



# Program Year 2017 Annual Report

*Creating a competitive, skilled and educated workforce  
by providing a system for individuals to gain meaningful  
employment in response to the needs of business.*



**The Workforce Connection  
Board Members 2017-2018**

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**Chief Elected Officials**

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City of Rockford

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Frank Haney  
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To: Members of The Workforce Connection Board  
Chief Elected Officials  
The Winnebago, Boone & Stephenson County Communities

It has been a successful year for The Workforce Connection. We are proud to be the leader of the workforce development system in the region. As the administrator of nearly \$5 million in federal funds, The Workforce Connection has worked very closely with employers, community leaders and partners to increase awareness of the many resources available to help both businesses expand and workers connect to new opportunities.

At the same time unemployment in our communities is the lowest it has been in years, the demand from employers for a skilled workforce continues to grow. In the past fiscal year, more than \$2.2 million dollars was spent connecting nearly 500 individuals to training in high demand job sectors, including manufacturing, health care, transportation and logistics and information technology. It is a wonderful partnership, with training opportunities ranging from truck driving or welding to computer and other technical skills offered through our community colleges and other training providers made possible by financial support available through The Workforce Connection.

Employers have taken advantage of the assistance available through our programs to increase the skill level of both new hires and existing workers. There have been success stories with several area businesses, including Magna International and Ceroni Piping. In the coming year there will be an increased emphasis on these programs which are essential if our local businesses are going to be successful in finding the workers they need to compete and grow.

The Workforce Connection Board completed its first year of an innovative One-Stop Partner arrangement with Rock Valley College, Goodwill Industries and Illinois Department of Employment Security. This unique partnership demonstrates true collaboration to meet the workforce needs in our communities.

Finally, the past year saw a change in leadership for our organization. With the retirement of Darcy Bucholz, we welcomed Dr. Lisa Bly as the new Executive Director. Dr. Bly has exceptional commitment to workforce development and the mission of The Workforce Connection. Through her leadership, the mission, "To create a competitive, skilled and educated workforce by providing a system for individuals to gain meaningful employment in response to the needs of business," remains strong.

Sincerely,  
Karen C. Brown  
Chair, The Workforce Connection Board  
Vice President, Chief Operating Officer  
OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center

*The Workforce Connection, the local public workforce development system, is the foundation for the implementation of WIOA in Boone, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties. The Workforce Connection is a network of organizations delivering employment, education and training services. The goal is to align and integrate services to increase cost-effectiveness and accessibility, helping individuals gain the skills necessary to meet the needs of our employers. We welcome your active participation as we move forward connecting employers with a highly skilled workforce.*



**\$2,205,194**

spent on job training in Boone, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties

**112**

individuals earned their high school equivalency certificates.

**More than 28,000**

visits were made to One-Stop Centers for career services.

**474**

individuals received training in high demand job sectors, such as manufacturing, health care, transportation & logistics and information technology.

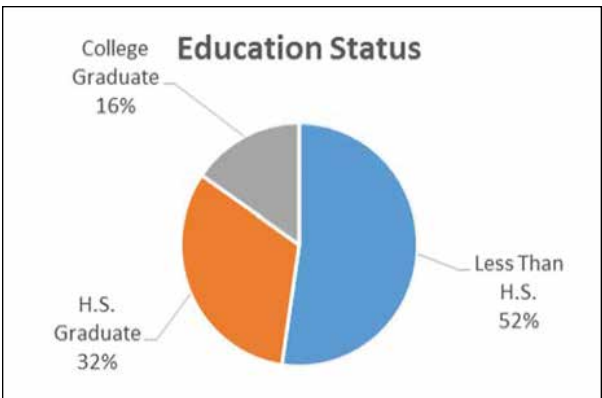
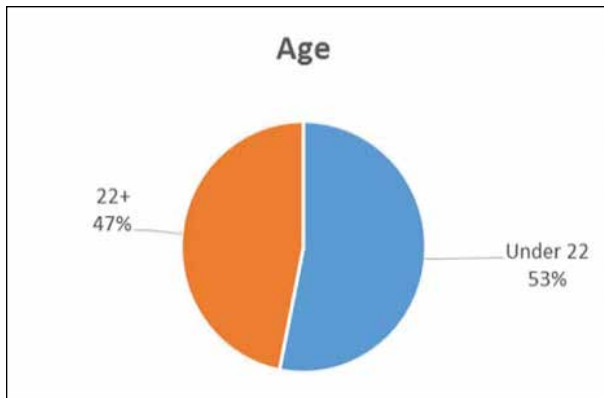
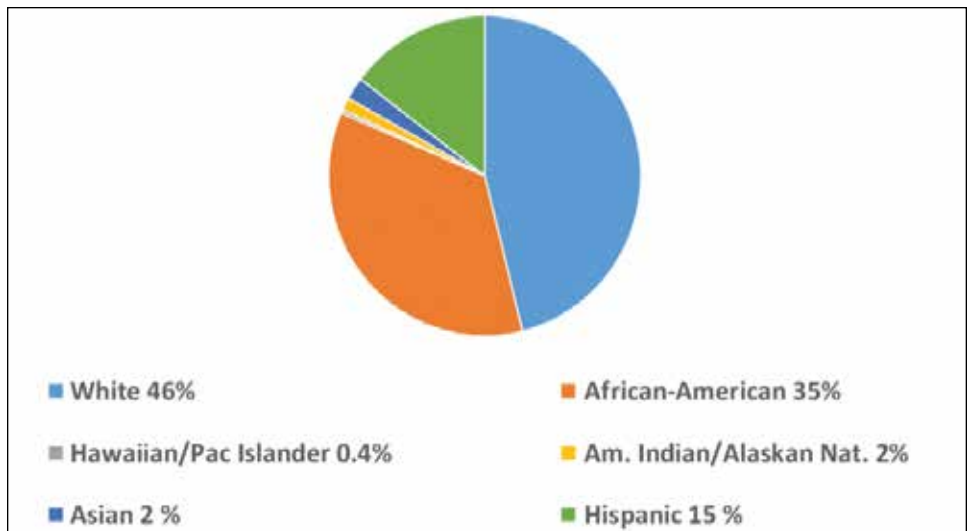
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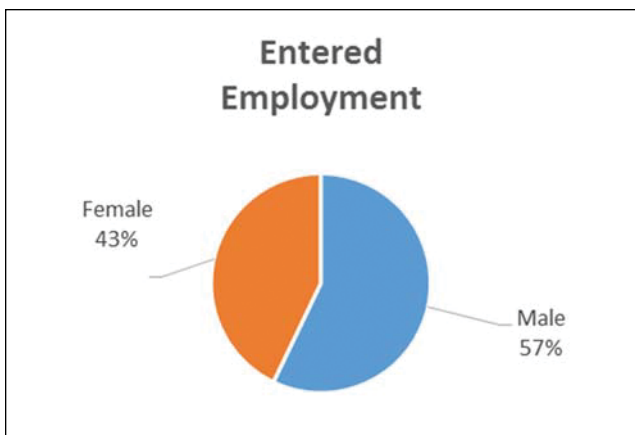
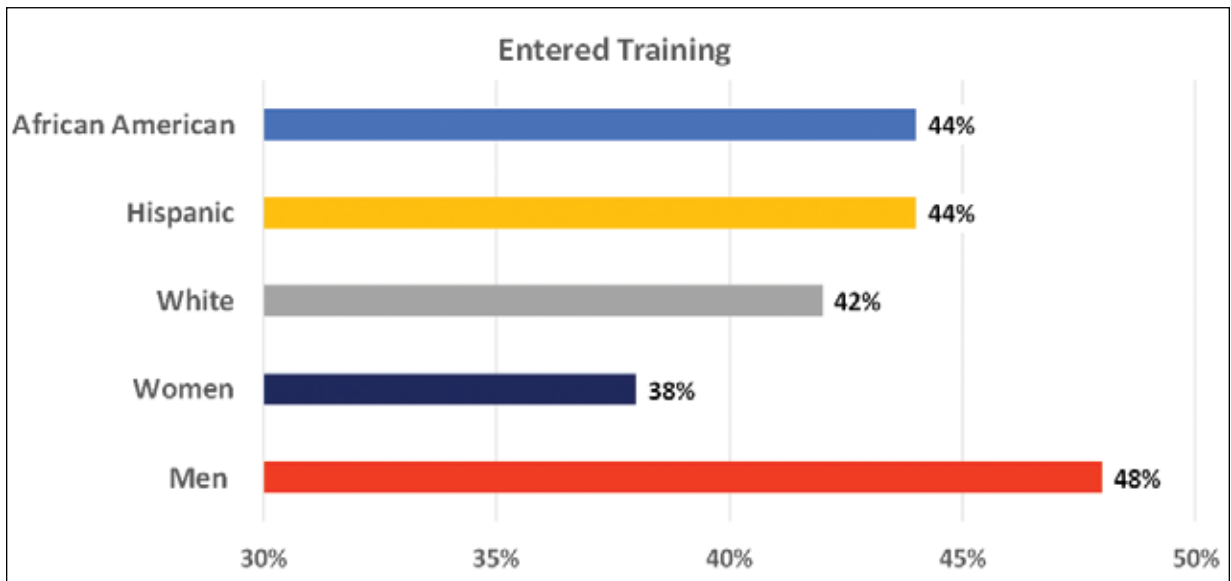
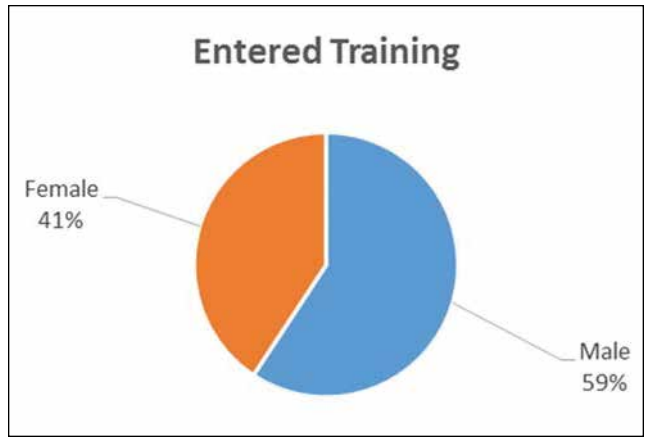
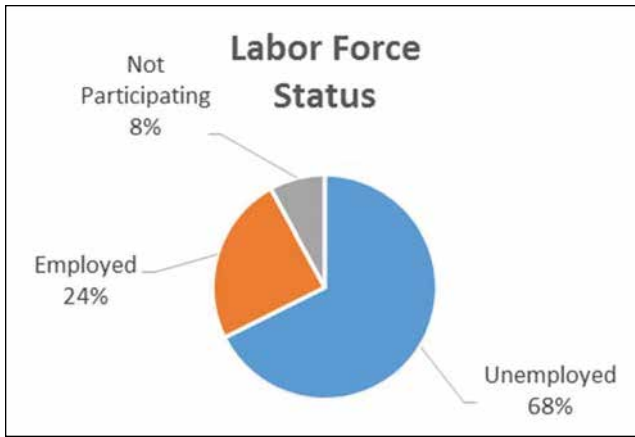
employers utilized Work-Based Learning programs, including On-The-Job Training, Incumbent Worker and Work Experience programs, and **188** employers participated in Hiring Events.

***1828 new hires made in the last year***



***1049 people were enrolled in programs during PY 2017***





## ***Regional Training Providers***

160 Driving Academy  
Blackhawk Technical College  
Highland Community College  
Mercyhealth School of Radiography  
Rasmussen College  
Rock Valley College

Rockford Career College  
Rockford University  
RX Tech Prep  
Saint Anthony College of Nursing  
Upper Iowa University

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### **Tamarius Brewer**

Illinois Workforce  
Partnership Individual  
Achievement Award  
Nominee



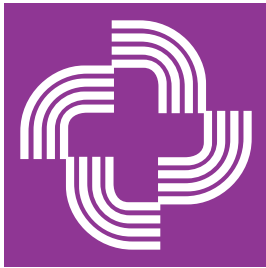
Tamarius Brewer was first enrolled in the Youth Elevate program in 2016 and began attending Career Readiness classes to gain employability skills and to receive career guidance. Tamarius had a rough time at first since he was painfully shy and it was difficult for him to participate in activities such as the mock job interviews which were part of the class requirements. The Elevate staff worked with him to prepare and guide him through this process because it was so difficult for him.

Once Tamarius completed his Career Readiness classes, he was enrolled in our Math class where he worked hard and was able to raise his test scores within two weeks and test into regular-level GED classes. Tamarius was able to obtain his GED certificate and continue his education by enrolling in the TechWorks manufacturing training program offered by Rock Valley College, with financial assistance from Elevate.

After successful completion of the TechWorks program, Tamarius enrolled in on-the-job training at Leading Edge Hydraulics where he worked for about seven months before being offered a new full-time position as a Mill Operator at Concentric, another local manufacturing company. Tamarius has always received excellent reviews both from the programs that he has been enrolled in and from his employers.

Recently Tamarius bought his first car and his own house. His family has expressed to us how thankful they are for this program and how it has completely changed Tamarius's life for the better.

## Employer Partnerships



SwedishAmerican, a division of UW Health, received funding from The Workforce Connection to help cover the cost of training more than 1200 staff members on its new electronic health record (EHR) system.

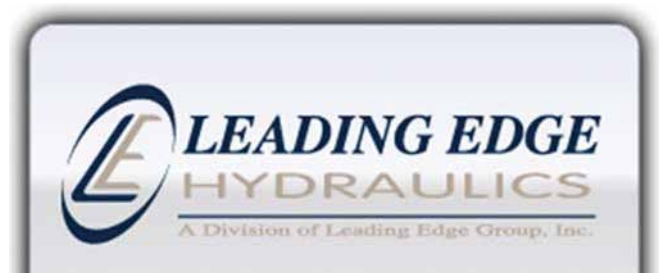
“SwedishAmerican is thankful to The Workforce Connection Board for affording us the opportunity to further train, develop and grow our Associates,” said SwedishAmerican Vice President of Human Resources Jerry Guinane. “The ultimate goal of the training is to prevent delays in communication and help our associates be more efficient in the new EHR...”

Magna, one of the FCA suppliers located in Belvidere, has an ongoing need for forklift operators. For four months, the business team worked with Cardinal Staffing, Magna’s staffing agency to identify nearly 100 potential employees and enroll them in one-day classroom and hands-on training, resulting in the forklift certification needed for employment. Nearly all of those workers who completed training were hired by the company. 100% of the cost of the training was covered.



Ceroni Piping and Construction Management, located in Cherry Valley, provides process power piping, plumbing and fabrication for food manufacturers, utility companies, automotive industry, defense contractors and other industrial and commercial customers. Ceroni has offered apprentices from the Plumbers and Pipefitters training program opportunities to gain work experience, using On-The-Job training dollars. Ceroni said, “By being able to participate in this program, we are able to pass down savings to our contractors.”

Leading Edge Hydraulics has had several new employees participating in on-the-job training through this year. “Working with the staff is amazing and the partial reimbursement helps us put money back into the company. We find that the new employee has a loyalty to the company and we get a better product because we are investing in the worker. We encourage other companies to give OJT a try.”







## ***Employer Engagement***

**On-the-Job Training** (including Apprenticeships) offsets a portion of a new employee's wages during the training period.

Area Mechanical Inc.  
Burpee Museum of Natural History  
Ceroni Piping Company  
CoreFX  
Goodwill Industries  
I. Spinello Locksmiths  
Imperial Punch and Manufacturing  
Integrative Medical Associates

Leading Edge Hydraulics  
Lifescape Community Services  
Loescher Heating & Air Conditioning  
Mechanical Inc.  
Miller Engineering Company  
Nelson Piping Co.  
NonProfit Thrive  
Tri Part Screw Products

**Incumbent Working Training** helps a company provide new skills to existing employees.

Specialty Screw Corporation  
SwedishAmerican Health System  
TriStar Metals

**Customized Training** can help meet the special training requirements of a single employer or group of employers.

Magna/Cardinal Staffing  
Acument Global Technology

**Work Experience** provides opportunities for young adults and other individuals with limited work histories.

Ali Baba Mediterranean Cuisine  
Angelic Organic Learning Center  
Blue Sky Insurance Agency  
Boone County Animal Services  
Bove's Automotive  
Brightside Adult Daycare  
Carrie's Poochie Paradise  
Discovery Center  
Downtown Discount Drugs  
Goodwill of Northern Illinois  
Klehm Arboretum  
Kids Around the World  
Leading Edge Hydraulics  
Maculan's Chiropractic  
Mosaic of Rockford

Napelton's Autowerks  
Northern Illinois Food Bank  
Northwest Community Center  
PAWS Rescue  
Rock Cut State Park  
Rock Valley College  
Rockford Boys and Girls Club  
Share Stuff Thrift Store  
The Canine Crunchery  
The Local  
The Spot  
Toad Hall  
Veteran's Drop In Center  
YMCA  
Zion West Association

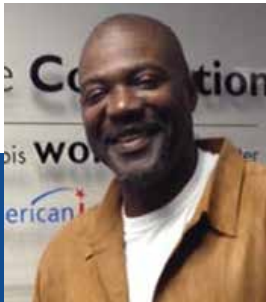
“When I was in school I didn’t attend much. I dropped out at 18 and enrolled in the Elevate program. When I was in the career readiness class I learned so much about school, careers, life skills and most of all about myself. The instructors motivated me to pursue what I only dreamt was possible. I wanted to go to college to be a psychologist but didn’t know how to get there. The program instructors showed me the steps and told me I could do it. I sat with my career planner and made my plan. I started testing and within two weeks I finished all the tests and graduated. I got a job at The Workforce Connection and now I’m moving back to my hometown to pursue my education and career plans. I can’t thank the program enough!”

**“Don’t quit before the miracle happens!”**

**- Karen**”



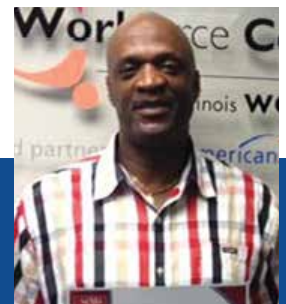
**“I demolished all my bridges, so therefore I have no other choice, but to move forward.”**



I have been coming to The Workforce Connection for a long time and with their help and the grace of God, I overcame many obstacles. Being unemployed is challenging, but unlike so many others, I didn’t give up. Thanks to The Workforce Connection, I’m back to work, not only with a job, but a career.

Ephraim started coming to the Workforce Connection in 2017. He was anxious to learn new skills and obtain a life sustaining job. Guided by his Career Planner, Paul, he worked hard every day in the Career Center. He studied for his Work Keys test, worked hard to improve his computer skills and attended the Employment Transitions program with Karyn. He enrolled in CNC TechWorks and is proud to display his NIMS Certificate in Measurement, Materials and Safety. Next step: working with the business services team to help find him a job. Ephraim embraced the programs and resources offered at TWC and not only built his self-esteem, but valuable skills.

**“I would like to thank God for giving me a chance to change my life in a positive way and to The Workforce Connection for giving me the tools.”**



# ***Partnerships: The Building Blocks To Our Success***

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## ***The Workforce Connection Partners***

CareerTec	Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency
CEANCI	Regional Office of Education 8
City of Rockford Human Services	Rock Valley Community College
Comprehensive Community Solutions	Rockford Housing Authority
Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois	Rockford Public Schools—Roosevelt Community Education Center
Highland Community College	Senior Community Service Employment Program-National Able Network
Illinois Department of Employment Security	The Literacy Council
Illinois Department of Human Services	YMCA
Illinois Migrant Council	
Job Corps-Adams & Associates	

## ***Community Partners***

Alignment Rockford	Rock River Homeless Coalition
Belvidere Chamber of Commerce	Rockford Area Economic Development Council
Community Foundation of Northern Illinois	Rockford Chamber of Commerce
Greater Freeport Partnership	Rockford Community Partners
Growth Dimensions of Belvidere & Boone County	Stephenson County Human Services Network
Lutheran Social Services	The Carpenters Place
Northwest Illinois Healthcare Collaborative	Transform Rockford
Rasmussen College	United Way of Rock River Valley
Region I Planning Council	Youth Services Network

The Workforce Connection— an Illinois WorkNet Center and partner in the American Job Center network. This program is funded by The Workforce Connection, Inc., Il Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, and the U.S. Department of Labor for the purpose of creating a competitive, skilled and educated workforce to advance the economic vitality of communities in the tri-county area.

The Workforce Connection is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Voice telephone numbers may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment by calling TTY (800) 526-0844 or 711. Contact the Equal Opportunity Officer at (815)395-6688.

This program is subject to the provisions of the “Jobs for Veteran’s Act” Public Law 107-288, which provides priority of services to veterans and spouses of certain veterans.

**The Workforce Connection Board Staff**

Dr. Lisa M. Bly, Executive Director

Cathy Cornelius, Board Assistant

Mike Johnson, Grant Compliance Specialist

Valerie Johnson, Planning & Quality Assurance Mgr.

Robert Jones, Business Account Mgr.

John Strandin, Public Information Mgr.

Dan White, Fiscal Manager

A proud partner of the  AmericanJobCenter® network