special emphasis is placed on helping clients learn ways to present themselves positively to employers, and to overcome any objections/biases that employers may have toward someone who has a criminal background. Each client receives a professionally prepared resume at the conclusion of the 3 required workshops.

Tri-County Opportunities Council

Established in 1965 by a group of concerned citizens in the counties of Lee, Ogle and Whiteside, Tri-County has grown to serve a total of nine counties- Bureau, Carroll, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Ogle, Putnam, Stark and Whiteside. Our mission is to investigate the impact of poverty throughout our nine county service area and to work, in partnership with individuals, families and communities to provide opportunities that supports movement towards stability and self-sufficiency. Our organization does this through a variety of programs. All programs are income based and require an application.

The following services are available to low income households:

Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG)

Provides comprehensive needs assessment, information and referrals and numerous case management programs to eligible customers to obtain self-sufficiency for employment, youth, education, housing, medical and emergency needs.

Offers various housing programs to those facing homelessness or on the verge of becoming homeless.

Annually awards education scholarships to income eligible service area residents attending an Illinois institution of higher learning.

Bureau County Food Pantry- Provides food to meet meals gaps to families residing in Bureau County.

COVID 19 programs are available in the areas of housing, health, food assistance and transportation needs for those who have been laid off, had a reduction of work hours or have been quarantined due to Covid 19.

Low Income Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)

Makes a one- time payment to the utility company.

Repair or replace furnaces to homeowners who are current on their mortgage and taxes.

Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) is designed to help clients' pay their own bill with a manageable budget bill.

Illinois Home Weatherization Program

Make homes more energy efficient, provide safe heating equipment, if needed, replace furnace and provide clients with safety equipment.

Ameri Corp Seniors Program

Provides meaningful volunteer opportunities for those in the lower income range who are 55 years old and older. This program offers supportive person-to-person services to at risk children in reading, math, spelling, are and other constructive projects.

Head Start/Early-Head Start Program

These programs are federal programs that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent engagement services to children from birth to 5 years of age, expectant mothers, and their families.

Tri-County Opportunities Council has offices in nine counties and information regarding our sites can be found on our website at www.tcochelps.org or by calling our main office at: 800-323-5434 or 815-625-7830

The following chart represents the number of students receiving financial support from NCI Works for Program Year 2021.

BLACK HAWK COLLEGE	2	\$ 1,792.00
CASTOR HEALTH INSTITUTE	32	\$ 28,409.92
CHICAGO PROFESSIONAL CENTER,	1	\$ 7,000.00
CLINTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE	1	\$ 2,900.00
CODING TEMPLE	2	\$ 28,580.00
DENTAL ASSISTING TECHNOLOGIES	1	\$ 4,000.00
HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE	9	\$ 31,299.10
ILLINOIS VALLEY COMM. COLLEGE	67	\$ 175,659.42
JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE	1	\$ 1,033.00
KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE	9	\$ 36,734.35
MANAGEMENT & INFORMATION TECH SOLUTIONS, INC	1	\$ 6,250.00
METHODIST COLLEGE OF NURSING	3	\$ 14,037.20
MICROTRAIN	3	\$ 8,140.00
MIDWEST SAFE DRIVER	1	\$ 4,920.00
MIDWEST TECH INSTITUTE	10	\$ 20,254.40
RASMUSSEN COLLEGE	7	\$ 32,167.00
SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE	79	\$ 277,400.78
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY	1	\$ 2,383.10
ST FRANCIS MEDICAL CENTER	1	\$ 15,770.25
TRINITY COLLEGE OF NURSING & NURSING SCIENCES	1	\$ 29,083.81
WEST CHICAGO PROFESSIONAL CENTER, INC	2	\$ 9,950.00
COMPUTER TRAINING SOURCE, INC	1	0
160 DRIVING ACADEMY	4	0
ILLINOIS WELDING SCHOOL	1	0
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY	1	0
Transaction Total	234	\$ 737,764.33

Chief Elected Officials for WIA #4

Represented by:

Marshann Entwhistle, Chairman
Bureau County Board

Kevin Reibel, Chairman
Carroll County Board

Don Hill, Chairman
Jo Daviess County Board

Don Jensen, Chairman
LaSalle County Board

Bob Olsen, Chairman
Lee County Board

John Finfrock, Chairman
Ogle County Board

Charles Lenkaitis, Chairman
Putnam County Board

James Duffy, Chairman
Whiteside County Board

Robert Albrecht, Member
Bureau County Board

Randy Freeman, Member
LaSalle County Board

Marilyn Shippert, Member
Lee County Board

Wayne Reising, Member
Ogle County Board

Steven Malavolti, Member
Putnam County Board

The following list represents local businesses that utilized services offered from NCI Works!

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 160 Driving Academy | CTE |
| 5 Star Plumbing | Davis Complete |
| AC McCartney | DC Computer |
| Acstec | DeSoto House |
| Allied Locke | DHS |
| Bad Axx Social Media | Dixon Chamber |
| Best Solutions Trucking | Dixon Community Food Pantry |
| Blackhawk Hills | Dixon Now |
| Blount | Dovin Machine |
| Bridges Senior Center | Elaky |
| Byron Chamber | Etyhre |
| CarParts.Com | Flex-0-Glass |
| Carroll Industrial Molds | FN Smith |
| Castor Home Nursing | Focus House |
| CGH | Freedom House |
| Chakra Crystals | Galena Area Chamber |
| Citizens Bank | Genesis 3 |
| City of Peru | Giese Roofing Company |
| City of Rochelle | Glad Rags Boutique |
| City of Rock Falls | Goodwill |
| City of Sterling | Great Sterling |
| City of Sterling Manager | Habitat ReStore |
| Clifton Larson | Hartland Control |
| Clinton Econ Dev | HB Wilkinson TITLE co |
| Coloma Township | Help at Home |
| Coloma Township Park District | Highland Community College |
| Computer Spa | Hobby Lobby |
| Cotton Expressions | Home of Hope |
| County of Lee | Homebuilders Institute |

For information regarding the Northwest Central IL Works (NCI Works) or any of their initiatives and/or projects, contact:

Carrie Folken, Executive Director

Business Employment Skills Team, Inc. • 815 N Orlando Smith Ave, Room C-328

Oglesby, IL 61348

815-224-0375

carrie_folken@best-inc.org



Hy-Vee	Morrison Community Hospital
Il Dept of Corrections	Morrison Schools
Illinois Cement	Motel 8
Illinois Valley Chamber of Commerce	National Bus Trader
Illinois Valley Community College	NCAT
IMEC	NCICG
Impact Printing	NWED
Kishwaukee Community College	Oregon Chamber
Kitchen Table	Oregon High School
Krieder Services	Oregon SuperValu
Kroger	Ottawa Goodwill
Lanark Chamber	Ottawa YMCA
Landmark Realty of Illinois LLC	PC Foods
Larlin Home Care	Perfectly Flawed
LaSalle County Probation	Peru Public Library
Lee Co	Peru Waltham Mutual Insurance
Lee County Lots	Pinnacle place
LKCS	PJSTAR
LP Area Career Center	Premier Staff
Majeski Motor	Princeton Police Department
Manpower	Princeton Area Chamber
Meat Master	Princeton Park District
Mendota Chamber of Commerce	Princeton Police Department
Metal Spinner	Putnam County High School
Micron Power	Ray O Vac
Midas	Regional Media
Midas	Rehab Services
Miller Excavating	RF Chamber
Mills Label	RF Library
MIT	RF Township

Riverview Center	Sodexo
Rochelle Chamber	Spectrum Preferred Meats
Rochelle Econ Development	St. Margaret's of Peru
Ruehl & Ruehl Realty	Sterling Controls
Safe School	Sterling Library
Sauk Valley Bank	Sterling Police Department
Sauk Valley Community College	Sterling Schools Foundation
Sauk Valley Food Bank	Sterling Township
Sauk Valley Media	Stockton Chamber
Savanna Chamber	Streator Chamber of Commerce
Savanna City Building	Subway Franchise
Sensient	Target
Sewer Equipment	Timken Drives
Sisson Lawn Care	Trinity College of Nursing
Snyder Drugs	True Smiles

Wahl Clipper
Walmart
Walmart DC
Wal-Mart DC
White Pines Lodge
Wurster Sales
XPO Logistics

The Partners of NCI Works provide a variety of services, free of charge, to area business from recruiting assistance to incumbent worker training. The partners of NCI Works are here to assist you with you workforce needs.

For information on NCI Works Employer Services contact Dianna Schuler at 815-640-

Number of individuals enrolled in services in Program Year 2021

	Enrolled	Exited
Youth	217	110
Adults	86	43
Dislocated Workers	187	63
Universal Services offered to the general public		1243

Economic Impact on the Communities from BEST exits for Program Year 2021

Adults	97 individuals
Total Annual Wages Earned	\$4,118,085.80
Average Annual Wage	\$42,454.50
Dislocated Workers	52 individuals
Total Annual Wages Earned	\$2,071,306.96
Average Annual Wage	\$39,882.83

Northwest Central Illinois Works Membership

Dave Argubright

*Business Agent, Carpenters Local #174
Illinois Valley Building Trades*

Ed Bochniak

*Executive Director
Carroll County Housing Authority*

Mary Boogemans

*Manager
UNFI*

Linda Burt

*Vice President of Quality & Community
Services
St. Margaret's Health*

Lyndsay Bliss

*Vice-President of Human Resources
Carus*

Danelle Burrs

*Bureau Manager
Lee County Farm Bureau*

Dr. Jerry Corcoran

*President
Illinois Valley Community College*

Marcia Derrer

*Executive Director
Northwestern Illinois Community Action
Agency*

Sara Escatel

*Adult Education Director
Illinois Valley Community College*

Abby Farrell

*General Manager
Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center*

Dan Fitzgerald

*Director of Programs and Services
Horizon House of Illinois Valley, Inc.*

Randy Freeman

LaSalle County Board

Janet Graham

*Local Office Administrator
IL Dept. of Human Services*

Patricia Head

*Controller
F. N. Smith Corporation*

Linda K. Hessenberger

*Assistant Vice-President/Real Estate Loans
Central Bank*

Vanessa Hoffeditz

*Community Services Coordinator
Tri-County Opportunities Council*

Deana Jones

*Staffing and Training Coordinator
Wahl Clipper Corporation*

William Keene

*Attorney
Keene Law Offices*

Rhonda Krueger

*IDES Office Manager
IL Department of Employment Security*

Robert Lentz

*HR Manager
Walmart DC*

Kevin Lindeman

*Executive Director
North Central Illinois Council of Govern-
ments*

Dwayne Mentgen

*Director
L/P Area Career Center, and
Starved Rock Area Vocational and Tech-
nical Educations (SRAVTE)*

Terry McGuire

*Senior Vice President
Halo*

Marcie Mulholland

*Manager of Billing
Rescar, Inc.*

Kris Noble

*Executive Director
Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce*

Daniel Payette

*Executive Director
Blackhawk Hills Regional Council*

Thomas Pigati

*Owner
Pigati Builders, Inc.*

Kevin Reibel

Carroll County Board Chair

Cary Robbins

*Manager of Human Resources
Sterling Steel Company, LLC*

Len Saunders

*Business Representative/Organizer
Carpenters Union Local #790*

John Spencer

*President/General Manager
Starved Rock Media*

Amy Strawn

*Human Resource Manager
Ace Hardware*

Teresa Strum

*Center Director
Area Health Education Center (AHEC)*

Joel Torbeck

*Program Manager
Business Employment Skills Team, Inc.*

Gerald Waszkowiak

*Director
American Nickeloid*

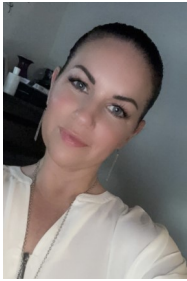
DeAnne White

*VP/Chief Operations Officer
Sinnissippi Centers*

Justin Wiggins

*Owner
WCT-Midwest*

PY 21 Local Award Recipients: Individual Achievement



Ashleigh Chapman:

In May of 2020, Ashleigh contacted the BEST, Inc. office in Sterling to inquire about getting assistance with the cost of the nursing program at Highland Community College. She was a single mother and under-employed in the health care field. Her goal was to pursue a nursing license in order to have a more fulfilling job and a much higher income. Ashleigh was determined eligible for WIOA services as a low-income adult and was able to get help from BEST, Inc. with tuition assistance and mileage reimbursement. She drove back and forth to Freeport and/or Rockford three days a week for 2 years, which would not have been possible for her to afford without the travel reimbursement that BEST, Inc. provided. Ashleigh excelled in her classes and graduated in May of 2022. She will be taking the state boards soon in order to become a registered nurse.



Cheyenne Cantu:

Cheyenne began the BEST, Inc. Program in March of 2021. She was placed in a Work Experience (W/E) at the Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce in Rock Falls, Illinois. During her Work Experience, she was a student at Sterling High School, completed and was certified as a CNA, and successfully graduated from Sterling High School. She achieved all this while navigating a learning disability that, at times, made her work harder to meet her goals. Her goal is to work in the medical field as a Radiological and Ultrasound Technician. During her time at the Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce she was an integral part of their small staff. She learned numerous skills that will help her in her future career. She learned: the importance of prioritizing her workload, customer service, assisting and calming difficult customers, organization, work-life balance, organizing community events, assisting and supervising volunteers, stress reduction, planning and preparation. She has an outgoing and enthusiastic attitude that was contagious to staff and volunteers. She did such a good job that when her W/E was done she was hired by the chamber for temporary work with their Summer Splash Event. Her supervisors have said that Cheyenne is always willing to do hard work which can be rare in today's workplace. She will work outside in hot and/or cold weather and does not complain. She has the rare quality of always looking for more work and not complaining about hard work.



Hannah Kaltenbrun:

Hannah Kaltenbrun was referred to BEST Inc. by her STEP counselor, Toby Luxton, for assistance with employment. Hannah was going to graduate high school soon and was unsure of her next steps. Toby felt she would be a wonderful candidate for the paid work experience program because it would help her ease into permanent employment. Hannah was especially interested in working with young children but did not have experience and it was difficult to find a worksite in her small community due to COVID restrictions. She was eventually referred by BEST Inc. to a local restaurant to assist with back of the house duties such as dishwashing, cleaning, stocking and other duties as assigned. She was hired through the BEST Inc. work experience program and learned many skills at the restaurant. She learned how to manage a work schedule that changed each week, she performed tasks she had never done before and she learned how workers in a restaurant have to work together. Hannah was learning many skills but she didn't like the job. She stuck with it to build a work history and when her training hours ended, she was eager to seek other opportunities.

Hannah said she was still interested in working with young children. The BEST Inc. Youth Job Developer, Diamond Merboth, knocked on doors until she found a business that was interested in meeting Hannah. The meeting went well and a new work experience for Hannah was developed with Best Beginnings in Oregon, IL. Due to Hannah's prior work experience, we were very aware of Hannah's strengths and challenges and were able to work with the supervisor, Tiffany, at Best Beginnings to customize a learning experience that would allow Hannah's strengths to shine and provide opportunities for her to learn new skills. It was a great partnership. Hannah did indeed shine with all the supports in place. Upon completion of her training hours, Hannah was permanently hired. When asked what she loves most about her job, she said she love working with the kids and working with her coworkers. She plans to stay at Best Beginnings for a very, very long time.

Program Year 2021 State Award Winners

Each year the Illinois Workforce Partnership recognized outstanding achievements made by both a member of the business community and a workforce system customer. Below are the local area 4 state level winners with a brief summary of each winner (State Award Winners also receive local award recognition). We extend our congratulations to both our award winners.

Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce Rock Falls, IL

BEST, Inc. has worked with the Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce since 2018. They have demonstrated outstanding leadership in workforce development and made significant contributions to our area workforce.

They have mentored three of our Work Experience clients at their office. They provided these client's an opportunity to learn applicable real-world skills within the confines of a nurturing learning environment. After our first Work Experience client completed her time there, Bethany Bland, their Executive Director, worked with our BRR, to help find an opportunity in the client's field of study and expertise with a chamber member business. This resulted in an OJT for that client and she is now permanently employed by that business. We have had two other Work Experience Client's at the Rock Falls Chamber. One client did such a good job that she was offered temporary employment at the chamber after completing her W/E.

The Rock Falls Chamber is a champion of BEST and WIOA by always sharing their experiences with the business community and recommending for others in the business community to use our services. The Rock Falls Chamber has sponsored numerous opportunities for our staff to get the word out about workforce services. This has been achieved through the use of their extensive social media outreach and sponsoring classes featuring BEST, Inc staff presentations to the business community. They have been a champion of our services and helping to grow the workforce for their chamber community and throughout their region. *(Pictured from Left to Right are: Sam Smith, Program Coordinator and Bethany Bland, President and CEO of Rock Falls Chamber of Commerce)*



Congratulations

**Customer Achievement Award Winner Shayna Miranda
Princeton, IL**

Shayna resides in Bureau County and had been working as a Certified Nursing Assistant in the local Nursing homes and our Hospitals. Shayna's Mother and Sister are both in the Nursing Field, so it was only natural that Shayna would follow in their footsteps though she really wanted to pursue Cosmetology. Her love of wanting to help others and making an impact in a Patient's life is what kept the passion strong in her Nursing path. Shayna then came to the Business Employment Skills Team in July 2019 ready to further her Education and work towards obtaining her Nursing degree. Since she was working on this goal all on her own, she needed some assistance from BEST with Tuition and Transportation. Shayna initially thought that she would have to obtain a student loan as she fell "between the cracks" with other financial assistance options. Shayna had been determined Basic Skills Deficient during intake process but with much determination and hard work, she was accepted into the Nursing Program at Illinois Valley Community College. Shayna then started her Training assisted by BEST, Inc. in August 2019.

Shayna was not able to pass her first Semester of Nursing, this did not deter her from continuing on though. Shayna registered for Spring Semester and kept moving forward. BEST was able to then assist Shayna once again with Tuition and Transportation for the remaining 2 Semesters. Shayna passed each of those Semesters without a problem. She graduated on May 14, 2022 and received her Associated in Applied Science – Nursing degree. On June 23, 2022 she passed her NCLEX and will be starting her Full-Time RN (medical/surgical) position at St. Margaret Hospital in Peru on July 12, 2022. She is now looking forward to beginning her new career which would not have been possible without the help of this Program.



Congratulations