



# IMPACT AWARDS

April 17, 2024



Celebrating



Michigan



Talent

*Celebrating those who are strengthening Michigan's economy  
by actively creating jobs and developing fresh talent.*

# EVENT AGENDA

## 11:00 AM OPENING REMARKS

Ryan Hundt  
CEO, Michigan Works!  
Association

Chris Holman - Emcee  
Founder and CEO, Michigan  
Business Network

U.S. Senator Debbie  
Stabenow (video)

U.S. Senator Gary Peters  
(video)

Stephanie Beckhorn  
Deputy Director,  
Employment and Training,  
LEO

Susan Corbin  
Director, LEO

## 11:30 AM AWARD CEREMONY

## 12:45 PM CLOSING REMARKS

John Kaczynski,  
Board Chair, Michigan  
Works! Association

Chris Holman

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and inspiring actions that  
keep Michigan working!



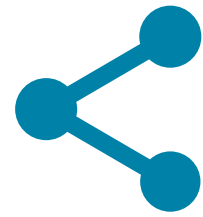
## VOICE

Advancing the interest of  
the Michigan Works!  
network through advocacy  
and participation in the  
legislative process.



## KNOWLEDGE

Sharing research-based  
best practices,  
information, and practical  
details about the Michigan  
Works! network.

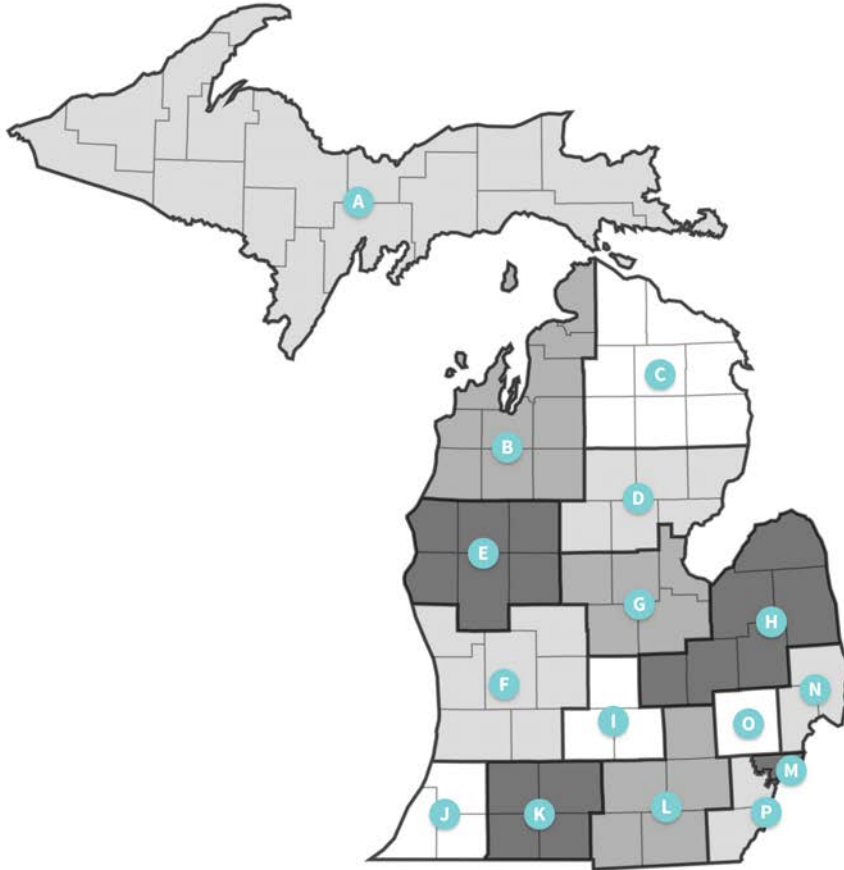


## CONNECTION

Providing training and  
networking opportunities  
for leaders and members.



# THE MICHIGAN WORKS! NETWORK



The 16 **multi-faceted and diverse Michigan Works! organizations** cover the state with efficient, effective tools capable of **building jobs, leveraging careers and developing core talent**. Michigan Works! is building and leading strong networks that boost community, economic and talent development.

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# | LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Welcome to the 2024 Impact Awards!

Each year, the Michigan Works! network makes it possible for job seekers and businesses to succeed with support and resources that are unmatched. In 2023, our agencies helped 675,000 job seekers and 32,000 businesses. But it's the success of the hardworking people and companies that's truly remarkable and needs to be celebrated.

The true impact of this work is felt across the state where companies like C5 Electric in Paw Paw utilize apprenticeships to help Brian Dudasko find his path to becoming an Electrical Journeyman. It's also on display in West Michigan where Michigan Works! West Central helped Brandon Nowak obtain his commercial driver's license and become a full-time over-the-road driver. These stories of continued success show just how transformative the work of this network truly is.

The Impact Awards are when we come together annually to honor the individuals, businesses, stakeholders and frontline Michigan Works! staff who make the success of this network possible. All of these honorees are working together to transform the lives of Michiganders and help our economy grow and thrive in a way that helps everyone succeed. We also want to thank our lawmakers and community partners across all sectors for making the achievements showcased today possible.

Congratulations to all the 2024 Impact Award winners. I have no doubt that your achievements are just the beginning of your future successes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ryan Hundt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ryan Hundt  
CEO

Michigan Works! Association

# LETTER FROM LEO DIRECTOR



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
LANSING

SUSAN CORBIN  
DIRECTOR

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity extends a heartfelt congratulations to Michigan Works! and the well-deserving honorees on the outstanding efforts showcased at this year's annual Impact Awards ceremony. This event serves as a testament to the remarkable achievements of the local Michigan Works! agencies, employers, workers and community partners who continuously prioritize and uplift Michigan's workforce.

Our department's partnership with Michigan Works! has been instrumental in our collective success in advancing economic opportunity and prosperity for all. Your unwavering dedication to providing Michiganders and businesses with the resources they need to succeed is truly admirable, and we appreciate all that you do to propel our state and communities forward.

Congratulations once again to each honoree and to the Michigan Works! network on all your hard work. We are immensely grateful for the invaluable contributions you have made to the growth and prosperity of our state, and we are honored to stand alongside you in this important work. Together we will make Michigan the best state to live, work and raise a family for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan".

Susan Corbin  
Director  
Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity



# CAPITAL AREA MICHIGAN WORKS!

## AWARD WINNER:

Jessica Graff

Employee at the Woodbridge Group

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In business since 1948, the Woodbridge Group has been a supplier to the General Motors Lansing Grand River plant for 21 years, delivering enterprise solutions that support complex, integrated systems. Through various technologies, Woodbridge supports the requirements of numerous automotive and non-automotive programs, providing complete systems, modules, components, parts and materials. Woodbridge has partnered with Capital Area Michigan Works! to support these operations by enhancing talent attraction, retention and development. Woodbridge has engaged with the Business Services Team for recruitment services and the Business Resource Network (BRN) to implement strategies for increasing employee retention.

Jessica Graff was hired into Woodbridge as a laborer, and as a new hire, she struggled with past-due rent. She reached out to the BRN after receiving an eviction notice that put her at risk of losing her home. Jessica worked with a Business Resource Coach to find mental health support, improve her budgeting and financial literacy skills, and receive services that paid her past-due rent balance. Jessica is still employed at Woodbridge and has been promoted to Team Lead, a role that allows her to showcase her skills in decision-making, communication and leadership.

"For almost five years, the BRN has helped us through the ups and downs of GM strikes, COVID and part shortages. When recruiting new teammates became the most difficult part of HR in the area, BRN became our savior in retaining teammates," said Matt Womack, Human Resources Manager. "They have not only helped our teammates through everyday struggles but played a key part in helping many teammates land back on their feet following extended shutdowns that are out of their control. We greatly appreciate everything that the BRN has done for our team and look forward to their continued support."

Jessica is a single mother who enjoys spending time with her son. She enjoys electronics and is currently focused on her career and discovering opportunities to best support her son. The coaches within the BRN are proud to be a part of her career journey and enjoy watching her skill sets and passions grow at the Woodbridge Group.

*"The BRN allowed me to focus on my son and my job. I'm grateful for everything they were able to do for me."*

---

*Jessica Graff*

*The Woodbridge Group*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @CAMWJOBS, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



## DETROIT EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS CORPORATION

### AWARD WINNER:

Charles Simpson

Employee at Henry Ford Health

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Over the years, Henry Ford Health has utilized a network of community resources to develop initiatives and programs that are responsive to the actual workforce needs of Detroit residents. One such example is the partnership they developed with Detroit Employment Solutions Corporation (DESC), a collaboration that has helped Henry Ford Health in building a resilient and competent healthcare workforce.

Since the beginning of DESC's engagement with Henry Ford Health in 2019, the partnership has resulted in hiring 200+ individuals with an average starting wage of \$15.75 per hour in various positions. One of those individuals is DESC's Impact Award winner Charles Simpson.

DESC assisted Charles by directing him to resources that helped him land the position of a Patient Transporter at Henry Ford Health. Through the help of the DESC staff, Charles received career advising, resume assistance, and interview preparation training. He also received support services, including gas cards and bus tickets, that allowed him to get to and from work without any worries.

He chose to apply to Henry Ford Health due to his respect for the organization. Both his grandparents were patients at Henry Ford Hospital and made full recoveries from their ailments due to their stay at the hospital. Charles receives the most satisfaction from caring for and helping those in need. He feels the impact he makes on his clients as a patient transporter. Charles also enjoys this position because he gets to work with nurses, a profession he greatly respects.

Charles has declared his next step at Henry Ford Health is to become a nurse assistant to prepare him for a career in nursing. Charles aspires to one day become a military nurse/rescue paratrooper medic and is working hard every day to acquire the knowledge he needs to pass the profession's entry exam. The motivation and drive he has gained from Henry Ford Health pushes Charles to keep striving for more success.

"I am excited and shocked that I won this award. This award has motivated me to want to move forward in my career, as a nurse assistant and nurse at Henry Ford Health and eventually a medic in the United States Army," Charles said. "This award was reassuring to me and let me know that I'm on the right track in my life. I'm more than grateful that I got this job at Henry Ford Health and this award from being an employee at Henry Ford Health. It lets me know that I'm heading in the right direction as I strive for greatness."

*"We have proudly served the city of Detroit for more than 108 years and we couldn't have done it without the incredible team members from within our communities. DESC has been an excellent partner in ensuring we connect with talent, provide training and development opportunities, and support for sustainable careers at Henry Ford Health."*

---

*Nina Ramsey  
Henry Ford Health*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @DETROITATWORK, USE  
#MIWORKSIMPACT**



# GREAT LAKES BAY MICHIGAN WORKS!

## **AWARD WINNER:**

Jeremy Lutze

Employee at Kapex Manufacturing LLC

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Kapex Manufacturing LLC is a veteran-owned design and build company established in 2005. Located in Saginaw, Kapex specializes in solving unique design and manufacturing problems for plastics, food, energetic material industries and more. They have over 125 years of manufacturing experience coming from 15 exceptional employees.

Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! (GLBMW) has been working with Kapex for over 10 years to provide support in their talent recruitment and retention needs, including supporting four successful Going PRO Talent Fund awards that enabled the company to provide critical training to their current employees. Kapex has been a work experience site for GLBMW's Youth Program and has hired three youth participants as a result. They believe in building their own talent pipeline by investing in young people just starting their careers and giving them the skills they need to be successful.

"Michigan Works! provides fabulous programs that bring opportunities to young people trying to determine what professions they want to pursue. The Young Professionals Program helps employers see if the candidate is a right fit for their organization and the young professional gets hands-on experience to see if the occupation is the right fit for

them. It's a win-win program on multiple levels: for the employer, employee, Great Lakes Bay Region, and the state of Michigan. We appreciate the partnership we have with Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works! and enjoy working with their team to mentor young talent in our workforce," said James Kowalczyk, Vice President and General Manager of Kapex Manufacturing LLC.

Jeremy Lutze is a 17-year-old student attending Saginaw Covenant Academy, working to complete his high school diploma through virtual learning. Faced with many challenges, Jeremy is a youth in foster care, actively participating in an independent living program to learn self-sufficiency and independence skills. He moved to Saginaw from the Au Gres/Tawas area. Jeremy is no stranger to work. Though having no formal work experience, he was able to find odd jobs working with mechanics and in a lumber yard. Jeremy has always seen value in working in the skilled trades and has been interested in machining as a career. He continuously shows initiative and strives to have a positive impact on those around him.

*"'Steel will never become a sword without first being burned and weakened.' This quote means so much to me and what I've been through. Working at Kapex has mentally helped me get through my daily struggles. They are genuinely kind people. I plan to work with them as long as I can, as long as they'll have me. I greatly appreciate the support of Kapex and Great Lakes Bay Michigan Works!"*

---

*Jeremy Lutze  
Kapex Manufacturing LLC*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @GLBMIWORKS, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



# GST MICHIGAN WORKS!

## AWARD WINNER:

LaShabriane Kelly

Employee at City of Flint Police Department

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Lieutenant Ronald Dixon from the City of Flint Police Department (PD) contacted GST Michigan Works! to discuss recruiting new officers. With the help of Service Center Manager Tricia D'Agostino and Business Solutions Professional Roy Reynolds, they formed a partnership to boost recruitment. Lt. Dixon expressed the need for more applicants, and together, they devised a plan that included participating in traditional career fairs, distributing recruitment flyers, digitally promoting employment opportunities, and more.

Through this partnership, a unique hiring event was organized to take place at the GST Michigan Works! Fenton Service Center. At the event, the Department was able to draw additional attention using tactical vehicles on display alongside interviews with local media. These efforts were very successful, with over 100 applicants and increased visibility for the City of Flint PD. Lt. Dixon and Roy Reynolds continue to strategize for future recruitment, aiming to make the Meet & Greet Career Fair in 2024 even more impactful.

The partnership between GST Michigan Works! and the City of Flint PD has received additional recognition, with the PD being selected as the August 2023 Employer Showcase. Lt. Dixon expressed gratitude for the outstanding support, emphasizing the impact of the collaboration on their recruitment success.

LaShabriane Kelly is an example of success through these collaborative efforts. GST Michigan Works! played a crucial role in supporting her journey from healthcare to becoming a successful homicide detective with the City of Flint PD. LaShabriane received funding for training and assistance through the WIOA Program. Now almost four years into her career, LaShabriane continues to excel!

Through dedication, she earned a promotion to homicide detective within a remarkable two-year span. She is known as one of the hardest-working officers in her department, propelled by the skills acquired at LERTA. Detective LaShabriane Kelly's story is a testament to the power of perseverance and the unwavering support provided by GST Michigan Works! Fenton Service Center. She highlights the transformative journey from fear to resilience, ultimately achieving her goal of becoming a detective. Her success story reflects the positive outcomes of dedication and collaborative efforts.

*"With hard work and dedication there's nothing that can stop you from being the best you! GST Michigan Works! was with me every step of the way. The support I received from my career coaches meant the world to me and helped me reach my end goal of becoming a police officer and now I've been promoted to detective!"*

---

*LaShabriane Kelly  
City of Flint Police Department*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @GSTMIWORKS, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



## MACOMB-ST. CLAIR MICHIGAN WORKS!

### AWARD WINNER:

Jacob Cross

Employee at Ultraform Industries

---

In 2017, Ultraform Industries received their first Going Pro Talent Fund award. Since then, Ultraform has received five more Going Pro Talent Fund awards totaling more than \$145,000 to train current and new employees.

As a result, Ultraform has not only been able to maintain a presence in the community but has grown to over 100 employees, as well as increasing and expanding training incentives to include a Registered Apprenticeship with the Department of Labor. Ultraform's willingness to invest in their talent pipeline for the future, utilizing all services presented by Macomb-St. Clair Michigan Works!, is cementing success for both the company and community for many years to come.

Jacob Cross came to Ultraform Industries in May 2022. He was working in forming operations and displayed a talent for understanding the setups and troubleshooting steps for Ultraform's vertical forming machines. Ultraform management approached Jacob about the Tool and Die Apprenticeship program. He accepted the opportunity and began formal Related Training Instruction coursework at St. Clair Community College in the summer of 2023.

Another component of the apprenticeship program is on-the-job training, which Jacob is currently participating in under the direction of the engineering manager, tool room supervisor, and department certified apprentices. Jacob is a peer mentor for new team members at Ultraform Industries. Outside of work, he volunteers at the Tuscola County Conservation Club. He also participates in sport shooting competitions and his three-person team recently took second place in a sponsored sport shooting competition.

*"Ultraform gave me an opportunity for a new career path with the Tool & Die Apprenticeship Program. I'm thankful to be working towards my Journeyman's License and a bright future with the full support of my work family at Ultraform Industries."*

---

*Jacob Cross  
Ultraform Industries*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @MIWORKSMSC, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



## **MICHIGAN WORKS! BERRIEN, CASS, VAN BUREN**

### **AWARD WINNER:**

Brian Dudasko

Employee at C5 Electric LLC

---

Founded in 2021 by Dion and Amy Campbell, C5 Electric LLC swiftly emerged as a beacon of excellence within the electrical services industry. Situated in the heart of Paw Paw, this family-owned enterprise rapidly gained the trust of the community. With Dion's extensive experience as a licensed Master Electrician and Amy's support, C5 Electric embarked on a mission to redefine standards of quality and professionalism. As C5 Electric sets its sights on the future, the company remains steadfast in its pursuit of excellence, ready to illuminate countless more homes, businesses, and communities with its unparalleled service and unwavering commitment to excellence.

With a team of four dedicated employees and an apprentice, C5 Electric remained agile in responding to the evolving demands of the industry. Their proactive initiation of apprenticeships demonstrated their commitment to nurturing talent and meeting the thriving market needs. Michigan Works! Berrien, Cass, Van Buren recognizes the profound influence of C5 Electric in shaping the landscape of electrical services, setting a benchmark for excellence, and inspiring others to aspire for greatness.

After high school, Brian Dudasko moved forward with college as he stated “it was the right thing to do” based on high school and parent influences. Brian pursued multiple pathways in college but never really found what he truly wanted to do - all while accumulating debt. He settled into a sales job that he worked at successfully for over 10 years, but never felt was fulfilling.

Brian considers himself very fortunate to have a friend who talked to him about his work as a tradesperson and how he loved what he did and knew he could build a good future for himself and his family. After that, Brian and his wife made the decision to move forward with an apprenticeship opportunity with C5 Electric within his same community. He is very grateful. Although Brian is not making the same wage he was in sales, he knows this is an opportunity for long-term personal and professional growth. Brian is over halfway to becoming an Electrician Journeyman and he wouldn't change a thing.

*“The apprenticeship program has been fantastic. The on-the-job training mixed with the classroom and lab work make it all-encompassing. I’ve found it especially rewarding to be on a job site and know exactly what to do because of troubleshooting scenarios I learned directly in a lab class.”*

---

Brian Dudasko  
C5 Electric LLC

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @MICHIGANWORKS, USE  
#MIWORKSIMPACT**



# MICHIGAN WORKS! NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

## AWARD WINNER:

Aubrey Zawacky  
River House, Inc.

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River House, Inc. is a nonprofit agency that serves victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse in four northern Michigan counties: Crawford, Ogemaw, Oscoda, and Roscommon. They have been serving local communities since 1986, providing crisis counseling, emergency shelter, group counseling and support, as well as legal advocacy and community education.

When Aubrey Zawacky was referred to Michigan Works! through the PATH program, she was facing many barriers. This single mother of two young kids needed support. She didn't have her high school diploma or Michigan driver's license. She was struggling to find housing, childcare, and employment. She had no transportation, a rough past, and few hopes left. Aubrey began working with the Michigan Works! Northeast Consortium team. Her Career Advisor helped her find housing at a local shelter and set her up in the Work Experience Program, the Career Navigators helped her with her resume and soft skills, and the Business Solutions Professional helped find a good work placement.

With guidance and encouragement from her Michigan Works! Career Advisors, Aubrey has made steady, continual strides in accomplishing her goals. She's an extremely hardworking and focused individual, which has helped her overcome so much. She completed her High

School Equivalency in three months, completed virtual traffic school in Arizona to clear her driving record, which enabled her to get her Michigan driver's license, and she continues to make overall improvements for herself and two sons.

Aubrey has been steadfast in working to set goals and explore options available to her. She wants to be a good role model for her kids and show them that perseverance can break the cycle. Along the way, Michigan Works! has helped Aubrey secure housing, childcare, and employment, provided mileage assistance, and purchased a vehicle for her. The vehicle purchase opened up a whole new avenue of opportunities and independence for Aubrey, who had been held captive by a lack of public transportation and career opportunities in her rural area.

Aubrey is dependable and personable and has earned every bit of her success! Working diligently with Michigan Works!, Aubrey has learned that goals can be accomplished step-by-step, especially if you have the right people behind you and you stay focused. Aubrey is thankful that Michigan Works! helped keep her on track with her goals and encouraged her through her journey.

Aubrey is also happy with herself, because she put in the extra work to make sure she accomplished her goals. Aubrey is continuing on her road to self-sufficiency and continues to work with Michigan Works!. Recently, she has started courses at Kirtland Community College.

*"You can get where you want to be with the help from the right people... and Michigan Works! and River House were those people. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to show what I am capable of."*

---

*Aubrey Zawacky  
River House, Inc.*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @WORKSMICHIGAN, USE  
#MIWORKSIMPACT**



# MICHIGAN WORKS!

## REGION 7B CONSORTIUM

### AWARD WINNER:

Lou Tomma

Employee at Roscommon County Road Commission

---

When it comes to increasing the talent pool for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), as well as road commissions across the state, the Roscommon County Road Commission stands out as a shining example of partnering to ensure that those entering the field have the opportunity to receive real world, on-the-job experience.

In April of 2022, Michigan Works! Region 7B Roscommon County Service Center assisted the Road Commission with promoting their partnership with MDOT for their Summer Apprenticeship Program. Four apprentices were hired. The program made it possible for apprentices to work on MDOT projects through the local road commission. Although the apprentices were employees of the Roscommon County Road Commission, staff knew that these apprentices would likely move along to another employer at the end of their apprenticeship – and that was okay.

One of these apprentices was Lou Tomma, and the opportunity to participate in the partnership between MDOT and the Roscommon County Road Commission was life-changing for him. Prior to entering the MDOT apprenticeship, Lou was the manager of Angelo's Party Store on Old 27 in Roscommon County. Lou was also a commercial sign fabricator at ALM Fabrication – a company he named in honor of his family.

Lou was ready to try something new, and decided to get his CDL-A. He reached out to Michigan Works! Region 7B's Roscommon County Service Center for assistance getting his driving credential. Michigan Works! Region 7B assisted Lou financially with the expensive truck driving training, while also keeping open communication with him and the school whenever road blocks came up, to ensure he completed his training. And there were roadblocks; but Lou persevered through every one of them to ensure that he met his goal of obtaining that Commercial Driving License.

In October of 2022, Lou's courses were postponed at Tri-Area Trucking School through Kirtland Community College, due to a lack of staffing. Lou continued on the journey, however, keeping those lines of communication open between him, Michigan Works! Region 7B, and his educators. Lou's commitment paid off in January of 2023, when he completed his training, and received his certificate from Kirtland Community College. Lou went on to enter the MDOT apprenticeship, and worked with the team at Roscommon County Road Commission to continue learning and practicing his skills. He passed his State Exam for his CDL-A endorsement, and has gone on to work as a truck driver for MDOT.

*"The intent of the program was to increase the talent pool and bring awareness to careers in road construction. We're doing it for all the other road commissions in Michigan, and for MDOT."*

---

*Roger Saxton  
Roscommon County Road Commission*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @MIWORKSR7B, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



## MICHIGAN WORKS! SOUTHEAST

### AWARD WINNER:

Oleksii (Alex) Schendryhin  
Employee at Ross Design™

---

The superior engineering, workmanship, and overall quality of Ross Design™ products have kept them at the forefront of manufacturing since 1989. Ross Design™ strives to add value to products through innovative design and state of the art manufacturing processes. They consider not only those who purchase their product but also those they employ as primary customers needing to be satisfied.

With Ross Design™, Michigan Works! Southeast (MWSE) was able to identify and assist with their intricate needs in addressing issues as they arose by leveraging grant dollars and a full complement of MWSE services. A strong bond and working relationship have been established to be responsive to their needs.

Oleksii (Alex) Schendryhin and his family arrived in the United States as refugees from Ukraine in October 2022, and started the PATH program in November 2022. With assistance from Business Services Coordinator, Sally Clark, MWSE was able to find an employer that was willing to give Alex a chance at his first job in America.

Alex first started out working for four weeks at Ross Design™ as a paid Work Experience Placement (WEP) to learn some basic components of the new manufacturing environment. After his WEP was completed, Alex received high scores on his evaluation, and then he was offered to stay on as a direct hire.

Sally was able to offer Ross Design™ an On The Job Training Contract to help offset the cost of the additional training that Alex would need to learn even more skills that would be necessary for long-term employment.

*"Michigan Works! Southeast helped me and my family start a new job and my new life in the USA."*

---

*Oleksii (Alex) Schendryhin  
Ross Design™*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @MICHWORKSSE, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



# MICHIGAN WORKS! SOUTHWEST

## AWARD WINNER:

Austin Edwards

Employee at Hi-Tech Electric Company

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Hi-Tech Electric Company is a premier local employer, with the company's Project Executive, Brian O'Donnell, serving on the Michigan Works! Southwest Workforce Development Board and chairing the Advanced IT Solutions Employer Led Consortium. As a champion for apprenticeship expansion, Hi-Tech Electric Company is a Going PRO Talent Fund recipient and a partner in the State Apprenticeship Expansion 2020 grant.

O'Donnell shared, "Implementing an apprenticeship training program at Hi-Tech Electric Company yields multifaceted benefits from enhancing workforce proficiency, adaptability, and retention. By nurturing aspiring electricians through hands-on experience and mentorship, the company cultivates a skilled labor force adept at navigating complex technical challenges."

The program fosters a culture of continuous learning, promoting innovation and knowledge exchange within the organization. Beyond operational advantages, investing in apprenticeships fostered community goodwill and contributed to addressing skill shortages in the industry, positioning Hi-Tech as a leader in talent development and sustainability.

Austin Edwards, an employee of Hi-Tech Electric, started working in the electrical field in March 2020, with no prior electrical trade experience. To expand his knowledge, he began his classroom experience by enrolling in classes at a local community college. Shortly after, Austin joined Hi-Tech Electric where he was registered into an apprenticeship training program to further advance his career. Through his apprenticeship experience thus far, Austin has a new appreciation for the electrical trade and always looks forward to work and class.

"I appreciate how the course is laid out for us and we know exactly what is expected of us to move forward," Austin said. "Working in this industry has shown me so much about the trade, and I can actually apply my work experience in the classroom."

*"Austin has grown professionally and, through his employment, is able to further his training in a more structured setting offered by the joint apprenticeship training committee. Austin has made tremendous strides in all aspects of his development. I am very proud of Austin and the work put in to get to this point. The apprenticeship program and good mentorship in the field is vital to creating excellence in our industry."*

---

*John Moden  
Hi-Tech Electric*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @MIWORKSSW, USE #MIWORKSIMPACT**



# MICHIGAN WORKS! WEST CENTRAL

## AWARD WINNER:

Brandon Nowak

Employee at Foreway Transportation

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Success for Brandon Nowak came later in life than expected. In his mid-30s, Brandon Nowak came to the very hard realization that his life was not where he wanted it to be. He never completed his high school education, had limited skills and was incarcerated for 18 months.

“Everything that’s happened to me, I’ve done to myself. I always remember that,” Brandon said. “I’m doing what I’m supposed to do, I just did it later on in life. I’m here because I made my bed, but places like Michigan Works! West Central, they give you a second chance.”

After exiting incarceration, Brandon’s parole officer referred him to Michigan Works! West Central. Working with a Talent Specialist, he was able to set short-term and realistic goals. Earning his GED was the first on the list. Through adult-education provider Quest High School, which is co-located in three of Michigan Works! West Central’s six service centers, he was able to finish his high school education.

“I studied every night; I really wanted to get it done as quickly as possible,” Brandon said.

"The program fit with my schedule. They would give me packets to study, which made it a lot easier. ... After learning I passed, I was excited, but still focused on what I had to do next. So, I couldn't get too excited because I wasn't at my end goal."

Michigan Works! West Central enrolled Brandon into WIOA Adult and MiLEAP programs, which were able to pay for training at FCG Truck Driver Training in Byron Center. Within six weeks, he earned his Class-A commercial driver's license (CDL), achieving his next goal.

"Brandon, being a hard worker and fast learner, was an excellent candidate for the CDL truck driver training program. It was obvious that he wanted success," said Bill Baareman, owner of FCG Truck Driver Training. "Partnering with Michigan Works! West Central is the perfect match for a new and challenging career path in a field that's in high demand. This partnership is opening new doors and opportunities for anyone with a desire to obtain a Michigan CDL."

It didn't take long for Brandon to reach his final goal of obtaining a job as a full-time over-the-road driver. He was hired at Coopersville-based Foreway Transportation in July 2023, and began driving across the U.S. His personal outlook is miles away from where he was just over a year ago.

*"My life has changed quite a bit. I've got a new outlook on everything. I'm healthier and I've got a new set of goals. (My life) is nothing like it was five years ago. I never thought I'd go to prison, but I did, and that's what needed to happen in my life to get me on the right path. ... The only reason I was able to do all of this is because I was realistic about little goals. Michigan Works! makes it really easy. I was surprised at how involved they were, and I never felt like I was judged while I was there. I definitely wouldn't be where I am today and as happy as I am, without Michigan Works! I'm very grateful for this place."*

---

*Brandon Nowak  
Foreway Transportation*

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# NORTHWEST MICHIGAN WORKS!

## **AWARD WINNER:**

Qayum Qayumi

Employee at TentCraft

---

Founded in 2007 and headquartered in Traverse City, TentCraft is a Veteran-Owned Small Business that's proud to continue the tradition of high-quality, innovative American manufacturing. TentCraft employs about 85-100 people throughout any given year.

The war in Afghanistan in the 1990s forced Qayum Qayumi and his family to seek refuge in Pakistan for nearly a decade. Despite the hardships, Qayum graduated from university as a microwaves specialist and became proficient in English, Dari, Pashto, Urdu, and Hindi. Upon returning to Afghanistan, he contributed to the field of mobile communications installation, working with a wireless communications company and NATO, earning recognition from the U.S. Military.

The return of the Taliban to Afghanistan brought new challenges, limiting job opportunities, banning education and employment for women, and causing a decline in medical care and economic conditions. Seeking a better life, Qayum and his spouse, Habiba, arrived in the U.S. as refugees through Bethany Christian Services and sought support from Northwest Michigan Works!.

Beginning their PATH participation with Northwest Michigan Works! in June of 2023, Qayum and Habiba required financial assistance, resume-building advice, and job search guidance. With assistance from Northwest Michigan Works! Qayum secured a position as a sewing operator at TentCraft in Traverse City, drawing on skills learned from his father beginning when he was a young boy. Habiba enrolled in ESL classes through the Northwest Michigan Works! Learning Lab to enhance her English skills.

Northwest Michigan Works! provided essential support, including transportation assistance, during their transition to living in the United States. Even though he's happily employed at TentCraft, Qayum remains determined to leverage his technical expertise and eventually start his own business. He even presented his future business, Quick Quality Alterations, at a local small business pitch event, inspiring the audience with his entrepreneurial spirit.

Impressed by Qayum's work and commitment to advancement, TentCraft gifted him a sewing machine, enabling him to continue the trade passed down by his father and generate additional income for his family. Qayum's technical knowledge in the engineering field also represents opportunities in his employment horizons.

*"Northwest Michigan Works! gave me hope at the start of my life in the new city. This place has been an invaluable resource for me as I navigated the process of job searching. Not only did they assist me with my resume, but they also shared resources directing me towards job opportunities that would be relevant to my skills and qualifications. My wife must study the language to be able to integrate into the community more fully, and she found that opportunity at the Michigan Works! Learning Lab. I am grateful for the support and encouragement Michigan Works! has provided for me during the transition period in my family's life."*

---

Qayum Qayumi  
TentCraft

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @NWMICHIGANWORKS, USE  
#MIWORKSIMPACT**



# OAKLAND COUNTY MICHIGAN WORKS!

## AWARD WINNER:

Alex van den Bremer

Employee at Three M Tool & Machine

---

Founded in 1971, Three M Tool & Machine is a high-performance, family-owned, contract machine shop with unique capabilities and experience in many sectors of the manufacturing industry. The company is a precision machining solution for today's manufacturers, offering quality, efficiency and delivery to surpass customer expectations. Three M Tool & Machine is a one-stop source for small, medium, and large part machining along with many other processes. Three M Tool & Machine staff live by the principle that your manufacturing capabilities are only as strong as your inspection capabilities. Therefore, their industry-leading precision inspection and verification services not only complement but are integral to industry-leading precision manufacturing capabilities.

"As a result of our collaboration, we have been able to bring in fresh, young talent that has significantly contributed to the growth and innovation of our company. We have also been able to provide tens of thousands of dollars' worth of skilled trades training, which wouldn't have been possible otherwise," said Sam Medwid, President/CEO of Three M Tool & Machine. "We believe that through our mutual efforts, we are making a significant contribution to the development of our local workforce. We are deeply grateful for the services provided by Oakland County Michigan Works! and we are eager to continue this fruitful partnership for many more years to come."

Alex van den Bremer's father worked at a car dealership and told him that the skilled trades were a dying career path, with so many retirements taking place and few young people joining the industry. He studied robotics, engineering and mechatronics in high school and spent a year in the manufacturing program at the Oakland Schools Technical Campus. He participated in a tour of Three M Tool & Machine as part of Manufacturing Day during his senior year. During the visit, he picked up an application and a token he could turn in for a \$500 bonus after 30 days of full-time employment. He joined the youth work experience program and, upon completion, accepted a full-time bench hand position and is also learning shipping and handling responsibilities. Three M President Sam Medwid recognized Alex's strong work ethic and willingness to learn right away and said he wishes he had more young workers like him.

*"On behalf of Oakland County Executive David Coulter, the Oakland County Workforce Development Board, and the entire Oakland County Michigan Works! team, congratulations to Three M Tool & Machine employee Alex van den Bremer on your 2024 Michigan Works! Association Impact Award. From collaborating on youth work programs and registered apprenticeships, to receiving multiple Going PRO Talent Fund awards, Oakland County Michigan Works! has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with Three M. Thanks to their dedication and commitment to developing young talent, Alex is now a valued member of the Three M team. Congratulations Alex. Your hard work has paid off and set you on your path to a successful career in manufacturing. We are so proud of you!"*

---

*Jennifer Llewellyn  
Oakland County Michigan Works!*

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# SEMCA MICHIGAN WORKS!

## **AWARD WINNER:**

Angelica Pittman

Employee at Taco John's

---

Taco John's has been in business since 1969, starting out as a small taco stand in Cheyenne, Wyoming. The Meritage Hospitality Group, one of the nation's premier franchise operations, brought Taco John's to Monroe County. As a new restaurant entering the Monroe County job market, Taco John's created over 30 local jobs with competitive wages and ongoing training of new team members.

The SEMCA Michigan Works! Monroe American Job Center staff provided job search assistance, an internship opportunity, transportation, work supplies, a resource fair for customers and a hiring event for employers, monthly meetings, assistance in setting up child care, and barrier resolution.

Angelica Pittman is a Partnership, Accountability, Training, Hope (PATH) participant at the SEMCA Michigan Works! Monroe American Job Center, who entered the program at the beginning of her journey to sobriety. The barriers she faced seemed insurmountable, but with her determination and big smile, SEMCA Michigan Works! knew they could help her overcome each barrier standing in the way of her success.

Monroe County recently welcomed Taco John's to the area, and was hiring staff to get the restaurant prepared for opening day. Angelica was one of the employees selected to help with the startup of this new restaurant. She was excited, yet anxious about her ability to organize, plan, and get herself and her children ready for the day and be on time and productive at work.

During her first week of employment, her PATH coach contacted her, and Angelica said that she was really enjoying the job. Week one turned into week three, and Angelica was still working and going to meetings and caring for herself and her children. One month turned into two months, and Angelica was excited to let her PATH coach know that she was awarded Employee of the Month! To her excitement, she received four free meals a week for the entire month.

To date, Angelica has successfully completed over three months of employment, is attending five AA meetings a week, and is engaged in counseling. Angelica and her two kids are thriving all thanks to her determination to succeed and her PATH coach helping her overcome the barriers that were preventing her from achieving her goals.

*"What I like about working at Taco John's is that they are very flexible with my schedule and the managers teach us how to be responsible and consistent. I also love the Potato Olés! They also let us know that we should enjoy our jobs by having fun and we all get along because of that environment."*

---

*Angelica Pittman  
Taco John's*

**POST YOUR CONGRATS TO @SEMCAMICHWORKS, USE  
#MIWORKSIMPACT**



## UPPER PENINSULA MICHIGAN WORKS!

### **AWARD WINNER:**

#### Mackinac Straits Health System

---

The Mackinac Straits Health System (MSHS) serves the region with local access to high quality health care, including state of the art equipment. MSHS includes a 15-bed critical access hospital in St. Ignace which houses a rural health clinic, Emergency Room, Fast Care Clinic, outpatient surgery center, six-bed infusion center, and a 48-bed long-term care facility. Other outpatient services include radiology, cardiac rehab, and physical therapy, along with a retail pharmacy.

UP Michigan Works! (UPMW) and MSHS partnered in 2022 to establish a Certified Medical Assistant (CMA) apprenticeship program. UPMW, acting as the registered apprenticeship intermediary, navigated the Department of Labor's apprenticeship process and obtained approval. To date, MSHS has enrolled six apprentices, is working with their second cohort, and has a waiting list for future cohorts.

The apprenticeship is a two-year, competency-based program. Each apprentice is required to display proficiency in 168 competencies and attend 482 hours of Related Technical Instruction (RTI). Upon completion of the RTI, apprentices are eligible to sit for CCMA, CPT, CET, and CMAA certifications.

UPMW takes an all hands on deck approach to supporting the program. Talent Specialists enroll eligible participants for supportive services including scrubs, gas cards, and tools like stethoscopes, non-contact thermometers, and pulse oximeters. The Talent Pipeline Manager, Apprenticeship Coordinator and Business Services Specialist connect apprentices with CareerStep as an RTI provider and WorkHands to track competencies. In addition, UPMW connected the employer with financial incentives for each apprentice.

Dr. Jodi Becker, Chief Ambulatory Officer, is excited about the program going forward and is working with the UPMW team to ensure individual apprentice success. UPMW helps employers and employees Get Ready to Win!

*"Mackinac Straits Health System is a beacon of light in the UP regarding healthcare and registered apprenticeship programs. They have embraced the process and worked on continuous improvement to find ways to support their apprentices through the Certified Medical Assistant program. They are looking to expand to other occupations as they currently have a waitlist for their CMA program. Mackinac Straits Health System is a leader in adjusting to new ways of attracting and retaining talent. Registered apprenticeships are a win for the worker, a win for the organization, and a big win for the Upper Peninsula region. Thank you, MSHS!"*

---

*Debb Brunell  
Upper Peninsula Michigan Works!*

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# WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!

## AWARD WINNER:

Kira Malinina

Employee at Walters Gardens, Inc.

---

Kira Malinina's journey to Michigan after fleeing the war in Ukraine represents a story of resilience and new beginnings. She left behind her life as a horticulture teacher and a cherished garden, arriving in West Michigan with her family to start a new life. West Michigan Works! had an integral role in Kira's integration into her new life in Michigan. Under the guidance of West Michigan Works! career coach Julie Sooy at the Allegan Service Center, Kira enrolled in English as a Second Language courses through Zeeland Adult Education and completed driver's training, two essential steps in adapting to a new cultural and linguistic environment.

Kira's horticultural knowledge led West Michigan Works! to connect her with Walters Gardens, Inc., a leader in employing refugees through the Work Experience Program. Her experience, combined with her strong work ethic, quickly resulted in a permanent position at Walters Gardens. She has since advanced to the company's Trial Gardens division, applying her knowledge of unusual plants and working with new and hybrid varieties.

"Kira's transition from a Ukrainian horticultural teacher to a valued employee at Walters Gardens showcases the transformative power of determination, opportunity and career development support," said Sooy. "This is an outstanding example of the demand-driven model in action. I spent time learning about her background – she had experience in laboratory work, agriculture, horticulture, teaching, and as a florist, all the while considering potential business that may be benefited by her expertise."

Walters Gardens, established in 1946 in Zeeland, is North America's leading wholesale grower of perennials, nurturing over 20 million plants annually across their 1,500-acre footprint, including 500,000 square feet of greenhouses. Walters Gardens' active role in West Michigan Works! Agribusiness Talent Council's initiatives, like Ag-Jobs-4-All job fairs, have been instrumental in developing a sustainable agribusiness talent pipeline in West Michigan.

"Kira's background knowledge was a huge advantage," said Dianne Cote, Human Resources Manager, Walters Gardens. "She is hardworking and kind with a ready smile. As her English continues to improve, I see her continuing to grow within our organization. We are very happy to have her."

*"Reaching refugees, like Kira, who are not currently working is vital to solving the labor shortage problem. By actively recruiting these untapped talent populations, Walters Gardens provides an excellent model for how employers can think beyond traditional hiring practices to meet their talent needs."*

---

Karrie Brown  
West Michigan Works!

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Alex van den Bremer  
2024 Impact Award Winner



## CONGRATULATIONS

Three M Tool & Machine and Alex van den Bremer

Celebrating our collaborative relationship  
to build a talented workforce!

Award-winning Three M Tool & Machine and Oakland County Michigan Works! have enjoyed a long-standing relationship. In 2019, after hosting a group of high school students for Oakland County Manufacturing Day, Three M decided to launch an on-the-job training program focused on young talent. As a result, Alex is a valuable full-time member of the Three M team!

- On-the-Job Training Program
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**SEMCA Michigan Works! proudly celebrates Angelica Pittman** and her courageous journey of career transformation, as she emerges as a role model within her family and community. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to **Taco John's** for their partnership in fostering a compassionate and supportive workplace culture that has empowered Angelica on her path to a brighter future.

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"Kira's background knowledge was a huge advantage, I see her continuing to grow within our organization."

- Dianne Cote,  
Human Resources Manager,  
Walters Gardens.

**2024 Impact Awards Winner**

Kira Malinina,  
Horticulturalist



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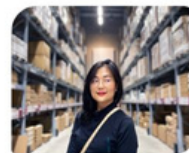
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