

## **WDB Youth Committee Meeting Minutes 3/1/22 at 10am via Zoom**

Attendees: Bryan Rotella (Niagara Falls School District), Dennis Martinez (ACCES-VR), Dawn Cody (Niagara County Employment & Training Department), Bonnie Rice (Niagara County Workforce Development Board).

### **1. First-ever LGBTQ Adult Vocational Conference**

Ron Piasezcnny was unable to join today's meeting. Bonnie shared information about Niagara Pride's upcoming LGBTQ+ Youth Vocational Conference, which is the first of its kind in Niagara County. Event will be held 4/23 from 9am to 3pm with two guest speakers in the morning and two in the afternoon. The registration is limited to 30 attendees. Agencies that offer vocation related services are able to reserve a table for free at the event. Bonnie will share the flyer.

Niagara Pride is also collecting donated new pairs of socks for WNY homeless shelters. Bonnie will share the flyer. Dennis said socks are the #1 requested item for homeless individuals.

Niagara Pride is also hosting a WNY LGBTQ+ Health and Wellness Fair on 3/26 from 10am to 3pm in the NCCC Main Gym. Bonnie will share the flyer.

Niagara Pride's website is [www.niagarapride.org](http://www.niagarapride.org) if you'd like to learn more about this organization.

### **2. NYSGVP grant funding and extension**

Bonnie said that the NYSGVP grant of \$250,000 to put 50 youth to work is being used for 90% wage reimbursements to businesses for new hires ages 18-24 that reside in Niagara County. These new hires are also receiving wrap-around services including transportation assistance, money to purchase hygiene items, and other potential services. Bonnie will share the checklist so the Committee is aware of the many wrap-around services available. The good news is that the grant has been extended until 2023. Please refer any individuals ages 18-24 who are seeking work to Dawn Cody. If you are aware of businesses that will be hiring individuals ages 18-24, please refer the business to Dawn Cody. We need to meet with the business and with the new hire before they start work.

### **3. Updates on WIOA Youth and WIOA-SYEP grants**

Dawn Cody said the WIOA-SYEP grant allowed us to extend the Summer Youth Employment Program for additional months. We were able to serve 50 youth, and these youth were able to work beyond the normal summer time frame. All of this grant money has been expended.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2022 Summer Youth Employment Program, with an application deadline of 5/13/22. The program serves low income youth ages 14-20. Applications are available at [www.worksource1.com/young-adults/summer-youth-employment-program](http://www.worksource1.com/young-adults/summer-youth-employment-program), in high school guidance offices, community agencies, and elsewhere throughout Niagara County.

The WIOA Youth program, which operates year-round and enrolls youth who are high school seniors or who are not attending school, has exceeded its planned enrollment goal but continues to recruit and enroll youth. The goal was 75 youth to be served by 6/30/22; currently, there are 81 youth enrolled. Of those youth, 22 have received their high school diploma or GED, 13 enrolled in college or the military, and 7 are getting driver's licenses. Please refer any youth to Dawn Cody or [www.worksource1.com/young-adults](http://www.worksource1.com/young-adults) to find out more about this program.

#### **4. Inclusion Committee business highlight and business panel events**

Dennis Martinez said the Inclusion Committee is a standing committee of the Workforce Development Board to promote diversity and inclusion throughout the workforce system in Niagara County. The Committee strives to bring more diversity and equity to our County. We are planning to spotlight businesses in Niagara County who have achieved a level of diversity in their workforce and talk about their challenges and successes. We plan to publish stories, articles, and interviews for a number of these companies throughout the year on a regular basis in the WDB Newsletter and the One-Stop Career Center's Business Newsletter. We have a couple of suggestions of businesses to honor from Mike Kearney of the Business Services Team. Honorees can represent a wide range of diversity, such as businesses that hire people with disabilities, minority companies, businesses that hire refugees, etc. If you know of a business that may be interested in being highlighted, just let Dennis know; it's basically free advertising.

The Inclusion Committee is also planning their next Business Panel event. These virtual events are free training for businesses in the community on diversity related issues. The next free Business Panel event is tentatively scheduled for 4/27 and will include training offered by Microsoft staff showcasing the free accessibility tools that are built into their popular software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.).

If you are interested in joining the Inclusion Committee, please let Dennis know. The Committee meets once a month.

#### **5. Other Business**

Bryan Rotella said Niagara Falls High School launched the PS2 Project, which is the post-secondary successes project. The project exposes high school juniors and seniors to the vast array of employment opportunities available. The ninth grade students are taking Career and Financial Management courses as well. The focus is on local and national job markets. M&T Bank, funeral homes, and the Sheraton are some of the participating employers. We are making sure there is an opportunity for those students to connect to work. We're learning that many companies want kids to work now, and they are willing to train the youth rather than wait for them to gain a four-year degree. We are also seeing colleges offering more microcredentials. Bonnie offered to share the list of training programs WIOA can sponsor in Niagara County, which includes two NCCC microcredential trainings.

Dennis shared that Buffalo Niagara Human Resources Association (BNHRA) is doing a diversity spotlight, which is what led to our local spotlight of a similar nature. ACCES-VR is considering reinstating their in-person Diversity Career Fair this Spring, usually held at the Buffalo Library. Although the career fair focuses on diversity, it is open to everyone to attend.

Dawn mentioned that the NYSGVP grant already has put 11 youth to work in Niagara County. Businesses benefiting from the 90% wage reimbursement include Sheraton at the Falls, Vishay Thin Film, and a new business that just hired its first employee through the program. Dawn is meeting with Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center to finalize some new hires as well.

With no further business to conduct, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bonnie Rice