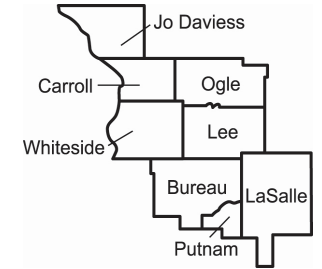




*Geared Toward The Future*

NORTHWEST CENTRAL ILLINOIS **WORKS**



# Annual Report

July 1, 2023—June 30, 2024



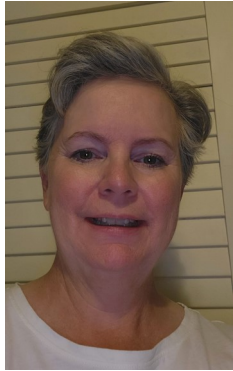
A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter® network

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

*Visit us at [www.nciworks.org](http://www.nciworks.org)*

**Join us for our new podcasts at: <http://www.nciworks.org/publications-news/podcasts/>**

# Greetings from the Chair of NCI Works!

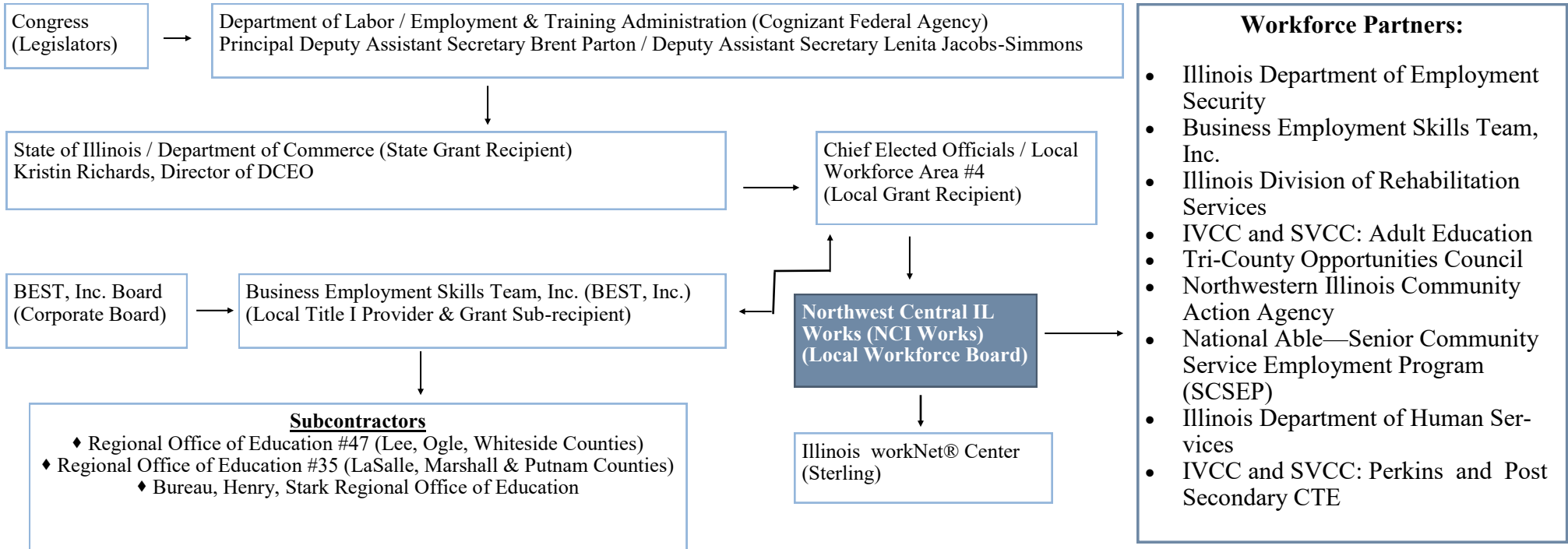


Program Year 2023 continued the theme of change for NCI Works and its partner agencies. Janet Graham with the Department of Human Services retired at the end of June and we wish her all the best. Speaking of retirements, long time board member and co-chair for the board Cary Robins also retired at the end of 2023. We wish him all the best as well. You will also notice that there is a new Comprehensive One-Stop. This is probably our most significant change. Program Year 2023 began the exhaustive task of moving the “Comprehensive” designation from Ottawa to Sterling. We are grateful for all the partner staff that worked on this endeavor and invite everyone to visit the center in Sterling at 406 Avenue C. As we look forward to Program Year 2024 I am sure there will be many additional changes to embrace.

*Patricia M. Head*



NCI Works One-Stop Center  
 406 Avenue C  
 Sterling, IL 61081  
[www.nciworksamericanjobcenter.com](http://www.nciworksamericanjobcenter.com)  
 815-245-3916 • TTY 800-526-0844  
 Monday-Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm  
 Closed State Holidays



**Year in Review  
Adult Education  
FY 23 Statistics**



<https://www.ivcc.edu/adult>  
Or Call 815-224-0358

The Adult Education department created an approved Bridge to Careers pro-gram 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 FY24:

Total students served - 314

Breakdown:

ABE-High School Diploma students – 139 and ESL students- 175  
Bridge to Careers Completers – 14  
ICAPS completers- 11  
CNA -8  
Phlebotomy-1  
Welding- 2  
Citizenship- 4



**SAUK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
ADULT EDUCATION  
PROGRAM**

<https://www.svcc.edu/community/adult-education>  
Or Call 815-835-6310

Program Enrollment

The Adult Education program at Sauk Valley Community College provided in-person instruction for the program year as well as virtual instruction for a small number of ESL students.

Adult Basic Education (ABE grade levels 4.0 – 8.9)	
Adult Secondary Education (ASE grade levels 9.0 -12.9+)	118
ESL – All levels	91
<b>Total students (Unduplicated)</b>	<b>209</b>

Program Highlights

22 students complete their Illinois High School Diploma (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 enrolled in the Manufacturing Bridge Course  
The Manufacturing Bridge Course introduces students to the various careers and training opportunities in manufacturing. By the end of the 8-week course, students will determine the manufacturing career they wish to enter. Students also develop study strategies, math skills, science knowledge as it relates to manufacturing, communication skills, and time management skills for college and career success.

5 students enrolled in 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.

A new online ESL class began in spring 2024. 8 ESL students were served in this distance learning class.

## **BEST, Inc. Receives State Supplemental Grant**

Business Employment Skills Team, Inc. (BEST, Inc.) was awarded \$452,153.39 in a State Supplemental Grant for workforce needs. A program proposal was submitted to Department of Commerce and the following projects were completed:

Computers were purchased and delivered to Sterling, Peru and Ottawa Shelters along with Perfectly Flawed Foundation and Safe Journeys. Job search handouts were created and were given to them to review with interested candidates as well as resume paper and envelopes. All organizations were very thankful for the supplies as many individuals would benefit from this opportunity.

A Professional Development conference was held on Rural Mental Health. 125 providers, employers, educators and interested individuals attended this all day conference. From the evaluations and feedback, it was a huge success.

A Work Based Learning component in this grant gave 67 participants an opportunity to explore career options or try-out employment. Out of the 67 participants 20 were hired into unsubsidized work from their worksite. The goal of the Work Based Learning experience was to gain work skills and the entered employment was a bonus. BEST, Inc. is grateful for the businesses who stepped up and helped with this initiative.

And finally, this grant allowed for transportation to and from multiple career exploration events held by Sauk Valley Community College CTE programs as well as SRAVTE/Area Career Center in LaSalle-Peru. These events were tailored to high school age individuals who expressed an interest for career exploration. VR goggles as well as career exploration experiences were also purchased to be used at career fairs and special events throughout our 8 county area. Youth will also benefit from the Job Readiness program that was purchased to be completed before and during a work based learning experience.

The ability to have these addition funds to benefit the residence in our 8 county area is a privilege and one that we hope to continue to apply for.

## **BEST, Inc. PY23 Apprenticeship Grant**

### **Summary of Grant Activities**

BEST worked with Jo Carroll Energy to stand up a set of standards for their Broadband Technician positions. Tools and equipment a broadband apprenticeship for Jo Carroll Energy were purchased and delivered to MIT who will be the training provider in the fall of 2024. Total cost to the grant for this purchase was \$34,968.74. In addition, MIT instructors received Train the Trainer training at a cost of \$600 for 3 instructors. In addition, a set of Broadband Technician standards were also put into place for Wolf Line Construction.

BEST worked with Sterling Schools who have signed onto an apprenticeship program recently certified by DOL with BloomBoard, Inc. as the sponsor. Sterling Schools is one of a handful of schools taking advantage of a para-professional to teacher initiative through apprenticeship training.

At the end of the program year (June 30, 2024) 3 DOL Registered Apprenticeship Program were certified, 4 new apprentices began training as Broadband Technicians, and 130 businesses had been engaged. We continue to discuss apprenticeships one on one with companies as well as holding informational events.

### **Strategic Partnerships Activities**

The apprenticeship program development with Jo Carroll Energy and Wolf Line Construction was directly in response to the lack of fully trained technicians in our most northern portion of our workforce area. In addition, we assisted Whiteside Area Career Center (WACC) and the CTE Academy in Hanover with career exploration materials (virtual reality goggles for WACC and career exploration virtual experience for both CTEs as a means to bring much needed career and training information to the emerging workforce. The partnership with the 2 companies and the CTEs was an effort to keep emerging talent local and to make them aware of the skills needed for the higher paying opportunities available in broadband infrastructure instillation.

**The total of the PY23 Apprenticeship Expansion Grant was \$109,836.17.**

**Partner Report  
PY 23 Report  
July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024**

<b>Title I – Adult/Dislocated Workers/Youth</b>	
Business Employment Skills Team, Inc.	438
<b>Trade Adjustment Assistance</b>	
Business Employment Skills Team, Inc.	0
<b>Title II – Adult Education</b>	
IL Valley Community College (IVCC)	313
Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC)	209
Highland Community College (HCC)	16
Kishwaukee College	483
<b>Title III – Wagner-Peyser</b>	
Ottawa	3141
Sterling	13,065
<b>Unemployment Insurance</b>	
Ottawa	4,141
Sterling	768
<b>Veterans Services</b>	
Ottawa	168
Sterling	2,221
<b>Trade Adjustment Allowances (TRA)</b>	
Ottawa	0
Sterling	0
<b>Migrant &amp; Seasonal Farm Workers</b>	
Ottawa	0
Sterling	0
<b>Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation</b>	
LaSalle	229
Sterling	108

**Partner Report  
PY 23 Report  
July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024**

<b>Community Services Block Grant</b>	
Tri Counties Opportunities Council	994
Northwestern IL Community Action Agency	0
<b>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families</b>	
Department of Human Services/ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (DHS/TANF) (LaSalle County Office)	2,777
Department of Human Services/ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (DHS/TANF) (Bureau County Office)	576
Department of Human Services/ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (DHS/TANF) (Ogle County Office)	1,135
Department of Human Services/ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (DHS/TANF) (Whiteside County Office)	994
<b>Senior Community Services Employment Program</b>	
NAPCA/National Able	8
<b>Career and Technical Education</b>	
IL Valley Community College (IVCC)	5,088
Sauk Valley Community College (SVCC)	1,387
Highland Community College (HCC)	183
Kishwaukee College	1,572

**BEST, Inc. – Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth and Business Services**  
 Program Year 2022 (July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023)

**Business Services**

Staff engaged with 1,441 area business resulting in 1 On-the-Job trainings and 18 Incumbent Worker Training projects that served 287 employees with a cost per employee of \$538.79. Other services provided included Labor Market Information, subsidized work experience, and apprenticeship development guidance with connection to the Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship.

**Rapid Response**

PY 23 saw 1 Rapid Response Event: Monterey Mushroom in Princeton. BEST, Inc., IDES, DCEO Office of Employment and Training, and IVCC were on hand to give impacted employees information on services.

**Education Outreach Program – Regional Office of Education #47**

The Education Outreach Program provides services to WIOA-eligible out of school youth between the ages of 17-24 who reside in Lee, Ogle or Whiteside County. Youth are provided or linked with academic instruction that results in an Illinois High School Diploma as well as career readiness skills to help them secure and maintain employment. Program served 113 youth this year.

**Step Ahead – Regional Office of Education #28**

The Step Ahead program provides academic instruction to WIOA eligible youth from Bureau County who have dropped from school and wish to earn an Illinois High School Diploma. Due to the rural nature of the county, instruction is provided, usually one-on-one, at the local library in each youth’s community. Program served 28 youth this year.

**Regional Work Study – Regional Office of Education #35**

The Regional Work Study program provides academic instruction and employment support to WIOA eligible youth who have dropped from school and want to earn a high school diploma from their district high school. The program serves youth from LaSalle and Putnam counties. Instruction is provided at the Ottawa IVCC Center and Mendota Library. Program served 85 youth this year.

**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 2023 BEST held workshops for 1 Adult Redeploy client.

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

**BEST, Inc. – Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth and Business Services**  
 Program Year 2022 (July 1, 2022—June 30, 2023)

someone who has a criminal background. Each client receives a professionally prepared resume at the conclusion of the 3 required workshops.

**Getting To Work: A Podcast of NCI Works**  
[www.nciworks.org](http://www.nciworks.org)  
 Getting to Work Can also be Found at:  
Podcasts – NCI Works

Over 25,000 downloads!  
**For more information on this initiative**  
 please contact  
**Dianna Schuler at**  
**dianna\_schuler@best-inc.org or**  
**call at 815-224-0375**

**Number of individuals enrolled in services in Program Year 2023**

	Enrolled	Exited
Youth	198	69
Adults	192	103
Dislocated Workers	52	34
Universal Services to the General Public		1,331

**Economic Impact on the Communities from BEST exits for Program Year 2022**

Adults: 103 Individuals	Total Annual Wages Earned: \$4,395,545.64	Average Annual Wage: \$ 42,675.20
Dislocated Workers: 34 Individuals	Total Annual Wages Earned: \$1,659,122.20	Average Annual Wage: \$48,797.71

**Tri-County Opportunities Council**

**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 be-coming 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.

**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 tax-es. 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**

Providing 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 provide 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](http://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 2023**

Castor Health Institute	18	\$26,769.91
Eastern Iowa Community College	2	\$10,963.00
Highland Community College	14	\$75,798.54
Illinois Central College	2	\$7,740.50
Illinois Valley Community College	60	\$196,761.49
Kiswaukee College	2	\$8,595.63
Medcerts	1	\$4,000.00
Methodist College of Nursing	1	\$3,280.90
Microtrain	1	\$13,500.00
Rock Valley Community College	1	\$4,920.00
Sauk Valley Community College	81	\$337,552.95
Scott Community College	1	\$2,150.00
Waubensee Community College	1	\$5,117.57
<b>Total Transactions</b>		<b>\$697,150.49</b>

## State and Local Outstanding Achievement Award Winners!



Erika Fleck came to BEST in December of 2019. She was interested in the Certified Medical Assistant Program. Erika had worked for a non-profit previously that helped individuals who were diagnosed with Epilepsy. Erika, having Epilepsy herself, was looking for a way to stay in the medical realm because her true passion was working with these individuals. One of our first conversations was how she really wanted to be able to start her own Non-Profit Organization in LaSalle County to continue offering assistance to those diagnosed with Epilepsy. Erika completed the Certified Medical Assistant course at IVCC and received her Certificate in December of 2020. She officially passed the exam in March of 2021. On January 30th 2024, the Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce held a Ribbon Cutting for the Epilepsy Advocacy Network to which Erika is one of the Founding Directors. Her current title is Founding Director of Epilepsy Services. Erika has been a peer facilitator for support groups for ten years, a role she started in as a volunteer. Erika plays an integral role of connecting with doctors and specialty services in the communities that Epilepsy Advocacy Network serves. Erika is a certified cognitive coach for HOB-SCOTCH. She is also trained in PACES and UPLIFT which are specialty programs for people with epilepsy that are part of the Managing Epilepsy Well network. Erika is a Registered Medical Assistant and has certification in non-profit leadership. Erika is the spokesperson for Loyola University following her brain surgery to control her seizures from epilepsy. Erika has been seizure free for ten years and continues to be an advocate for her clients through her real-life experience. I have no doubt that with Erika's expertise and training that the Epilepsy Advocacy Network will be successful in LaSalle County.



## **Illinois Department of Employment Security**

The Illinois Department of Employment Security will encourage economic growth and stability in Illinois by providing vital employment services to Illinois residents and employers, analyzing and disseminating actionable labor market information, and administering unemployment insurance programs.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security focuses on assisting those unemployed at no fault of their own with access to unemployment compensation and employment services, connecting with employers seeking to expand their workforce, and sharing data with policymakers looking to make informed, fact-based decisions that impact Illinois' economy. You can visit the Department's website at [www.ides.illinois.gov](http://www.ides.illinois.gov)

- IDES administers the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund, collecting roughly \$2 billion in employer taxes and disbursing roughly \$2 billion to unemployed claimants each year.
  - IDES provides employment services to employers and job seekers throughout Illinois.
- IDES provides employment and wage data for research and the development of sound public workforce policy.

### **Ottawa One-Stop Center Program Year Highlights – July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024**

During the program year, Ottawa One Stop Job Seekers sought and received services for the following:

163 individuals attended in-person job seeker workshops, 12 attended hiring fairs, 9 attended Onsite Recruitment Events, 459 attended Re-Employment Service Workshops, 182 attended Rapid Response Workshops, 456 attended Re-Entry Summits held at the Dept. of Corrections.

10,611 individuals received staff assisted services during their Illinoisjoblink.com registration and resume completion.

1,594 Veterans received staff assisted services during their Illinoisjoblink.com registration and resume completion.



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

## **Chief Elected Officials for WIA #4**

*Represented by:*

Marshann Entwhistle, Chair  
Bureau County Board

Kerwin Paris, Member  
Bureau County Board

Joseph Payette, Chairman  
Carroll County Board

Chris Flikkema, Member  
Carroll County Board

LaDon Trost, Chairman  
Jo Daviess County Board

Don Jensen, Chairman  
LaSalle County Board

Michael McEmery, Member  
LaSalle County Board

Bob Olson, Chairman  
Lee County Board

Keane Hudson, Member  
Lee County Board

John Finfrook, Chairman  
Ogle County Board

Wayne Reising, Member  
Ogle County Board

Charles Lenkaitis, Chairman  
Putnam County Board

Steven Malavolti, Member  
Putnam County Board

Martin Koster, Chairman  
Whiteside County Board

James Duffy, Member  
Whiteside County Board

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.  
4110 Progress Blvd.  
Peru, IL 61354  
815-780-0871  
[carrie\\_folken@best-inc.org](mailto:carrie_folken@best-inc.org)

## Northwest Central Illinois Works Membership

**Dave Argubright**

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

**Ed Bochniak**

*Executive Director  
Carroll County Housing Authority*

**Lyndsay Bliss**

*Vice-President of Human Resources  
Carus*

**Danelle Burrs**

*Training and Development Specialist  
Illinois Farm Bureau*

**Dr. Tracy Morris**

*President  
Illinois Valley Community College*

**MaryAnn Rice**

*Temporary Public Service Administrator  
IL Dept. of Human Services*

**Sara Escatel**

*Adult Education Director  
Illinois Valley Community College*

**Janet Graham**

*Local Office Administrator  
IL Dept. of Human Services*

**Patricia Head**

*Accounting Associate  
Lifescape Community Services*

**Linda K. Hessenberger**

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

**Vanessa Hoffeditz**

*Community Services Coordinator  
Tri-County Opportunities Council*

**Deana Jones**

*Sr Human Resources Generalist  
Donaldson Company, Inc.*

**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*

**Terry McGuire**

*Senior Vice President  
Halo*

**Dwayne Mentgen**

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

**Terry McGuire**

*Senior Vice President  
Halo*

**Jesse Nauman**

*Human Resource Manager  
L. W. Schneider*

**Kris Noble**

*Executive Director  
Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce*

**Daniel Payette**

*Executive Director  
Blackhawk Hills Regional Council*

**Thomas Pigati**

*Owner  
Pigati Builders, Inc.*

**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*

**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 Administrative Officer  
Sinnissippi Centers*