

Program Summary: Kirkwood Community College

Kirkwood Community College is implementing a career pathway system of training and support services through public and private partnerships. The system is designed to assist individuals to enter training in high-demand industries. Training opportunities extend along a continuum of basic skills: high school equivalency diploma; industry recognized credentials; short-term certificate training; one year diplomas; and two-year degrees. There is a series of on-ramps into training and off-ramps into employment for each pathway. For the purpose of this project, Kirkwood is primarily focusing on advanced manufacturing, health care, and information technology. The college has also provided services to students pursuing training in other high-demand industries to be responsive to the needs of area employers.

Kirkwood manages Skills to Employment, which is co-located with IowaWORKS, the home of the regional workforce system. This facility operates with an integrated model emphasizing skill development needs of the available workforce. This model enables Kirkwood to connect with unemployed and other IowaWORKS members, assess their service needs, and enroll them into training programs that align with their career interests. In addition to this facility, Kirkwood opened a Center for Lifelong Learning that is home to High School Completion and Continuing Education. This space enables Kirkwood to reach students who need their high school equivalency diploma, bridge training to develop basic skills, and then continue on into short-term certificate training. This is a pipeline for students to continue into credit training.

The following outlines two student success stories:

Julie was unemployed when she arrived at the Iowa WORKS office. She had worked in the food service and human service industries for several years, where she demonstrated leadership, integrity, and a desire to exceed her customers' expectations. Julie was interested in the contact center industry as she loved to help others, but she did not have the phone skills to be competitive for those positions. Through Customer Service Professional training she gained phone experience and sales, customer service, and collections skills. Julie excelled in class and was a great mentor for the other students. She also earned a gold level National Career Readiness Certificate. She received the financial assistance and Navigator support that she needed to achieve her educational and career goals. Julie graduated on a Thursday and started her new collections position at an industry leader the following Monday, earning sixteen dollars an hour. In less than four months, Julie had started her new career. In addition, Julie continues to give back to the program by speaking to current students at the company tour. Here is what Julie has to say about her experience: "The Customer Service Professional class and staff support made it possible for me to find a new career for the rest of my working life! Thank you so much!"

This next student story is a testament of how the Walmart Brighter Futures Project impacted a student's belief in himself.

My name is John. I am 36 years old and for the first time in my life I am proud of myself. This pride and confidence stems from my relationship with the KPACE Program. A year ago I would not have imagined myself in such a positive place. My life since my late teens has been a life of chaos, drug abuse, and a man lost. I was a high school dropout with a long criminal record. Having my background and being in my 30s didn't give me much confidence about my future. Learning about the KPACE program, supported by the Walmart Foundation, gave me hope. I

finally had a team of people on my side! They wanted to see me succeed as much as I did! The transformation I experienced was unbelievable. I am the man I always dreamed I could be. I am a success. I hold pride in who I am and I now see the best is yet to come instead of fearing what my future will hold. I am forever grateful to the KPACE Program!

John went through Welding training at Kirkwood and obtained several certifications, including Production MIG, AWS, OSHA, Forklift, and the National Career Readiness Certification. John obtained a job post training earning twelve dollars an hour. It is evident that this is a great start for John's career.