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DWD Announces Success with Wisconsin Promise Enrollments, Gives Testament to Disability Mentoring Day

Promise family shares success story at local press event, encourages more families to enroll

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (October 23, 2015) – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) this week hosted a media event to recognize Disability Mentoring Day (DMD), which Governor Scott Walker proclaimed for Wednesday, October 21, and feature a Milwaukee family who is moving toward a stronger financial future as participants in the Wisconsin Promise program for eligible youth with disabilities and their families.

"The Wisconsin Promise initiative is already changing lives and strengthening families, and Disability Mentoring Day provides a perfect opportunity to applaud the many partners who are making this program successful," said DWD Deputy Secretary Georgia Maxwell, who emceed the event on Wednesday, October 22 at the Northeast Comprehensive Job Center in Milwaukee. "We also want to recognize the youth and their families who are choosing the power to succeed by taking part in Wisconsin Promise."

Wisconsin Promise is a national grant-supported project designed to improve education and employment services for youth SSI (Social Security Supplemental Security Income) recipients and their families. The project is administered by DWD's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in partnership with other state and local agencies and organizations. The grant program was launched in 2014, which Governor Walker declared as Year of A Better Bottom Line to encourage businesses to hire people with disabilities.

Milwaukee youth Derrick Lyons is an inspiring example of how Promise can help youth with disabilities achieve financial goals. Along with his mother Diane Cook, Derrick was given a chance to talk about his experience with the program and his new job, and encourage others to enroll.

"I am working a temporary job right now," says Derrick proudly. "I contact businesses and give them the information they need. Promise helps me manage my communication with others and keeps me positive."

"Promise has helped Derrick set goals as he goes through high school, and is preparing him for college," says Derricks mother. "He is in the 'Skills to Pay the Bills' program, which has helped him manage his money, and teaches him how to save. Promise not only helps the youth, but the entire family as well."

LaToya Sykes, Promise Champion and Community Connector for Wisconsin Promise, spoke about her role with Wisconsin Promise.

"I am so pleased to be a Promise Champion! For me, it means so much more than just getting our (Wisconsin Promise) information out to the community. We give our youth the opportunity to do more than they thought they could. I am here to show them a vision of the future, and to fulfil our 'Promise' to them that they will be great contributing members in our community."

Among the attendees who attended and/or gave testimonies were representatives from the office of Congresswoman Gwen Moore and Milwaukee Common Council President Michael Murphy.

(more)



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Disability Mentoring Day is a national effort coordinated by AAPD to promote career development for students and job seekers with disabilities through hands-on career exploration and ongoing mentoring relationships. While DMD has been and continues to be officially launched the third Wednesday of each October during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), the foundation of the program has expanded from a one-day event to a year-round initiative across the country.

About Promise

Wisconsin is one of few states taking part in the national project that includes Promise. State partners in the initiative include DWD and the Departments of Children & Families, Health Services and Public Instruction. DWD partners with Independence First, Creative Employment Opportunities, Inc. and other organizations to support the Wisconsin Promise initiative.

Since its launch in 2014, Wisconsin Promise has enrolled approximately 1,250 students meeting over 62% of the enrollment goal of 2,000 youths, and over 50% of those enrolled reside in Southeast Wisconsin. The program calls for about half of all enrollees to receive grant-supported services and the other half to receive traditional DVR case management services.

Promise provides services and additional support, such as: financial stability, workforce resources and job opportunities, to youth with disabilities and their families. Only SSI youth ages 14, 15 and 16 are eligible for enrollment. Resources are readily available online and include career exploration, financial planning, job searching, self-advocacy and school transition planning.

Wisconsin Promise is gaining traction in Southeast Wisconsin in part through the support of “Promise Champions,” who are represented by community leaders, politicians, parents/caretakers, teachers and others who are encouraging youths and families to enroll and supporting their success along the way. Notable Champions include:

- Senator Lena C. Taylor – Wisconsin State Senator, District 4
- Bishop C. H. McClelland - Pastor of Holy Cathedral Church of God in Christ in Milwaukee
- Alderman Joe Davis, Sr. – Milwaukee District 2 Alderman

In addition to Governor Walker, the following elected officials provided proclamations or resolutions/ letters of recognition of Disability Mentoring Day, which were displayed at the event:

- Senator Tammy Baldwin
- Congresswoman Gwen Moore
- County Executive Chris Abele
- Mayor Tom Barrett
- County Board Chairman Theodore Lipscomb, Sr.
- Common Council President Michael Murphy

For more information about Wisconsin Promise and for information about how Wisconsin Promise supports SSI youth, visit www.promisewi.com or call 1-855-480-5618.

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