



HUMAN SERVICES NETWORK NEWS

May 2009

Additional FEMA/Emergency Food and Shelter Funds

Laurie Benzing of United Way announced that Hillsdale County received an additional \$25,000 through FEMA (stimulus), with a focus of helping the newly unemployed. Salvation Army received \$10,000 for housing assistance, and the rest was distributed to various agencies to help with utilities, emergency shelter, and food.

Community Action Agency (CAA)

CAA has received \$5.5 million for **weatherization** through the Stimulus package. CAA (Jackson-Hillsdale-Lenawee) will be going from weatherizing approximately 150 homes per year to approximately 1,000 in the next 18 months. For Hillsdale County, it will mean going from 15 - 20 homes per year to around 200 in the next 18 months. Work will be done by local contractors (interested contractors should contact CAA), and the contractors will be encouraged to purchase materials locally. See documents attached to email for additional information. CAA encourages everyone to refer qualified applicants to CAA 437-3346

Child Care Network

Brooke Rains from Child Care Network (CCN) announced that CCN is able to assist **parents with reporting child care hours** (new requirement by the State of MI). Contact Brooke at (517)264-5306 or the Ann Arbor office at (800)777-2861.

Alpha-Omega Women's Care Center

Gloria Vear of Alpha-Omega Women's Care Center announced that AO held their Walk for Life last weekend. They are raising funds to purchase an ultrasound machine. They have a grant for \$25,000 if they can raise a local match of \$12,500.

Hillsdale County Senior Services Center

Terry Vear of Senior Services Center announced various upcoming events:

- An ice cream social will be held on Thursday, May 21st from 3-6 p.m. at the Center to Celebrate Older Americans Month.
- National Fitness Day is May 27, and the Center has many activities planned.
- On June 15, there will be an Elder Abuse Workshop from 10-2 at the Center, with the focus on those who come in contact with the older population (utility workers, USPS workers, etc.) to help them recognize and report abuse. Free lunch will be provided from 11:30am - 1:00pm.

Hospice of Hillsdale County

Lora Ward of Hospice of Hillsdale County announced that **Camp Courage**, a grief camp for children 6-14, will be held on June 27 and 28 at Kimball YMCA Camp. The last day to register is June 12.

Great Start Collaborative

Ginelle Skinner of the Great Start Collaborative announced that their **new website** www.greatstarthillsdale.org is up and running, complete with a community calendar and a volunteer link.

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

Wendy Warring of the Hillsdale County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition announced that SAPC will be holding **SPF/SIG training** on June 11, with discussion about priorities and goals.

Region II Area Agency On Aging

Ginny Wood-Bailey of Region II Area Agency on Aging announced that there is funding available for senior (over 55, low income) employment opportunities. It would be for 20 hours of work per week.

CTAC (Child Trauma Assessment Center)

Keila Kilgore of Art of Creative Dimensions (and Hillsdale County Counselor's Association) announced that twenty (20) local counselors received intensive training at CTAC (Child Trauma Assessment Center) in Kalamazoo.

Post 53 American Legion

Dave Wallin of Post 53 American Legion announced that tickets are available for a Tigers game at Comerica Park. There is a possibility of a grant through DAV for funds for a van to provide transportation to medical appointments, etc., but there would be a matching funds requirement.

South Central MI Works!

Sarah Hartzler of South Central MI Works! announced that there is stimulus funds available for Youth Summer Job Connect - see the www.scmw.org for more details, or contact Barb Dennis at 437-3381.

Don't Forget: SCMW! Human Capital Asset Survey

Meeting the Challenge: SCMW! is meeting our regional economic situation head-on by working with employers, educators, economic developers and community partners to support efforts to create new jobs, stabilize existing jobs and develop new industries. Our focus includes taking an inventory of our Human Capital Assets, and we would like to hear from YOU. Your participation in taking a brief, online survey will assist us in validating what we are thinking, identifying what is missing and learning what might be effective. Help us to do our part to help our partners build a stronger South Central Michigan. To access the survey, log on to www.scmw.org and click on either "Survey for Businesses", or "Survey for Non-Profits". The log-in for the survey is "human capital".

Western Michigan University program offers hope for grown foster children

Posted by Paula M. Davis | Kalamazoo Gazette May 21, 2009 10:15AM

KALAMAZOO -- For one student, his dorm room was an unexpectedly painful reminder of life as a foster child. The cinderblock walls, hard floors, small rooms, "it brings back ... bad things," said the student, who bounced around to 11 different foster homes as a child.

He dropped out after just days on Western Michigan University's campus.

While the cadre of former foster youth in a new WMU program received generous financial support that covered virtually all of their college expenses and offered year-round housing, it wasn't a fix-all.

Their needs often go much deeper than dollars.

"The financial benefit of this scholarship, it's necessary for their success, but it's not sufficient," WMU social-work professor Yvonne Unrau said.

The complexity of support needed was one of the lessons for WMU in its first year running the [Foster Youth in Higher Education](#), or Seita Scholars, program.

Launched this past fall with 51 students, the program is designed for first-time freshmen or transfer students who have "aged out" of foster care. It is named after John Seita, a WMU alumnus, Michigan State University social work professor, expert on foster youth and a former foster-care recipient himself.

For admission, students entering the program must meet the same academic standards as any other WMU student. The university covers tuition, while the students' other aid, such as the federal Pell grant, pays for housing and other expenses.

On Wednesday, WMU hosted a conference with an audience of officials from other colleges interested in offering similar programs at their institutions.

"As an institution of higher education, we really wanted to increase the number of students who were in foster care who are earning career-oriented degrees," Unrau said.

She noted that while half of the 500 youths who age out of foster care annually in Michigan graduate with a high school diploma, only about a dozen wind up achieving a college degree.

Unrau said WMU officials recognized from the start that students who've aged out and enroll in college often have different challenges than the typical student who grew up with biological parents and in a stable household.

WMU offered year-round housing to these students known as "Seita Scholars," since many may not have a home to return to during breaks.

"Four years on a college campus can do great things for any young person. (But) we can't help them transition by ignoring the foster-care history. ... We really are deliberate about the transitional process," Unrau said.

Students in the program may have legal, medical and counseling needs. Some left neighborhoods where violence was typical.

Many have had traumatic life experiences, leaving them extra sensitive, mistrustful of authority and with short attention spans, according to Unrau.

She said program leaders learned this year that students needed two full-time staff members to act as resources. Initially it employed only part-time graduate assistants.

The two full-time "campus coaches" have backgrounds in counseling psychology and/or social work and are on call 24 hours a day.

Unrau said they field myriad issues from students, such as: "I can't find my assignment or I'm afraid to meet with a group of students or I just can't get out of bed and go to class.

"Their job is to help the students actually gain access to what's available and how to make use of it," she said.

Josie Graham, a 19-year-old Seita Scholar, said the campus coaches provide a lot of support.

"We don't have parents we can call if we are having trouble with a certain class. We don't have that go-to person," said the social-work major.

Graham said she became a foster child at age 14 because her mother, who was disabled and single, couldn't take care of her and her three siblings.

Graham said that with her college degree, "I want to give my family everything I can."

While some students in the first year of the program made the dean's list, others struggled academically. Even with all the support provided through the program, about half of the Seita Scholars left WMU for academic or other reasons in the first year.

The retention rate "for former foster youth is extremely low. We didn't start out the year thinking we would hit the average (freshman) rate the first year," Unrau said.

The general rate of retention rate for freshmen returning for their sophomore year at WMU is about 77 percent.

Unrau said the program is maintaining contact with students who dropped out, providing assistance that includes help locating housing and enrolling elsewhere.

"We're very committed to every student," she said.

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