



ANNUAL REPORT

**2018-19**

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The YOU annual report provides a non-exhaustive overview of the many services offered to the Southwest Michigan community.

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## HALF CENTURY OF HISTORY

YOU has served Southwest Michigan communities since its inception in 1961, when a private donor contributed enough to get the organization up and running. YOU was created to serve at-risk youth in Kalamazoo and was one of the first organizations designed to assist high school dropouts through reconnection to education and employment training. Throughout a 58 year history, the services available have grown to include both youth and adults and now spans a four-county region of Branch, Calhoun, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph counties.

Today, YOU is a vital piece of Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA), helping job seekers to complete their educations, find employment and thrive in the community. The services provided by YOU have strengthened individuals to improve their communities through academic enrichment, workforce readiness, and social skills development while empowering them to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, graduates and leaders.

**Mission:** To strengthen individual and community-wide prosperity through education and dynamic career development opportunities

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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What a year.

2019 was full of amazing accomplishments by the people we serve. It was a year marked by exciting, incredible collaboration with our partners, fully embracing a philosophy of being better together. It saw the rise of new and innovative initiatives and practices that take the YOU service menu to the next level.

One shining example is our Bridging Opportunities initiative. Together, with the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, Kalamazoo County Juvenile Probation, Northside Association for Community Development, and Boys & Girls Club of Kalamazoo, YOU provided work experience and mentoring to 14- and 15-year-olds who were deeply seated in the criminal justice system. The gains we witnessed from these youth in just 11 short weeks was nothing short of incredible. Given a productive, meaningful course of action that leads down a positive career pathway, the program made a huge impact. And that is what YOU is really all about — strengthening individual and community-wide prosperity through education and dynamic career development opportunities.

Yes, 2019 was a year of success on many levels. But, we are just getting started. We renewed our commitment to digging into the hard work of continuous improvement. We set out to establish a new, goal-focused career coaching structure that puts those we serve in the driver's seat of their career plan. We set ambitious goals to serve even more youth, job seekers, dislocated workers and employers. We work to seek out and discover new ways to reach and bring value to individuals in crisis. We planted our flag in the ground as a true talent solution throughout Southwest Michigan, and we have not done it alone.

I thank every person who helped YOU get to where we are today: high-achieving participants, passionate and skilled staff, incredible partners, generous funders and donors, supporters at Michigan Works! Southwest, and family at Kalamazoo RESA; none of this work would be possible without you.

I invite you to spend time reading the following report. If any questions or ideas are sparked while turning these pages, please do not hesitate to reach out. We know that, together, we can make our area a beacon of light for careers, education and community.

Better together,



Eric Stewart, Director



# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

This is Jerry's story – a highly-trained worker, an immigrant from Africa, a father, a United States citizen applicant and suddenly an individual struggling to even land a job interview.

Jerry came into Michigan Works! Southwest frustrated and disheartened that he wasn't getting interviews in his field of specialty. After working with staff, they took matters into their own hands and looked into specialized partnership programs available for those seeking assistance.

Through the On-the-job Training (OJT) program, which works directly with local employers to provide skills upgrading and occupational skills training, Jerry was able to apply, interview and accept a position as a maintenance technician.

These training programs not only benefit the participant – who receives a job with paid training to further their occupational skills breadth – but provides employers with an incentive to hire individuals into these positions with the potential of so much growth.



59 116,404

TAA participants

Employment Services participants

*As a young, independent adult, I needed guidance and help to succeed. YOU did just that. I was looking for a career and they helped me push for success and opened my eyes to a better life.*

— Chantz Royston-Bennett



Making education a priority in life can be challenging for many. When Chantz enrolled in YOU, he was in an alternative school due to a disconnect from secondary education. He was deficient in math skills, unemployed and had minimal employment history.

This is not an uncommon motif for those who come to YOU – barriers do not just affect one aspect of life; they have a way of inhibiting prosperity in all areas of life.

The staff at YOU encouraged Chantz to make his education take precedence, and as such he accepted tutoring assistance. Once he got a handle on his education, Chantz completed employability skills training where he was exposed to valuable job search techniques. After being referred to the Vision for Prosperity Apprenticeship readiness training for the skilled trades field, he graduated from high school, applied to the apprenticeship program and was accepted.

Because of YOU, Chantz's career pathway was leading him to success whether he knew it or not.

Upon completing the program, he was offered an apprenticeship with the Local 2 Bricklayers. YOU presented Chantz with the opportunities available through partnering agencies and as such, is a shining example of how career pathway systems lead to prosperous communities.

## OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

A long overdue transition, the Michigan Works! Southwest Kalamazoo County service center made a revolutionary shift to a digital intake system and, as such eliminated paper intakes. Instead of incoming participants signing in on a clipboard or completing a paper questionnaire, visitors use a tablet kiosk or computer.

The Kalamazoo County service center is the first in the state of Michigan to participate in the pilot research project conducted by the W.E. UpJohn Institute. It is designed to streamline services and gather research to guide the development of tools and labor market information for job seekers.

The pilot program was a tremendous success, providing partners across Southwest Michigan with crucial data points that will catalyze our services into the next and best phase. It is YOU's goal and intention to bring the digital intake system to every Michigan Works! Southwest service center in the next year.

## PUTTING PARTICIPANTS IN THE DRIVERS' SEAT

In 2019, YOU staff were trained in a goal-focused, research-based coaching model that emphasizes using 21st-century core skills: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication. This model, entitled Goal4 It!, establishes strategies for assisting participants in developing individualized career pathway plans based on their goals, passions and skills.

Team members are trained on methods rooted in trauma-informed best practices and are designed to not only enhance participant employability but social-emotional wellness as well. These elements are embedded in YOU's career coaching model and are ingrained in YOU's culture.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR COMMUNITY

A new partnership with Western Michigan University piloted a series of career exploration day camps for Career 101 participants this year. This partnership with WMU's Office of Pre-College Programming's GEAR UP allowed youth to spend three weeks exploring a variety of careers on campus within several colleges including:

- » College of Health and Human Services
- » Haworth College of Business
- » College of Education and Human Development
- » College of Engineering and Applied Sciences
- » College of Arts and Sciences

GEAR UP facilitated both hands-on activities and workshop-style sessions covering topics from financial literacy to leadership skills.



# CAREER PATHWAYS WORK

A familiar tale for many out there, Mondrea Sims habitually put her family before herself. After the loss of her mother, Mondrea stepped into the role of raising her younger siblings. She dreamed of rising through the healthcare field, and the next step was to become a certified nurse aid (CNA). Thankfully, for her and her family, YOU makes this seemingly daunting feat accessible and attainable.

Mondrea was put through testing, career pathway development, paid training, CNA certification and job search assistance. And while obtaining subsidized training and testing is a opportunity unlike any other, individuals like Mondrea cherish what many might overlook; her scrubs, required footwear and a new watch were provided to her free of cost.

She was offered a CNA position promptly after her training. Her high level of dedication and consistent positive attitude will prove an asset in attaining future career goals.



*It is my passion to help others. I am beyond thankful to CareerNOW and the Adult Services for being by my side the entire time, helping me obtain my CNA certification and gain employment in a skilled nursing facility. It has changed my life forever.*  
— Mondrea Sims

**553**

RESEA participants

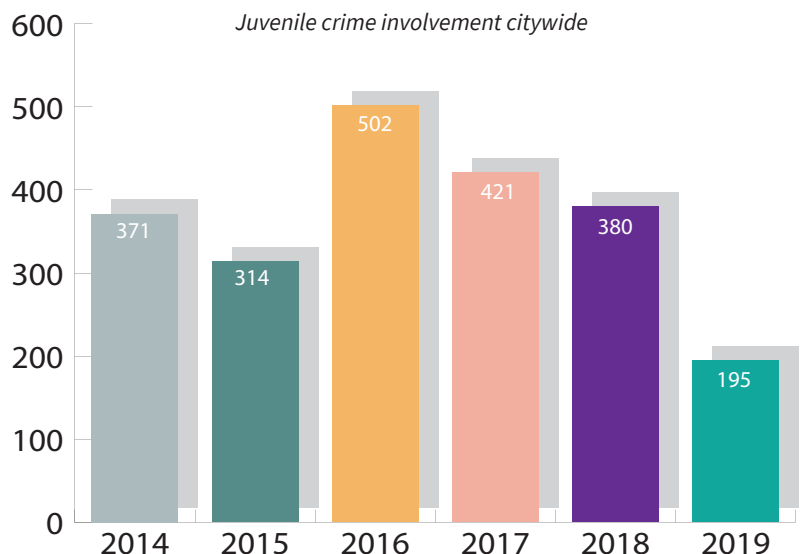
## BRIDGING OPPORTUNITIES

Bridging Opportunities is a multi-agency initiative established in 2017. The Kalamazoo County Juvenile Courts and the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) assembled a group of agencies, including YOU, to focus on youth development and develop strategies for reducing the amount of crime committed by juveniles within city limits.

**25**

Juveniles identified for program participation

Since the implementation of the program in 2017, juvenile crime rates in the City of Kalamazoo have dropped 61.2% — from 502 offenders in 2016 to 195 in 2019.



# EDUCATION RECONNECTION

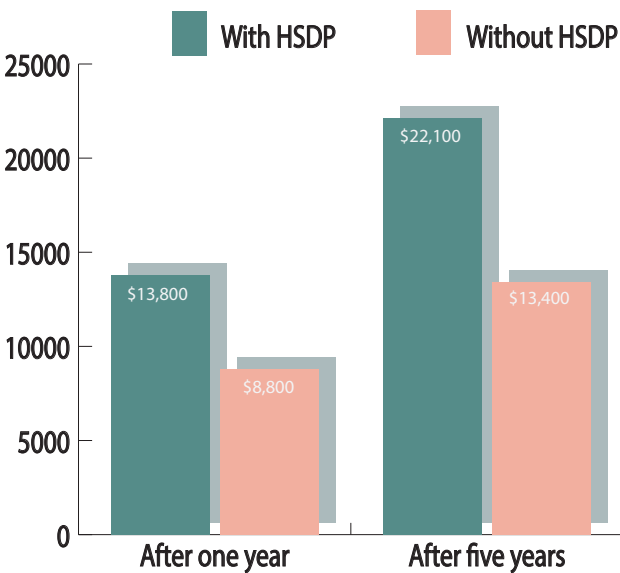


Elijah is a student from Portage Community High School who graduated in 2019. In addition to the coursework he was guided through via Education ReConnection, Elijah enrolled in the Jobs for Michigan Graduates (JMG) program at YOU. JMG is the state-based affiliate of the national Jobs for America's Graduates program, delivering 90% or higher graduation rates and tripling the rate young people find jobs.

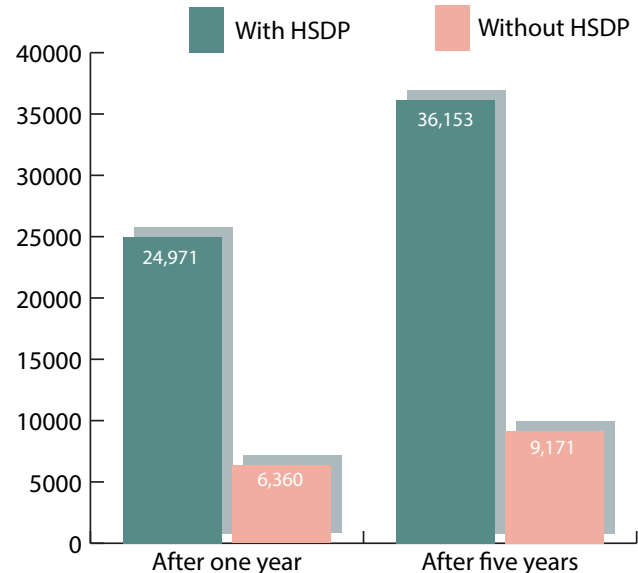
Through JMG, Elijah strengthened his employability skills which led to a job offer. During the time he was enrolled in YOU, Elijah participated in several Talent Tours to supplement his studies. Elijah is now employed and enrolled at Kalamazoo Valley Community College with aspirations of becoming a graphic designer.

**171**  
JMG participants

Median annual wages by educational attainment, MI School Data



Number employed by educational attainment, MI School Data



**143**

Students enrolled in 2018-19

**12**

Graduates

**88.5**

Earned credits

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2019 GRADUATES

Raekwon Little  
Santiago Navin  
Natalya Norris  
Jamie Baker  
Liam McDonell  
Jerome Parker

Comstock High School  
Comstock High School  
Phoenix High School  
Portage Community High School  
Portage Community High School  
Portage Community High School

Claire Pence  
Elijah Simon  
Jack Desmond  
Jon Eaton  
Jakob Sagers  
Markus Ziegert

Portage Community High School  
Portage Community High School  
Schoolcraft High School  
Schoolcraft High School  
Schoolcraft High School  
Schoolcraft High School

# Your support helped serve

# 118,164

**Bookworms**

**Daughters**

**Bus riders**

**Students**

**Nurses**

**Michigianians**

**Thinkers**

**Builders**

**Electricians**

**Teens**

**Servers**

**Fathers**

**Home owners**

**Healers**

**Activators**

**Cashiers**

**Innovators**

**Mothers**

**Accountants**

**Savers**

**Cousins**

**Helpers**

**Singers**

**Graduates**

**Foodies**

**Believers**

**Sons**

**Community members**

**Crafters**

**Grandmothers**

**Gamers**

**Doers**

**Techies**

**Friends**

**Photographers**

**Brothers**

**Readers**

**Uncles**

**Writers**

**Learners**

**Farmers**

**Partners**

**Elderly**

**Counselors**

**Musicians**

**Cleaners**

**Sisters**

**Educators**

**Tinkerers**

**Voters**

**Travelers**

**Grandchildren**

**Aunts**

**Adults**

**Michiganders**

**Designers**

**Story tellers**

**Artists**

**Heroes**

**Dreamers**

**Administrators**

**Spenders**

**Bikers**

**Sport fans**

**Persisters**

**Shopkeepers**

**Renters**

**Grandfathers**

**Runners**

**Mechanics**

**Leaders**

**Consumers**

**Families**

**Workers**

**Humans**

