

2011 Annual Report

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Western Wisconsin
Workforce Development System
Annual Report, 2011



2011

Dear Friends;

On behalf of the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development System, we are pleased to present our annual report. As an opening to this report, we would like to take a moment to reflect on some of our challenges and achievements over the past year.

We have faced the most difficult political landscape in recent memory. Balancing the need to set our fiscal house in order with the necessity to get our workforce fully engaged has been the top of everyone's agenda at the federal, state and local levels. All agree these are the priorities of the moment, but great divides have arisen as to how to accomplish the desired stability. We look forward to helping our leaders make wise and informed decisions over the next year as they set about the business of strengthening our country.

While the resolution to our external environmental pressures remains unclear, we have continued with piercing clarity as to our purpose of connecting people, work and training. Although our bedrock mission has remained unchanged, our strategies and tactics have not. Over the past 12 months, we have revamped our youth services to include partnerships with proven programs like Jobs for America's Graduates and Wiscorps; become more efficient in our administrative services; begun to break down organizational and program silos; and introduced an "employer-customer" philosophy with a re-focused effort on Industry Sectors.

None of this was accomplished without our first and greatest asset, our people. It has been disciplined people engaged in disciplined thought taking disciplined action who have led us through the innovations of the last year. It will be this same "First who, then what" philosophy steering us to future success.

In conclusion, although we have made great progress, we still have far to go. We look forward to a bright and exciting time, as we launch strategies aimed at strengthening our relationships with employers, becoming more efficient and community impactful and lessening our dependence upon the political forces in Washington and Madison.



Jamie Applin
Executive Director/CEO
Workforce Connections, Inc.



Rocky Shephard
Chair
Workforce Connections, Inc. Board



Daniel D. Braund
Chair
Workforce Development Board, Inc.
James Ehrsam
Chief LEO
Local Elected Officials

workforce connections board...

Workforce Connections, Inc. (WCI) is a private, non-profit organization who, since 1983, has been providing employment and training-related opportunities for individuals who experience barriers to obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment.



WCI has been appointed as the administrative and fiscal agent of the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development System; supporting the leadership and oversight capacities of the Local Elected Officials and the Workforce Development Board. WCI, with 28 years of workforce development experience, has the ability to deliver resources beyond traditional workforce programs; strengthening the system's support to businesses and jobseekers.

As a non-profit organization, Workforce Connections, Inc. is governed by a Board of Directors (BOD). The BOD provides operational oversight of the organization and their appointed administrative and fiscal obligations.

The WCI Board of Directors has established standing committees to perform the functions of the Board. The WCI committees and they functions they serve are as follows:

PERSONNEL AND COMPENSATION COMMITTEE

The Personnel and Compensation Committee provides direction to the Executive Director and management staff regarding: overall employee pay and benefits plan; revisions to personnel policies; and the evaluation process for the Executive Director.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Strategic Development Committee focuses on the organization's strategic future by examining and providing direction which considers the short and long-term factors that will affect the organization. They assist in assessing the organization's strengths and weaknesses as well as identify opportunities and threats, thereby providing direction for the development of the strategic plan.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The Oversight Committee reviews and forwards recommendations to the Board of Directors in areas such as: audits; internal and external monitoring reports; internal management, financial and performance reports; and associated internal management systems.

2011-12 WCI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rocky Shepherd, Chair
Freudenberg - NOK

Rick Mickschl, Vice-Chair
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers

Jennifer Kuderer, Secretary/Treasurer
La Crosse Area Development Corporation

Bruce Ardet
Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Kurt Bear
Mid-City Steel

Catherine Kolkmeier
La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

Bob Hillary
Mayo Clinic Health System Franciscan Healthcare

Rocky Lisowski
Gold'n Plump Poultry

Bruce May
University of Wisconsin - La Crosse
College of Business Administration

Bud Miyamoto
Market & Johnson of La Crosse

David Ring
Kwik Trip

highlights

September 2010
LEADERSHIP TRANSITION
Workforce Connections, Inc.'s Executive Director, Jerry Hanoski, retires after 27 years of service. Jamie Applin, of MichiganWORKS, accepts the position.

February 2011
CAPITAL CONNECTION
Workforce Development System Leadership visited western Wisconsin constituents in Madison to share a unified vision.

April 2011
BUSINESS SURVEY
Under instruction from the Dept. of Workforce Development, a survey focused on the hiring and training needs of businesses in western Wisconsin was administered.

July 2011
JAG MODEL
WDB Youth Council selects the Jobs for America's Graduates program, proposed by Forward Service Corporation, as the new youth service delivery model for western Wisconsin.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: The System Approach

The Western Wisconsin Workforce Development System works hand-in-hand with local, regional, state and tri-state workforce development partners to meet the needs of employers in the regional laborshed.

Leadership of the Workforce Development System is provided on three different levels. The Local Elected Officials ensure that regulations and policies of the system are maintained, the Workforce Development Board provides strategic direction for the system, and the Workforce Connections, Inc. Board of Directors establish the operational management of the system.

The distinction of each Board in the system is important, but should not overshadow the function of the system as a whole. It is the collective drive of the partnerships within the workforce development system and the regional businesses the system serves that builds, grows and promotes the workforce of western Wisconsin.

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JOB SEEKERS NETWORK

This weekly workshop brings job seekers together to network with local employers and to educate job seekers on job attainment strategies.

Employers who have participated in the Job Seekers Network during the 2010-11 program year include:

Aerotek
Altra Credit
Associated Bank
Bio-Plasma
Burger King (Heartland Food Corp.)
Candlewood Suites
Centrally
Comfort Keepers
Consumer Credit Counseling
Festival Foods
Gundersen Lutheran
Harter's Quick Clean-up
Hillview Healthcare Center
Lakeview Healthcare Center
Logistics Health, Inc.
Mathy Construction
River Steel
Valley View Mall

one-stop job centers...

Through One-Stop Job Centers, adults and dislocated workers can access a continuum of services organized into three levels: core, intensive and training.

CORE SERVICES: include initial assessments, job search resources, job placement assistance and career counseling. These services are available to all who access the Job Center.

INTENSIVE SERVICES: include in-depth assessment, career counseling and planning, and pre-vocational services. These services are available for qualified individuals who are unemployed and unable to obtain employment through core services.

TRAINING SERVICES: include training - specific services for qualified unemployed and employed individuals needing additional training to reach self-sufficiency.

Workforce Connections, Inc. was awarded \$140,324 in a sub-grant from Western Technical College's Community Based Job Training Grant to provide 'Building Employment Skills Training' (BEST) Academies for adults and high school students. BEST Academies provide pre-vocational, industry focused skills training as preparation for post-secondary Skills Institutes or Associate's Degrees.

workforce development board...

The Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Inc. (WDB) was incorporated under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Fifty-one percent of the Board's regulated seats are to be occupied by business leaders, with the remaining seats held by education, labor, economic development and community-based organization representatives.

The WDB serves the eight county of western Wisconsin, including: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon.

The Workforce Development Board develops and supports regional workforce strategies. This is accomplished collaboratively with regional and tri-state industry sector leaders, regional economic development partners, and the technical college system. These key partners working together create an integrated service delivery approach to workforce development.

The work of the WDB is carried out in perfunctory committees. The members of the WDB are tasked to the committee the most appropriately aligns with their sector and professional focus. The WDB committees and the functions they serve are as follows:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee provides strategic oversight for Board functions that include: the WDB business plan, administrative budget and grant funds, WDB committees, One-Stop Operator, WDB staff, and local, regional and state partnerships.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Planning Committee provides programmatic oversight for Board functions that include: the WIA Plan, WIA adult and dislocated worker program performance and program subcontracts, and the 7 Rivers Region Exemplary Employer Recognition.

YOUTH COUNCIL

The Youth Council provides strategic oversight for youth-related Board functions that include: WIA youth program performance and program subcontracts, and youth services request for proposals (RFP).

SERVICE COORDINATION COMMITTEE

The Service Coordination Committee coordinates and aligns employment and training-related services in western Wisconsin to better serve the emergent and unemployed workforce.



2011-12 WDB MEMBERSHIP

Private Sector

Dan Braund, Chair
CenturyLink

Marina Abbott, Vice-Chair
Manpower, Inc.

Pete Eide, Secretary/Treasurer
Hillview Health Care Center

Judy Berg
Courtesy Corporation

Jerry Bloom
Oakdale Electric

Bob Brague
J.F. Brennan Company, Inc.

Trevor Hall
Coulee Coffee Roastery

Ellen Holt
Logistics Health, Inc.

Sharon Imes
Mediation/Arbitration Services

Bill Lenardson
River Valley Newspaper

Janine Luz
Gundersen Lutheran Health System

Jodi Roesler
Dairyland Power Cooperative

David Schams
Schams Financial Group, LLC
Water Lily Gifts

Education, Labor, CBO, Economic Development and One-Stop Partners

Patricia Balacek
Western Technical College

Greg Flogstad
Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission

Amy Grotzke
DWD-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Dan Hanson
Great Rivers United Way, Inc.

Terry Hicks
Western Wisconsin AFL-CIO

James Hill
La Crosse Area Development Corporation

Marcia Jagodzinske
Riverfront, Inc.

Grace Jones
Couleecap, Inc.

John Kriesel
Buffalo County

Guy Leavitt
CESA #4

Stephen Woessner
UW-La Crosse Small Business Development Center

James Young
Vernon County Human Services Office

Resources available through Job Centers and Employment Resource Centers include: access to the Job Center of Wisconsin website, resume writing assistance, labor market information and a variety of educational resources.

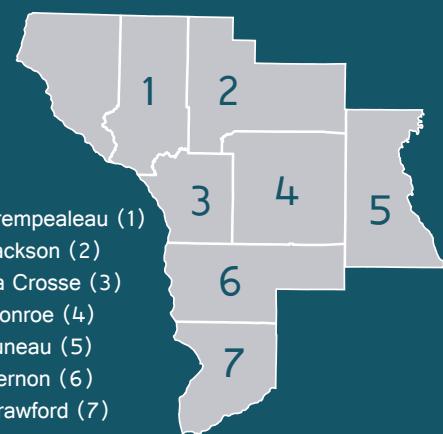
Employment workshops are offered monthly at the Comprehensive Job Centers. Specialized demand-industry pre-vocational training programs are made available throughout the year.

LOCATION	SERVED
La Crosse County (CJC*)	22,173
Monroe County (CJC*)	7,519
Crawford County	5,276
Jackson County	3,862
Juneau County	12,194
Trempealeau County	4,236
Vernon County	5,654

July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011

*Comprehensive Job Center

The Workforce Development Area of western Wisconsin has two designated Comprehensive One-Stop Job Centers located in La Crosse County and Monroe County, and five Employment Resource Centers located within Workforce Connections, Inc. offices in Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties.



2010-11 service levels

BEST ACADEMY DATES	MANUFACTURING SKILL-SETS	Enrolled	Completed
September 7-24, 2010	Industrial Mathematics	18	14
December 20, 2010 - January 12, 2011	Forklift Operation	15	11
April 25 - May 12, 2011	Manufacturing Skills Certification - Safety Job Search and Work Readiness	8	5

7 rivers region exemplary employer

The Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Inc. (WDB) recognizes innovative and sustainable recruitment and retention practices through the presentation of the 7 Rivers Region Exemplary Employer recognition.

The 2011 recognition honors one of the region's largest employers. With hospitality-focused employees that provide outstanding service and a consistently high-quality product, it is no wonder that the WDB has chosen Courtesy Corporation of Onalaska, Wisconsin, as this year's 7 Rivers Region Exemplary Employer.

Courtesy Corporation started more than 45 years ago with a single location on Losey Boulevard. Today, they have grown to include 43 McDonald's restaurants throughout western Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota and Decorah, Iowa. Courtesy Corporation is a fast-paced, progressive company that places high priority on providing hospitality to their customers, encouraging their employees and serving their communities.

Courtesy Corporation's 3,000 employees serve more than 16,000,000 people every year! Those employed by Courtesy Corporation include high-school-students, students working their way through college, senior citizens, and moms and dads; many of whom are managers or managers-in-the-making.

Taking an active role in each community where Courtesy Corporation's stores are located is an extremely important part of their overall focus. From school-to-work and business education programs, career fairs, involvement in Junior Achievement, and contributing to non-profit organizations through Ronald McDonald House Charities of western Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota, Courtesy Corporation enjoys the roles it plays in the communities it serves.



2011-12 LEO MEMBERSHIP

James Ehrsam, Chief
La Crosse County

Del Twit
Buffalo County

Pete Flesch
Crawford County

Dennis Eberhardt
Jackson County

Ed Brown
Juneau County

Rick Irwin
Monroe County

Ernie Vold
Trempealeau County

Tom Spenner
Vernon County

local elected officials...

The Western Wisconsin Counties Consortium, referred to as the Local Elected Officials (LEOs), played a creative role in the development of today's workforce development system. Merging the strengths of regional workforce development partners, the LEOs created an integrated, demand-driven system focused on growing and supporting a quality workforce for the employers of western Wisconsin.

The LEOs work in partnership with the Workforce Development Board (WDB) to ensure that employers' workforce needs are being met, job seekers are being served and the local economy is thriving.

The western Wisconsin Local Elected Officials represent the counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon.



In Memory of Donald E. "Don" Evenson

Don was appointed as the Jackson County Board representative to the Western Wisconsin Counties Consortium (Local Elected Officials) in 1996 and served in this capacity until his retirement from the County Board in early 2011. Throughout the years, he served western Wisconsin providing expertise and leadership to the workforce development system. In 1999, as the employment and training system began to evolve from the Job Training Partnership Act to the Workforce Investment Act, Don's history and knowledge assisted the Consortium to ensure a seamless transition. Today, the Consortium is a strong partner with the local Workforce Development Board, in part, due to Don's service to our workforce development area.

Don passed away on August 15, 2011. He shall be remembered for his leadership and dedication to service. The Western Wisconsin Counties Consortium, Workforce Connections, Inc. and the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Inc. posthumously honor Don for his 15 plus years of service to western Wisconsin.

yes americorps...

YES AmeriCorps is a national and community service program described as a domestic Peace Corps. The program serves communities, agencies and schools in western Wisconsin with sites in La Crosse, Monroe and Vernon Counties. After an 11-month commitment, YES AmeriCorps members leave a footprint in the communities they serve by increasing opportunities for success, promoting literacy, reducing hunger, expanding volunteer services and ... Getting Things Done!

During the 2010-11 program year, 17 full-time members served their communities in the following capacities:

- Mentored and/or tutored 711 students in 7 area elementary schools, including: Hamilton, Hintgen, Summit, Franklin, Coulee Montessori, Northwoods and Maplewood.
- All AmeriCorps members received CPR/First Aid certification.
- Honored Martin Luther King Jr. Day by engaging 280 students in discussions about Dr. King and issues of equality, justice and peace. A food drive and book drive, that collected 416 children's books that were distributed to local organizations, were also coordinated.
- Distributed 2239.5 pounds of food from the Southside Community Garden to the residents of the Coulee Region.
- Recruited and managed 1,504 volunteers who completed 17,636 hours of service at local non-profit agencies.

The total cost of the 2010-11 AmeriCorps program is \$391,246. A grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service covers 56% of the cost, with 44% coming from local sources.

Judith A Bouffleur Volunteer Award

On April 8th, the YES AmeriCorps program was awarded the Judith A. Bouffleur Volunteer Award from the Children's Museum of La Crosse. This award was created in 1999 in honor of one of the Museum's founding volunteers who started up the Museum. Ms. Bouffleur is a very prominent individual in the community and is highly involved in the non-profit sector in the Coulee Region.

Christina Knudsen, Project Director at the Museum, stated, "YES AmeriCorps was selected because of all the wonderful things you do in the community." She continued, "We also did it because we felt you do so much and with all the funding cuts happening...AmeriCorps does such good that we don't want it to go away in our community. We cannot thank you enough."



Courtesy Corporation in their words...

Crew Trainer (3+ years)

"I was unhappy as a customer service phone rep. in a program where I could do very little to resolve customers' issues. I no longer wanted to sit in front of a computer screen for 8 hours a day and be required to work weekends. It was an ad in the newspaper offering flexible scheduling and week day hours that caught my attention. My interview with Courtesy Corporation (McDonald's) was conducted on-site by professional, friendly staff. I have been with Courtesy Corporation for over 3 years and with the regular training I receive, I have moved into a Crew Trainer position. I find value in my role and enjoy the challenges it brings. I appreciate that I work in an environment where successes are recognized and constructive feedback is given when necessary. There are so many aspects of my job that bring me joy, but if I narrowed it down to one thing, it would be the face-to-face contact with our customers."

Crew Trainer / Playland Manager (2 years)

"When I initially applied for a position with Courtesy Corporation (McDonald's), my main focus was to save up for college and off-set some bills. What I didn't expect was all the benefits offered, the more than agreeable pay and the consistency of raises for work well done. Since my first day, I have never felt discouraged. The Managers and Crew Trainers are patient and compassionate in their approach. If mistakes are made, redirection is given without judgement. I have come to see our management team as not only mentors but friends. Working at Courtesy Corporation has created a gateway for me to meet new friends and encounter new experiences; I have opened up more as a person. All these factors have contributed to my success and have enabled me to take a recent promotion to Playland Manager. I would not be the person I am today without Courtesy Corporation (McDonald's)."

Technology Manager (28 years total)

"I began my employment with Courtesy Corporation (McDonald's) in 1982. It was the opportunity to work for a company that had a long-standing national reputation for nurturing the personal and professional growth of its employees, that initially attracted me to job the Courtesy Team. My initial expectations were met and more. I found a rewarding career path that allowed me to work side-by-side with co-workers who shared my high core values and strong work ethic; I found my 'home'. I work for an organization that recognizes me for the things I do well. But more importantly, I receive correction and redirection when needed, and it never feels like a reprimand. I have the pleasure of working in the same office as our owners, Dick and Rick. They often take time out of their busy day to stop, say hello and show an interest in me as a person. I appreciate them. They are both highly, highly, respected men; not for the power they wield but for the examples they set."

building opportunities...

Building Opportunities, a YouthBuild program, provides hands-on occupational skills training to individuals age 16-24 who have encountered barriers to earning their high school diploma.

Workforce Connections, Inc. has successfully completed its second year of Building Opportunities. Three cohorts, totalling 59 youth, attained individual and group accomplishments, which include:

	Number of Participants
Red Cross First Aid Certification	56
Red Cross Adult CPR Certification	55
American Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Workshop	31
Graduated High School or Earned a GED	38
Increased TABE Scores	40
Mock Interview Workshop	55
Forklift Truck Operator Certification	57
Driving School Completion	4
Tobacco Cessation Program	8

In addition, Building Opportunities participants receive financial literacy and budgeting training, job readiness and career planning training, and participate in leadership building activities.

build-site update

2412 South 14th Street, La Crosse
- stained base boards and stair trim
- installed all baseboard and case trim
- washed windows and house exterior
- installed linen closet in bathroom
- installed bathroom mirror and cabinet
- installed locksets and door stops
- filled all trim nail holes and blemishes

1513 Denton Street, La Crosse
- installed garage siding
- installed garage trim
- filled nail holes, screw holes and blemishes

The total cost of the Building Opportunities program is \$1,224,357. A YouthBuild grant from the U.S. Department of Labor covers 80% of the cost with 20% supported by local sources.

Self-Confidence through Leadership

Brent S. had a difficult upbringing. He grew up with two alcoholic parents who divorced when he was age 3. He reported at one time that he hadn't been "clean" for more than a month since he was in 9th grade in high school. His mother had him arrested twice while he was 17 years of age. When Brent came into the Building Opportunities (BO) program, he was already on his own financially, but was struggling without a parental support system.

Needless to say, Brent had anger and other issues to work through during the program. Brent's anger was evident when he talked about his childhood. His father was absent, and his mother had AODA issues of her own. She was unable to keep a job in order to support the two of them. With the support of our BO staff, Brent began to demonstrate a real desire to deal with his anger and AODA issues.

Brent gained self-confidence through leadership, work readiness and construction training. He was hired at Security Boss Manufacturing, LLC as a Laborer Cutter, and recently received a performance raise increase to \$10.50 an hour. Brent was recognized by his supervisor for recommending a solid job applicant (and fellow BO participant - see the adjacent success story), and was praised for taking on the task to train this new employee, without being asked.



several of her goals. She was hired nearly full time with Courtesy Corporation in July 2011, was able to study for and pass her driver's license test and find childcare. She also continues to work towards earning her GED by attending Goal Oriented Adult Learning classes at Western Technical College in Black River Falls.

"I am sincerely amazed with Andrea thus far and I believe she will continue to work towards her goals," Burnham said. "She was, and is, a motivated individual who honestly surprised me with her efforts to make it."

Nicholas remains in follow-up services with Workforce Connections, Inc. and hopes to pass the final two GED tests by the end of 2011.

youth offender expansion...

Expanding Opportunities is a program developed specifically for youth ages 14-21 who have had contact with the juvenile justice system. Workforce Connections, Inc. partners with the Upper Explorerland Region 1 Employment and Training, ECIA in Iowa and Workforce Development, Inc. in Minnesota to expand the highly successful X-Treme Opportunity which served youth who have been adjudicated in the adult court system.

The aim of Expanding Opportunities is to assist youth in developing and working towards a career goals. The program provides services including: life skills attainment, skills assessment, career exploration, Individualized Employment Plans (IEP), GED/HSED or occupational skills training, work readiness experience and counseling services (AODA, mental health or behavior health).

Expanding Opportunities also provides accessibility for those with disabilities and assists individuals seeking parenting skills, financial literacy, and/or mentoring support services. Over 150 individuals have been served in this program during the 2010-11 program year.

2010-11 service levels

Enrollment Rate	118%
Recidivism Rate	5%
Long-Term Placement Rate	62%
Diploma/GED/HSED Rate	44%
Participation Rate	+100%

wisconsin works...

Wisconsin Works (W-2) is an employment-based assistance program for low-income families with dependent children. W-2 helps participants successfully rejoin the workforce.

Workforce Connections, Inc. provides W-2 and related services in Buffalo, Columbia, Douglas, Jackson, Juneau, Monroe, Pierce, Sawyer, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon and Washburn Counties.

Wisconsin Works provides child care, medical and transportation assistance; short-term, no-interest loans; food share support; and translation/interpretation services to qualifying families and individuals.

The 2010-11 program summary includes:

- Wisconsin Works (W-2) served 751 individuals.
- Wisconsin Shares, a program designed to help eligible families with the cost of adequate and reliable child care options, served 1,477 families monthly.
- Emergency Assistance, provided to help secure permanent housing, served 585 adults and 951 children.
- Food Share Employment Training (FSET), a voluntary program that helps find, maintain or advance in employment, served 134 individuals in Buffalo, Columbia, Douglas, Jackson, Juneau, Monroe, Pierce, St. Croix, Vernon and Washburn Counties.
- Children First, an employment program that helps non-custodial parents meet their child support obligations, served 35 individuals in Buffalo, Jackson, Juneau, Monroe, Pierce, Sawyer, Trempealeau and Vernon Counties.

W2 and related programs are funded through the State of Wisconsin Dept. of Children and Families using TANF funds. FSET is funded through the State of Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services using TANF funds.

Hardwork and a Helping Hand

Andrea Nicholas had goals for her life: obtain employment, find reliable daycare for her young daughter, earn her GED and become an independent, good mom. She summed her goal up by saying she wanted to accomplish a good lifestyle, which would also include staying up to date with bills by paying them on time.

Nicholas had ways to go to reach her goal. When she first visited Workforce Connections, Inc. (WCI) Nicholas was unemployed, had less than a high school education did not have a driver's license and lacked work experience. She was also on probation from an earlier theft conviction and struggled with an anxiety disorder, dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Nicholas and Lisa Burnham, employment coordinator with WCI, met in March 2011 and came up with an employment plan that also included Nicholas's educational and other personal goals.

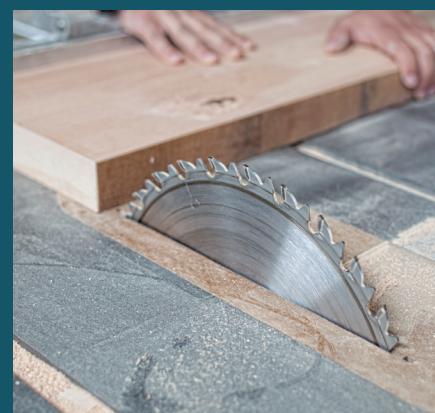
Burnham and WCI also provided Nicholas with support ranging from transportation assistance to weekly support meetings to interviewing and resume building.

Since establishing her employment plan, Nicholas has put forth hard work and determination. And with the help of WCI staff and services, has reached

Stability Gained

Rocky worked hard to earn his place in our Building Opportunities program. He was homeless at the time of his application and had been dealing with an adult offense on his record. Rocky had a difficult childhood, dealing with ADD/ADHD, which was diagnosed in third grade, and had been placed in special education classes. He also had AODA issues and had been "kicked out" by his parents home right after he turned age 18.

The Building Opportunities program provided Rocky with the stability he needed to begin to straighten his life out. The leadership, construction and work readiness training helped him learn that he could be successful in the workforce and in his life as he started dealing with his AODA issues. Rocky started a job at Security Boss Manufacturing, LLC and is working 40 hours a week where he is earning \$10.25 an hour.



transitional jobs through constructing opportunities and more...

Transitional Jobs Demonstration Project (TJDP), is designed to provide income eligible adults, who meet program guidelines, with skills development and work experience through limited-term employment.

During the 2010-11 program year, Workforce Connections, Inc. created 31 subsidized transitional jobs. Ten of these jobs were crew-based work experiences on a construction site. The training crew worked to rehab residential housing sites for the city of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Participants that demonstrated appropriate attendance, behavior and work ethic were transitioned to a community employer host work-site.

Additional job placements include a local silk screen print business, powder coating business, glass recycling business, auto parts delivery business, tree trimming business, corrugating business, electronic recycling business, and a carpentry and furniture manufacturing business.

Badger Corrugating
The Board Store
NAPA Auto Parts
Elite Trees
Designz
River City Powder Coating
AMV, LLC
Dynamic Recycling
Howard Johnson Hotel
Advanced Fiber Products, Inc.
Bernard Construction

employer hosts

Funded by a \$304,047 TJDP grant from the Department of Children and Families, and support from the City of La Crosse.

connections to independence...

Connections to Independence helps individuals with disabilities and employment barriers find experience in a tailored work environment. Workforce Consultants stay in regular contact with area employers and other support service programs to ensure that both the participant and employer's workforce needs are being met.

Workforce Connections, Inc. operates Connections to Independence in seven western Wisconsin counties: Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon. Services specific to Connections to Independence include:

- Employment Service to Individuals with Disabilities: Employment Coordinators work closely with the clients, counselors from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Western Wisconsin Cares and employers to develop paid work experiences, complete assessments and fill job placements.
- Ticket to Work Services: These services link clients with an employment coordinator to develop a strategy to get the clients back to work and reduce their Social Security dependency.
- Social Security Assistance: Individuals applying for Social Security benefits are provided support with documentation and navigation of the system. A Benefits Specialist also helps explain how employment affects the participant's benefits.

2010-11 service levels

Crawford County	18
Jackson County	11
Juneau County	25
La Crosse County	81
Monroe County	25
Trempealeau County	6
Vernon County	43

Rough Life

To put it plainly, John Cox has had a rough life. During his adolescent years, he experienced bi-polar disorder which plagued him into adulthood. John had alcohol and drug dependency issues, and maintaining a job was not easy for him.

After many attempts at different forms of employment - quitting most and being terminated from the others, John realized that recovery from his AODA tendencies and addressing his mental health issues needed to be his priority if he was ever going to find success.

John wants to help people like himself, individuals struggling with AODA issues and in need of someone who understands the daily challenges. With the help from Workforce Connections, Inc.'s (WCI) 'Connections to Independence' program and the support of his WCI employment coordinator, Ellen Clason, John is well on his way to achieving his goal.

Ellen has been working with John since January of 2010. During this time, John has taken an active interest in his personal and professional development. John was a job coach and a peer mentor, and he is currently working towards his bachelor's degree in addiction counseling at Viterbo University and Western Technical College.

Growing-up Quickly

For 18 year old, Brandon Young life has presented many challenges to overcome. Brandon entered into Couleecap, Inc.'s Youth Employment and Training (YET) program in Monroe County in 2009. At the time, Brandon and his family were homeless and he was forced to grow up quickly.

In May of 2010 Brandon graduated from Sparta High School. From that point on Brandon decided it was time to focus on finding a full-time job and explore the idea of college.

Brandon had a difficult time landing an interview anywhere on his own due to his lack of job experience. After talking to any employment agency, Brandon was given an interview with Northern Engraving. Brandon admittedly nervous and concerned about what to say participated in mock interviews with his YET Coordinator, Matt Gaworski.

Brandon's hard work and determination paid off, as of December 2010 Brandon has been employed full-time with Northern Engraving. Now his main struggle is getting up for his early shift.

Brandson has been saving money so his family can move out of temporary housing soon. Brandon has also been meetings with guidance counselors at Western Technical College.

wia youth...

The WIA Youth Program assists youth ages 14-21 with career planning and work experience. Program services focus on life skills training, job search and application assistance, job placement and industry-specific training.

During the 2010-11 program year, Couleecap, Inc. provided WIA youth services through their YET (Youth Employment and Training) program in Crawford, Juneau, Monroe and Vernon Counties. Workforce Connections, Inc. provided WIA youth services in Buffalo, Jackson and Trempealeau Counties.

One hundred seventy-five (175) western Wisconsin youth were served in the 2010-11 program year, meeting the planned program enrollments.

2010-11 service levels

	Standard	Actual	Status
WIA YOUTH			
Degree/Certificate	75.0%	73.7%	meet
Literacy/Numeracy Gain	30.0%	44.4%	exceed
Employment/Education	72.0%	75.0%	exceed

wia adult & dislocated workers...

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) offers a comprehensive range of workforce development services for eligible adults and workers who have recently dislocated from their employer and are unlikely to return to their previous industry or occupation. Adult and dislocated worker services are provided through locally-based One-Stop Job Centers.

Workforce Connections, Inc. provides WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services in the counties of Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon. During the 2010-11 program year, 202 adults and 524 dislocated workers received employment-related support services and/or specialized training.

Two hundred and twenty-one (221) of the adult and dislocated workers receiving WIA services participated in demand-industry training, and of those in training 39 percent received healthcare-related training.

2010-11 service levels

	Standard	Actual	Status
WIA ADULT			
Entered Employment	72.0%	67.8%	meet
Six Month Retention	86.0%	80.8%	meet
Average Earnings	\$9,800	\$10,563	exceed
WIA DISLOCATED WORKERS			
Entered Employment	84.0%	84.3%	exceed
Six Month Retention	93.0%	91.5%	meet
Average Earnings	\$14,400	\$14,684	exceed

Workforce Investment Act programs are funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.

Overcame Barrier

John Andrews' choices in his past were making it difficult for him to find a job. Andrews came to Workforce Connections, Inc. (WCI) unemployed and with an adult conviction record.

Heather Bettmann, employment coordinator with WCI, began helping Andrews with searching for a job, developing his resume and perfecting his interviewing skills.

But it was a call Bettmann received from Nelson Hardwoods in Prairie du Chien looking for job candidate referrals that really turned the tides for Andrews. "I discussed John's qualifications and the employer agreed to meet with him," Bettmann said. "John went on an interview and was offered the position that day."

Nelson Harwoods is aware of Andrews' history, but Bettmann said he was able to overcome that past. "John was very honest and forthcoming about his conviction history," she said. "That, with his demeanor and how well he interviewed was how he got the job." Andrews was very grateful for the help WCI provided.

"He mentioned that without our help, he wasn't sure if he could overcome his barrier," Bettmann said. "He had tried everything to obtain employment but never was successful."

WCI has continued to aid Andrews since he began working by providing him with work boots and clothing for his outdoor work.



In addition to his schooling, John participated in training and an internship to prepare himself to pass the State of Wisconsin's Peer Specialist Certification Exam.

John is currently working at the Family & Children's Center in Viroqua, WI, and hopes to continue working there after he receives his degree.

industry sector initiatives...

The Western Wisconsin Workforce Development System is focused on developing and supporting industry partnerships in western Wisconsin and through our tri-state alliance with AIM2WIN. The following industry partnership grants were collaboratively acquired and administered during the 2010-11 program year.

- **Bio Plastic Industry Partnership Grant (\$25,000):** A SWOT analysis conducted by Western Technical College and Winona State University was used to develop strategic direction for this sector that included: utilization of workforce shortages, communication technology, product customization, alternate energy sources and creating a local talent pool.

- **Energy Industry Partnership Grant (\$25,000):** This initiative built upon the activities of the Western Technical College RISE Initiative and career laddering for the renewable energy industry was developed.

- **SAGE Convening Grant (\$9,819):** This grant supported the development of the emerging Green Energy Industry in the region. The partnership is structured to bring the unique needs of workforce development, including business needs, economic development and education. The partners represented energy, renewable energy, weatherization and energy audit providers.

- **FRAN Industry Partnership Grant (\$53,105):** The Food Resource and Agribusiness Network provided cross-training in areas identified by leading food manufacturers in the region. Seven training sessions were offered, and 91 employees participated from 15 companies.

- **Healthcare Industry Partnership Grant (\$88,393)** In response to the career laddering and retention efforts in the long-term-care arena, this grant assisted the Coulee Region Long Term Care Coalition by providing training in basic computer literacy for medical records, gerontology training and leadership training for direct care workers.

wisconsin senior employment...

WISE, Wisconsin Senior Employment Program, provides income-qualified adults, who are at least 55 years of age, with training and part-time paid work experience in community service organizations. The goal of this on-the-job experience is to build and improve the skills necessary to gain permanent employment.

During the 2010-11 program year, Workforce Connections, Inc. helped 33 adults increase their work experiences through WISE, and 7 participants obtained permanent employment. WISE services are accessible in Buffalo, Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, Pierce, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon and Wood Counties.

wise supported businesses and non-profits
Couleecap, Inc.
Bekkum Memorial Library
American Red Cross
Gifted Hands
Family Resources
Hmong Cultural Center
VMAC in Tomah
Goodwill Industries
Western Dairyland, Inc.
Veterans Assistance Program
Lakeview Healthcare Center
Riverfront, Inc.
Second Chances Restore
Melrose-Mindoro School District
Cents and Sensibility ReStore
Coulee Region Business Center
Workforce Connections, Inc.
Trempealeau County Health Care Center
Independence School District
La Crosse Job Center
Department of Motor Vehicles, Onalaska
Habitat for Humanity Project Restore
Pierce County ADRC and Nutrition Meal Sites
County of La Crosse - Recycling Center
Monroe County Senior Services and Nutritional Meal Sites
Alma Center, Humbird & Merrillan School District
Hillview Greenhouse Life Center
Whirling Thunder Ho-Chunk Tribal and Aging Unit
La Crosse County Dept. of Aging - Nutritional Meal Sites

The Title V - Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP) is funded by a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources.

Enough Running

Running had become a way of life for Amy Turner. The mother of two spent most of her adult life running from addictions, mental health issues and domestic violence. But in September 2010 she decided she had enough of the running, wanted to stabilize her life and become increasingly self sufficient. That's when she came to Workforce Connections, Inc. and connected with employment coordinator Lisa Burnham. Turner came to Burnham with gaps in her employment history and a track of frequent relocations.

Turner started her climb towards employment with a paid placement through the Wisconsin Works program. She spent nearly a year in paid placement and while her old tendencies to run sometimes came out, Burnham said Turner stuck with it.

Eventually Turner was placed to work at River Country Fitness, LLC in Black River Falls as a gym attendant. It was perfect fit for Turner, who has long been interested in body building and self-defense. Three months into her placement, Turner was hired.



"She has a love for it. She has plans to offer self-defense classes to women," Burnham said. "The opportunities of what Amy can and will do in this field are endless."

Flexibility and Family

Willie M., seen below with his newly purchased 2001 Pontiac Grand Am, applied for transportation assistance through Workforce Connections, Inc.'s 'Transportation Connections' program on August 31, 2010.



Willie is employed by Best Buy and needs the flexibility to travel as a direct part of his employment. Willie also has family and school obligations that require personal transportation for he and his two children.

Willie met program requirements and completed his vehicle purchase on October 15, 2010 at Clason's Pontiac Buick in LaCrosse, WI.

As you can see from the photo Willie is very pleased with the vehicle that is roomy enough for his family and is economical to afford.

transportation connections...

Transportation Connections consists of several programs that assist low-income and/or persons with disabilities meet their transportation needs. This includes assistance with transportation services such as vehicle registration, obtaining or reinstatement of driver's license, adaptive vehicle devices, or purchasing a bicycle.

Workforce Connections, Inc. assists qualifying individuals with day-to-day transportation expenses including mileage reimbursement, zero percent vehicle loans for the purchase of a new vehicle, and vehicle service and repair needs.

2010-11 service levels

WETAP Loans	12
WETAP Repairs	80
WETAP Misc. Transportation Services	45
New Freedom Resource Manuals	5
New Freedom Trips Provided	218
New Freedom Miles Operated	1542

WETAP is a joint project of the Wisconsin Dept. of Workforce Development and the Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation. The local program is funded by a grant for \$252,535 and local matching dollars. New Freedom is paid for by a \$71,782 grant from the Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation.