



Human Services Network Announcements February, 2008

Agency Announcements

Sharon Bisher of Hillsdale County Community Foundation announced that HCCF is hosting a “Board Governance For Non-Profits” training seminar on March 25, 2008, from 9:00am – 12:30pm at the Dow Leadership Center, Conference Rooms A and B. The seminar is aimed at nonprofit executive directors and board members, and will be presented by a representative from Michigan Non-Profit Association (MNA). Topics covered will be fiduciary duties, basic board responsibilities, and best practices. It is limited to four participants per organization, and the cost is \$10 per person. Please RSVP to HCCF at (517)439-5101 by Wednesday, March 19.

Matt Frizzell of Hillsdale County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition announced that Key Leader Surveys had been returned to him, and thanked the HSN for their assistance with that project. The Town Hall Meeting on Underage Drinking is set for March 27, 2008, at 7:00pm at the Senior Center – more details to follow in the coming weeks.

Sarah Hartzler of South Central Michigan Works! (SCMW!) announced their 4th Annual Legislative Breakfast on March 10, 8:00am at Time Out Sports and Spirits in Hillsdale. Please RSVP to Sarah at (517)437-0990 x-171, or shartzler@scmw.org.

Jan Bellamy of CAPA (Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness) announced that the Real Men Rock campaign is underway – posters are available at the CAPA office for distribution and display. The Children’s Yellow Pages will be available soon.

Laurie Benzing of United Way announced that United Way has achieved 93% of the campaign goal. The campaign is slated to be complete on February 29, and the allocation process will begin on March 7.

Jane Munson of Key Opportunities announced that JARC money (job transportation) has not been received as of this date. There will be a New Freedom transportation meeting immediately following the HSN meeting (since rescheduled for Friday, Feb. 29, at 10am).

Brook Rains of Child Care Network announced that they are still providing services to Hillsdale County. For referrals on child care openings, call (800)777-2861 or visit www.childcarenetwork.org.

Brenna Wheeler of 2-1-1 thanked the HSN for their support of the 2-1-1 project, and that the system is fully-funded and operational. She urged all agencies and organizations to keep the 2-1-1 database up-to-date by forwarding all changes to 211@lifewaysmco.com.

General Announcements

From the Jackson Citizen-Patriot:

Class on mailing rules planned in Jonesville

Saturday, February 25, 2008

Citizen Patriot staff report

The Jonesville post office will offer a free class on mailing requirements from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday at Jonesville High School, 460 Adrian St.

The class will address mail piece design, bulk mail, business reply mail and shape-based rates. After three 20-minute overviews, participants will be able to ask questions and consult with U.S. Postal Service mailing requirements specialists. The first 25 people to register for the class will be entered in a drawing to win a 10-pound postage scale.

Community Action Agency - Income Tax Assistance Program

This program is available in Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale Counties.

Overview

Through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, Community Action Agency provides trained tax preparers to complete and efile your basic tax returns so you receive your refund. You may also be eligible for the Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Credit, Homestead Credit, Home Heating Credit or a Prescription Drug Refund. A special free tax program, just for senior citizens, is also available. Trained volunteer preparers are available to assist you with questions.

Who Is Eligible? Low Income families needing to file their income tax returns are eligible.

Additional Program Information What you will need to do: Contact Community Action Agency to schedule an appointment and to find out what documents you need to bring with you. At your appointment, the trained volunteer preparer will enter your tax information into the computer and print out a copy of your completed income tax documents. Your return will be efiled directly to the IRS and State of Michigan. For more information or if you would like to volunteer, email Chris Kilmer or call: 1-800-941-0004

Community Action Agency will:

Provide community members with office locations in Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale Counties where you can have your taxes prepared - at no cost to you!

Complete, print and efile on your behalf your income tax documents.

Be available to answer basic income tax questions or direct you to appropriate specialist.

For more information or if you would like to volunteer, email Chris Kilmer.

Scholarships support program for foster-care youth

Jan. 18, 2008

KALAMAZOO--The members of one of the nation's most underserved college-age populations will get help making their higher education dreams come true, thanks to a new scholarship and support initiative being launched at Western Michigan University this fall.

WMU's Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is an effort being launched in coordination with the Michigan Campus Compact and the Michigan Department of Human Services. The pilot program is designed to recruit and offer a support structure and financial aid for young people who have aged out of foster care and who qualify for admission or transfer to WMU. While the intent is to target Michigan's foster care youth, the program is open to qualified students from any state.

The initiative will create a community of scholars among WMU students who grew up in foster care and will attempt to fill the unique support needs that exist for the students who have no adult mentors and no permanent home outside their college residence and who have specialized legal, medical, counseling and financial needs. The goal will be to help foster youth, who age out of care between the ages of 18 and 20, make the transition to adulthood through higher education.

"We cannot, as a society, afford to lose the potential these young people represent," says WMU President John M. Dunn. "At Western Michigan University, we are passionate about insuring that no segment of our society is kept from having access to higher education. This University, with its broad range of programs, excellent faculty and strong support systems is well positioned to make success for these young people a reality."

Michigan Department of Human Services Director Ismael Ahmed applauds WMU's commitment to foster youths.

"Programs like this one are essential to improve outcomes," he said. "The University's leadership is the model for other institutions to provide the support and resources foster youths need to lead productive lives."

Chief among the tools WMU will use to support foster youth is the John Seita Scholarship, named for a three-time WMU alumnus who grew up in foster care and has become one of the nation's foremost experts on and advocates for foster youth. Seita, who has published extensively on the topics of foster care and youth development and whose background includes work with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, is being honored this month with the 2007 Ruth Massing Foster Care Alumni Award through Casey Family programs--an offshoot of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Only one foster care alumni a year is selected in the United States.

The Seita Scholarship will provide foster youth aging out of care with undergraduate tuition. Recipients will be required to live on campus, and year-round, on-campus housing will be available, thus providing students with the stability of knowing they have a roof over their heads even during semester breaks.

Seita, now an associate professor of social work at Michigan State University, says people unfamiliar with the plight of former foster youth, often underestimate the importance of housing stability for a student trying to pursue a college degree. Before he became a student at WMU, Seita briefly attended a small Michigan liberal arts college. When his fellow students went home for the holidays, he had no place to go. When college administrators could offer him no assistance, he spent his holiday recess sneaking in and out of a residence hall and scrambling to find a way to eat.

Other tools in WMU's foster care initiative will include:

- adult assistance to young people who need help and encouragement with admissions and financial aid forms;
- a partnership with Kalamazoo Valley Community College to facilitate the transfer of foster youth to WMU;
- a work study component to provide additional life skills and campus connections for students in the program; and
- a marketing drive with state agencies that will publicize the initiative to Michigan middle schools, high schools, foster care agencies and foster parent associations.

In addition, a support network on the campus and in the Kalamazoo community will be constructed and include professionals in the areas of career planning, mentoring, tutoring, counseling and legal services. Support services may also include providing the students with an opportunity to catch up on such life skills as banking, budgeting and time management.

Annually, more than 500 young people age out of Michigan's foster care system. Nationally, the figure is about 20,000. While 70 percent aspire to go to college, only about 20 percent actually enroll and only a quarter of those students go on to earn a degree. That compares to a national college attendance figure for college-age youth of about 67 percent.

In addition to their financial and housing problems, a number of other issues come into play with former foster students. Foster care youth, for instance, frequently lack adult encouragement and role models and often are unfamiliar with college and career options.

"There is a whole set of characteristics and a comfort level that most children acquire through what I call 'family privilege,'" Seita says. "It's something children in traditional families never even think about, but foster kids just never have the opportunity to acquire those traits."

The Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is an outgrowth of a statewide summit in April 2007 in which WMU joined with representatives from colleges and state agencies to begin assessing the situation and begin post-secondary planning for Michigan's foster care population. Planning for the WMU program accelerated in the fall of 2007 with the support of WMU's new president, Dunn. A student advisory group made up of current WMU students who formerly lived in foster care is assisting with the planning effort. First-time freshmen or transfer students who were in foster care or were wards of the state at the time of their high school graduation are eligible to apply for WMU's John Seita Scholarship. Recipients must meet WMU's admission requirements, complete the University's admissions process, fill out a federal financial aid form each year, live on campus and agree to a basic set of conditions that will include maintaining a minimum GPA and taking part in academic support programs such as First Year Experience.

Additional information on how the program will work is available by contacting one of WMU's three principal planners: Penny Bundy, director of admissions, at (269) 387-2000; Mark Delorey, director of financial aid and scholarships, at (269) 387-6037; or Dr. Yvonne Unrau, associate professor of social work, at (269) 387-3185. John Seita, for whom the scholarship is named, can be reached at (269) 501-5487.

Media contact: Cheryl Roland, (269) 387-8400, cheryl.roland@wmich.edu

WMU News

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From the MSHDA (MI State Housing Development Authority) website:



***“Save the Dream” toll-free number
866-946-7432***

Operated by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), the hotline directs homeowners to a housing counselor in their county or to technical experts in MSHDA's Homeownership Division. The toll-free hotline is a part of MSHDA's “Save the Dream” campaign, to protect homeownership.

If you are having financial problems, don't risk losing your home - there are options available. Take the first step by contacting your lender or a [MSHDA LINKS to Homeownership Counselor](#) today.

From the New York Times:

OPINION | February 18, 2008

Op-Ed Columnist: Poverty Is Poison

By PAUL KRUGMAN

To be poor in America today, even more than in the past, is to be an outcast in your own country. And that, the neuroscientists tell us, is what poisons a child's brain.

For the rest of the op-ed article, go to:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/18/opinion/18krugman.html?emc=eta1>