



# LOCAL WORKFORCE INNOVATION AREA 23

## *2022 Success Stories*

Local Workforce Innovation Area 23 serves individuals and businesses in 13 Illinois counties: Clark, Clay, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Edgar, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Lawrence, Marion, Moultrie, and Richland.

We are committed to making a positive impact on the local and state workforce through our programs, resources, and dedicated staff.

C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation has been the program service provider for decades. Their Career Planners work closely with participants providing resources, guidance, information, mentoring, and encouragement.

It is our pleasure to share with you some of the LWIA 23 success stories for customers served July 1, 2021 through April 30, 2022.



### C.E.F.S. Career Planners

*open* – Centralia

Carol Hoedebecke – Effingham

Charlene Nelson - Effingham

Maureen Hays - Lawrenceville

Laura McHenry - Mattoon

Debra Schumacher - Mattoon

Tabithia Wilcoxon – Mattoon

*open* - Olney

Maureen Hays - Robinson

Heidi Cade – Vandalia





## About W.I.O.A....

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) took effect on July 1, 2015, which supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA).

WIOA formally adopts many parts of Illinois' progressive workforce development model on a nationwide basis, with the goal of ensuring that our workforce system is job-driven, responding to the needs of the employers and preparing workers for jobs available now and in the future.



These success stories focus on the Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth and Trade customers who have been involved with WIOA and have been able to experience first-hand what can be achieved with assistance through WIOA.

## Providing Opportunities...

Whitney first contacted the C.E.F.S. Effingham office after hearing about the WIOA program at Lake Land College. As a single parent with two children, she was working part-time as a bartender/server at a local restaurant and wanted to inquire about her eligibility for the program, as she was selected for admission to the Fall 2019 Associate Degree in Nursing Program at Lake Land College. Whitney was enrolled into the WIOA program and soon after, the pandemic hit just as she was beginning the ADN program and she was faced with many uncertainties. Whitney seemed to accept the challenge and forged ahead, continuing to make good grades all throughout the program. She was diligent in turning in all her paperwork on time, always had a smile on her face, and was determined to complete the program.

Throughout her enrollment in the WIOA program, Whitney was able to receive financial assistance to cover training costs along with transportation assistance and support services, including uniforms, stethoscope, blood pressure cuff, physical and immunizations, and Illinois State board and licensure fees.

After completing the ADN program, she obtained her RN license and secured employment at HSHS St. Anthony Memorial Hospital. Whitney is working full-time and has more than doubled her wages. She also has great employment benefits that she did not have at her previous job.

As best stated by Whitney, "C.E.F.S. is such an amazing program for those wanting to expand their education and career. From the financial assistance to the communication and relationship I was able to build with my case worker Charlene. I never expected to go back to school at 30 years old while trying to raise a family and suddenly a pandemic hit while I was in the midst of nursing school. Without C.E.F.S. I can't say it would have been possible to achieve my goals and grow in a career that I am so passionate about. I am more than thankful for them and hope that one day I can pay it forward!"



### **Whitney Wolff**

Mason, IL

Career Planner:  
Charlene Nelson

*Adult Program*

## Providing Opportunities...



### **Susan Seals**

Centralia, IL

Career Planner:  
Azlynn Arnold

*Adult Program*

After being out of the workforce for almost 10 years, Susan came to the C.E.F.S. office in Centralia in November 2021 seeking assistance. She heard about the WIOA program through a neighbor who had previously completed training through the program. She had a goal to complete the CDL program at Kaskaskia College, but she needed assistance being a single mother of three.

Susan was enrolled into the CDL program at KC and received transportation and childcare assistance. Susan worked very hard to achieve her goal of completing the program. She began her classes on December 13, 2021, with a planned end date of January 14, 2022. However, the Secretary of State offices in Illinois closed for 3 weeks due to the high volume of COVID cases. This setback made the program last two weeks longer than scheduled. Susan also faced challenges finding appropriate childcare for her children during the Christmas break. Regardless of the obstacles, Susan was able to face the challenges that came her way and successfully completed her training. After completion of the CDL program, Susan was apprehensive about taking the State exam. She was afraid she would not pass; however, she took the test and passed on the first try. She quickly found employment as a CDL driver.

Susan shared the following statement, "The services that were provided to me were life changing. I am now able to support my family on my own. Receiving my CDL license has given me hope for a brighter future for my children and myself."

## Providing Opportunities...

After being accepted into the Nursing Program at Lake Land College, Abigail went to work applying for financial aid and other scholarships. Even though she was eligible for some financial aid, it was not enough to cover the costs of the entire program and she was going to have to apply for student loans. It was at this time, a past student of C.E.F.S. told her about the program and encouraged her to apply for services. In December 2019, Abigail contacted the C.E.F.S. Mattoon office to inquire about her eligibility for WIOA. Abigail felt that WIOA was her last hope of getting help with going to school to become a Registered Nurse.

Abigail was determined eligible and enrolled in occupational skills classroom training through the WIOA Program. Abigail was also working part-time while attending college, but soon found herself laid off at the beginning of April 2020 due to Covid-19. Abigail was facing the obstacle of having no income until her employer called her to return to work. She lived with her parents; however, they only provided room and board for her.

Abigail was able to work as an LPN part-time once she completed the LPN Program and obtained her LPN license. She graduated in Fall 2021 with her Associates Degree in Nursing. As of March 2022, Abigail has been working full-time at Sarah Bush Hospital in Mattoon as a RN. In a short 2 years, Abigail went from working as a barista at Starbucks part-time, making minimum wage to becoming a RN making in between \$25 and \$30 per hour.

“C.E.F.S. means so much to me. Without it, I would not have been able to go to school without taking out loans. I was able to go through school without the worry of the cost. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it wasn’t for the services that C.E.F.S. provided me with. In the beginning, I thought this program was too good to be true. I believed there was a catch, and I would have to pay the money back. My case manager assured me that C.E.F.S. was here to help me.” ~ Abigail Held ~



**Abigail Held**  
Charleston, IL

Career Planner:  
Tabithia Wilcoxen

*Adult Program*

## Providing Opportunities...



**Brandon Ramsey**  
West Union, IL

Career Planner:  
Debra Schumacher

*Dislocated Worker  
Program*

Brandon contacted the C.E.F.S./WIOA program in December of 2020 after he was laid off from his job. He was interested in receiving assistance with completing the Entrepreneurship Certificate program at Lake Land College.

In January of 2021, Brandon began training. Some of the assistance he received as part of WIOA was tuition assistance and case management services. He is a creative, quick learner and mechanically inclined. Brandon hopes to one day open his own business.

Brandon earned his Certificate in Entrepreneurship in August 2021 and now works for ZF Group in Marshall earning \$23.25 per hour, a significant increase over his previous wages.

Erin came to the Mattoon WIOA office in July 2019 after being referred by the Dental Hygiene Program at Lake Land College. She had been accepted into the program, but there were substantial costs involved that she would need assistance to pay for. Erin was working part-time, making \$8.25 per hour when she was enrolled into the WIOA program.

Erin was provided with assistance with tuition costs and other training related expenses allowing her the opportunity to attend school to obtain a degree in Dental Hygiene. She completed her degree with a cumulative GPA of 3.948. It is notoriously difficult to earn A's in Dental Hygiene, but Erin did it with only one B during her entire enrollment.

Erin passed her board exams on the first try and received her Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) credential in August 2021. She began working full-time in October 2021 making \$38 per hour, a significant increase over her previous wage prior to training.

"C.E.F.S. offered financial peace of mind which allowed me to focus solely on succeeding in school and my career." ~Erin Gahimer



**Erin Gahimer**  
Vermillion, IL

Career Planner:  
Debra Schumacher

*Youth Program*

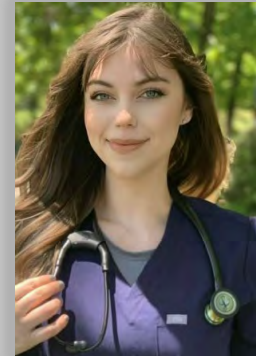
## Providing Opportunities...

Sydney was 21 years of age, unemployed, single, pregnant, and receiving SNAP benefits when she came into the Robinson Workforce Center in July 2018 to inquire about the WIOA program for youth. She had heard about the WIOA program from her local college and was interested in classroom training.

After an assessment of her skills and abilities, information on labor market in-demand occupations and guidance, Sydney selected the nursing program as her occupation of choice. She investigated the benefits, wages, and availability in her area and surrounding area and found that becoming a nurse would lead her to self-sufficiency.

Sydney was enrolled into training Fall Semester 2018 and had her baby during this time. She took a one-week maternity leave and completed the term with a 3.57 GPA. The following semester she obtained a part-time job, completed her basic nurse training and was accepted into the Nursing Program at Lincoln Trail College for Fall 2019.

Sydney completed her Associate Degree in Nursing in May 2021 and one month later passed her state board exam. She is currently working as a registered surgical nurse and attends Western Governor's University online BSN program. Sydney has also earned her Advanced Cardiac Life Support Certification and expects to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in June 2022.



**Sydney  
Schottman**  
Robinson, IL

Career Planner:  
Maureen Hays

*Youth Program*



## Providing Opportunities...

### **Molly McDonald** Casey, IL

Career Planner:  
Debra Schumacher

*Adult Program*

After finishing her first year of training in the Dental Hygiene Program at Lake Land College, Molly heard about the WIOA program from some of her classmates. She contacted the Mattoon WIOA office in May 2020 seeking assistance to help with the costs of training such as tuition, books, fees, exams and licensure fees to complete her program.

Molly received career planning services, case management, testing and assessment, and completed an Individual Employment Plan. Molly was enrolled into the program and continued her last year of the Dental Hygiene Program.

Molly was working part-time while attending classes, which made it sometimes difficult to spend time needed to devote to her schoolwork. She was also faced with completing her program during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic which made it difficult to complete required clinical hours due to quarantines, illnesses, and social distancing issues. Because of this, her training was extended an additional semester. Molly was still able to complete her program and graduate with a 3.741 GPA in August of 2021.

Molly passed her board exams on the first try and received her Registered Dental Hygienist (RDH) in August 2021. She now works as a Dental Hygienist making \$35 per hour, a significant increase over her former wages.

While faced with many challenges while completing her training program, Molly always thought back to one quote by A. A. Milne, "You are braver than you believe, stronger than what you seem, and smarter than you think."

## Providing Opportunities...

A single mother of two children, Kayla came to the C.E.F.S. Vandalia office needing assistance to go into the ADN program at Lake Land College. She had heard about WIOA through other students at school and wanted to inquire about eligibility for the program. Without any financial assistance, Kayla would not have been able to afford the cost to go to school on her own.

In August 2020, Kayla began training. The C.E.F.S. WIOA program provided tuition, books, uniforms, and supplies as required by the ADN program, and mileage to assist her with her educational needs. She maintained good grades throughout her enrollment, turned in all paperwork on time, and still found the time to work full-time as a Certified Nurses Aid while in school.

Even though the Nursing program can be challenging, Kayla had a positive attitude and was determined to complete the program. Becoming a Nurse was something she had dreamed about since she was little, and with the help of WIOA she was able to make those dreams come true.

Kayla will graduate from the ADN program in May 2022 and is looking forward to taking her State Boards, receiving her license, and starting her career as a full-time Registered Nurse.



**Kayla  
Summann**  
Brownstown, IL

Career Planner:  
Heidi Cade

*Youth Program*

## MAC Plastics Manufacturing Olney, IL



MAC Plastics has worked with WIOA, utilizing many different avenues of training, for many years. We have developed a strong partnership with them to help take our team to the next level. MAC Plastics has recently undergone significant changes, particularly coming under new ownership and experiencing a substantial cultural shift. The new perspective highlighted Lean Leadership training as imperative to our success. As an employee-owned company, we want to be fiscally responsible and high training costs were a concern. Through partnership with LWIA 23, we were able to support our upper level management team by offering Lean Management Training and Strategy Deployment paid for with WIOA grant funds. We learned how to further ingrain lean manufacturing principles into our culture and create buy-in amongst our team. We also created a five-year plan with long-term, “stretch”, goals and incremental goals to achieve our long-term goals. By using what we have learned and through the hard work of our team, we have almost met those long-term goals only one year into our five-year plan! MAC Plastics is grateful for the opportunities and the advanced success afforded by the WIOA services.

# Local Workforce Innovation Area 23



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**“WIOA: Workforce Innovation  
and Opportunity Act”**