

# 2015 TANF Innovation Project Report

## Funding Amount:

\$269,635 in TANF Innovation funds from the Department of Human Services

## Cost Per Participant:

\$1,997 per youth

## Number Served in 2015:

135

## Number Co-Enrolled in Workforce Investment Act (WIA)/Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA):

32 (24%)

## Gender:

26% male

73% female

## Youth from Communities of Color:

67%

## Youth Attaining Work Readiness Skills:

84%

## For More Information:

Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

332 Minnesota St., Suite E-200  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Kay Tracy, Director  
Office of Youth Development  
[Kay.Tracy@state.mn.us](mailto:Kay.Tracy@state.mn.us) or  
651.259.7555

Lynn Douma, Program Coordinator  
Office of Youth Development  
[Lynn.Douma@state.mn.us](mailto:Lynn.Douma@state.mn.us) or  
651.259.7536

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The 2015 TANF Innovation Project was a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA) to provide structured work experiences, direct services to youth, and related support services to youth receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits.

The project served two groups of youth:

- Teen parents, ages 16-24, who are receiving cash MFIP benefits; and
- Younger youth, ages 14-18, who are on the grant in MFIP households.

The project served participants from 34 of Minnesota's 87 counties. Many of those served had little or no previous work experience. The TANF Innovation Project youth service providers collaborated with county financial workers and the participants' MFIP Employment Service Providers for recruitment of youth and to ensure continuity of the MFIP Employment Plan as appropriate. Work readiness skills were evaluated through worksite evaluations measuring performance in the workplace as the participants progressed through the project.

## Examples of Employers Providing Work Experience

Independent School District #820, Sears, Golden Living Center, YWCA, ECHO Food Shelf, City Center Hotel, City of Sleepy Eye, ACE Hardware, American Cancer Society, Mercy Hospital, TJ Maxx, Sunshine Tree Child Care Center, The Crest Apartments, Central Lakes College, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Children's Dental Services, Anoka County Library, Backus Head Start, National Sports Center, HealthPartners, Appliance Mart

## Success Stories

### Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. (RMCEP) - Zhalya

Zhalya is a 17 year-old who attends school at Moorhead High and lives with her parents and twin sister after coming to the United States in January of 2015. Although Zhalya understands the English language, she is very quiet and reserved. Zhalya's parents, who are currently on MFIP, heard about the programs that RMCEP could offer youth and encouraged Zhalya to apply. Since she wanted experience in retail and customer service, Zhalya was placed at a local home improvement store. She has done a great job at the worksite and has been mentored by her supervisor, a former RMCEP client who was hired by the store following a work

experience. Zhalya's supervisor has stated that she has exceeded his expectations for a youth worker. When she started at the store, she was unable to make change and explained that she had never seen the American coins before. Although she has only been at the worksite for a short time, she has gained a wide variety of skills such as producing merchandise signs, assembling weed trimmers, cashiering, and customer service skills.

#### **City of Duluth - Kaysha**

Kaysha was referred to the YES Duluth program by her MFIP job counselor. She was a 24-year old single mother of two young children with little previous work history. Kaysha was enrolled into the TANF Youth Project and set up with a work experience at Super One Foods. She gained skills in customer service, teamwork, communication, and attention to detail. Partway through her work experience, she experienced a setback with childcare, but after a group meeting with her YES Duluth counselor and MFIP counselor, found that a slight change in her work schedule would alleviate her childcare issues. Kaysha's work supervisor was able to revise her schedule so she was able to complete the work experience and get hired on directly at Super One Foods!

#### **Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS) – Esmerelda**

Esmerelda was enrolled into the TANF Innovation Program in August, 2015. The mother of two children, Esmerelda relied on MFIP cash assistance to make ends meet at that time. She knew that this was not a long-term solution for her family, and elected to participate in CNA training so that she could improve her ability to make a better life for her children. Esmerelda entered training in September, 2015 and one month later, she was able to pass her written and skills tests, and she obtained her nursing assistant certification. Shortly thereafter, she secured full-time employment as a nursing assistant at Rice Care Center in Willmar, MN. She is now earning \$12.19 per hour and is working her way off of the MFIP program, receiving only food support at the present time. She hopes to begin Trained Medication Aide training in January of 2016. She knows that the successful completion of this training will give her the opportunity to further increase her earnings and allow her to completely eliminate her dependence on public assistance.

#### **Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Services (CMJTS) – Lasha**

Lasha, mother of three children ranging in age from seven years down to eleven months, was enrolled into the TANF Innovation Program in November, 2015. At the age of 23, Lasha had yet to complete her secondary education. This severely impacted her employability and Lasha relied on MFIP to support her family. Lasha didn't want to remain on MFIP. The TANF Innovation program gave Lasha the opportunity for a paid work experience at the Family Pathways Thrift Store in Cambridge, MN. After only a couple of weeks, her site supervisor reported that she was a "great worker" and was doing a "phenomenal" job. Lasha plans to continue her paid work opportunity through another program administered by CMJTS, and will use her experience to enter unsubsidized/competitive employment. She also plans to get her GED as soon as possible to further improve her employability. She wants to work with her employment specialist to identify a career that will fit her interests, values, and abilities. Then she'll work hard to achieve success in that field, increase her earnings, and purchase her own home.

#### **Southwest MN Private Industry Council (PIC) - Alyssa**

Alyssa started working with the SW MN Private Industry Council's Youth and Young Adult Program when she was referred by her MFIP Counselor in July 2014. Alyssa is a single parent to one daughter. She had worked her way off of MFIP in July of 2015, but unfortunately needed the help again in September of 2015 while she worked on finishing her Cosmetology degree. She enrolled at Avalon School of Cosmetology in Worthington. Recently, Alyssa has graduated from Avalon and passed her boards in November. She has started working at Great Clips in Worthington as a receptionist until she gets her official license in the mail, at which time she will become a hair stylist at Great Clips.

### **Southwest MN PIC - Jenesy**

Jenesy started working with the PIC Youth and Young Adult Program in August of 2015 when she was referred by her MFIP Counselor. She is a single mom of two little boys. She wanted to be able to provide more for her sons and after some career counseling and exploration, Jenesy made the decision to further her education as an LPN at MN West Community and Technical College. Jenesy started at MN West right away, and has been working diligently her first semester of school. Her school enrollment reduced the number of hours she was able to work and she had fallen behind in her rent. Fortunately, the PIC was able to support her education plan and allow her to concentrate on continuing to be successful with her post-secondary classes by assisting with a few months of rent. Jenesy is really doing great in all of her classes and is excited about what the future has in store for her and her two sons.

### **South Central Workforce Council/Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC) – Hannah**

Hannah came to the MVAC Youth program for assistance with a work experience. She had been involved with the court for an incident which happened at school the previous year. Hannah completed a work experience at the City of Sleepy Eye and excelled from the beginning. Hannah was able to complete her tasks from beginning to end with enthusiasm and learned how to act and be responsible when at a worksite. She enjoyed every minute of it and loved being outdoors staying constantly busy. The worksite supervisors were very impressed with Hannah's work and have promised to give her a recommendation when needed. Hannah continues to stay enrolled in school at Sleepy Eye Public. She has shown determination in her coursework and works with various teachers to keep her grades up. She is also working towards obtaining her driver's license with assistance of the program. Her confidence and determination has grown and continues to show while she works on the program.

### **South Central Workforce Council/MVAC – Shyann**

Shyann was first enrolled in the youth program back in March 2015. A single mom on MFIP finishing her last year of high school, she was also enrolled in a CNA class through her high school and was concerned about her future. She was considering going to a private college for nursing but was not certain what she wanted to do. She worked with the Teen Parent Program and was referred to MVAC for career counseling and assistance with enrollment in post-secondary. After her MVAC enrollment she decided to attend a 2 year post-secondary program and enrolled at Riverland Community College in Albert Lea for LPN. She passed her CNA certification and graduated from high school in June of 2015. She and her daughter moved into their own apartment and she got a job as a CNA in a nearby nursing home. Shyann has almost completed her first semester of college and although there have been a few bumps in the road, she is excited about her future and appreciates the support she has received from MVAC TANF and Workforce Investment Act programs.

### **City of Minneapolis - Tatiyona**

At only 19 years old, Tatiyona navigated homelessness, moved to Minneapolis, and started college – all while raising two kids. Upon arriving in Minneapolis, Tatiyona enrolled at Broadway High School, which helps pregnant and parenting teens earn their diplomas and prepare for college. Through the school, she was introduced to Emily and Suzanne, counselors in HIREd's TeenHOPE and PACE programs. TeenHOPE is a collaboration between HIREd and the Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency that provides education and employment and parenting assistance to young women. Thanks to the support she received, Tatiyona graduated from high school in less than six months. To help her gain work experience, Suzanne suggested that Tatiyona complete an internship at Cookie Cart. Within two months, Tatiyona was offered a permanent position at the bakery where she frequently mentors younger teens. Today, Tatiyona is taking classes at Minneapolis Community and Technical College and plans to follow a career path in special education.

### **Anoka County – Doniesha**

Doniesha, a senior at Coon Rapids High School, participated in Anoka County's 2015 TANF Youth Innovation Program with the purpose of gaining work experience in the health care field. Her long term employment goal is to become a registered nurse. Doniesha's placement at Mercy Hospital allowed her to develop marketable job skills while being mentored by a worksite supervisor. From this experience and her training in high school to become a CNA, she recently accepted a Dietary Aide position at Autumn Glenn Senior Living. Once she turns 18, Doneisha has the opportunity to promote to a CNA position. She believes her work experience at Mercy Hospital and training as a CNA will assist her in career laddering within the health care field. Doniesha's long term goal is to join a branch of the military as a nurse where she can further use her skills in helping others.

### **Anoka County – Sarah**

Sarah, a junior at Fridley High School, participated in Anoka County's 2015 TANF Youth Innovation Program. She worked closely with project staff to determine goals she wanted to achieve: developing her English, working with children and increasing her marketable job skills through her work experience at the Mississippi Branch of the Fridley Public Library. Sarah is friendly with her co-workers and members of the library community, she accepts work direction and critique well, and is eager to perform and learn new skills. As Sarah's English skills improved, so did her social skills. She is learning workplace etiquette and will continue to increase her social awareness and interactions. Sarah is a valuable asset to the Mississippi Library and takes pride in serving the patrons of the Fridley Public Library system. Sarah will continue her work at Mississippi Library Branch through the Minnesota Youth Program and become more involved in the children's programs offered at the library. Her long term goals are to continue expanding her skills in working with children, become more proficient in speaking English, and attend college after she graduates high school.

### **Ramsey County – KaBao**

KaBao was having a difficult time finding employment on her own. She felt her criminal background made it very hard for her to obtain the entry-level jobs for which she otherwise qualified. When her employment counselor suggested she try the TANF Innovation Project to help her find an employment opportunity, she agreed and was referred to this project. She was motivated to work with the placement team and was placed in a work experience as an advocate with Safe Zone. The job allowed her to gain experience in human services, which she is now majoring in at St. Paul College. Upon completion of the TANF Innovation Project, Safe Zone staff strongly encouraged her to apply for the permanent advocate position they currently had open. As a result of her work experience and the quality of work she demonstrated, she was offered the position and is currently employed in a position directly related to her human services college major.

### **Ramsey County – Dairah**

Dairah was referred to the TANF Innovation Project after she completed a four-week class called Career Series. As the placement team worked to set up a work experience with an employer, Dairah showed initiative by introducing herself to the employer and giving them a copy of her resume. Dairah ended up working as an Administrative Assistant at Woodland Hills Church along with two other worksites, Merrick Community Center and Close To My Heart Child Care. These work experiences allowed Dairah to make great connections with multiple employers and enhanced her administrative skills. Now that the work experience has ended, the placement team is continuing to work with Dairah and Merrick Community Center to find a permanent position because of the great impression she made on them at Merrick.

### **Tree Trust – Travis**

Travis, 18, has been with Tree Trust's Youth and Young Adult Services program for three years. He was referred to Tree Trust as a junior at Osseo High School through his guidance counselor who recognized that

Travis had great potential, but could use some additional support to ensure his graduation from high school. Since joining, Travis has met with his Tree Trust case manager consistently to work on a variety of educational and employment goals and also attends monthly educational workshops. Through these workshops, he figured out his long term career goal, to be a marine photographer, and a path to achieve it. With Tree Trust's support, Travis received his high school diploma and got his first job as an Assistant Maintenance Technician at Champlain Park High School through Tree Trust's Summer Youth Employment Program. After he graduated, Travis's confidence and motivation grew and he attended Summit Academy's pharmacy technician program. He received his pharmacy technician license and is currently working at an internship at a pharmacy to complete his program.