

GED Gives Young Man Second Chance

In a time when competition is fierce in the job market, job seekers will do what they can to make themselves stand apart from the competition – or at least ensure they are on the same playing field. For one young man in Mecosta, the chance to rise above the competition was going to be tough. But when Brandon Hoover saw an advertisement for Eagle Village’s Youth Employment Program, he didn’t know it would be his “golden ticket” to his future.

In the summer of 2009 Hoover met with Linda Albright, case manager with Eagle Village, at Michigan Works! in Big Rapids. After meeting with him, she could see he had potential and simply needed some guidance to lead him down the right path.

Albright, with help from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding, provided Hoover with a paid summer work experience at the Mecosta County Park Commission. It was a win-win situation for Hoover and the Park Commission, because it gave Hoover some much needed work experience, and it gave the Park Commission an extra set of hands to complete much-needed summer projects.

His time with the Park Commission was very valuable. He learned how to handle complaints from campers and patrons of the parks, security, the organization and function of an office environment, maintenance and tree trimming, to name a few. But Hoover also learned something else. He knew that to be potentially hired by the Park Commission or any other employer, he needed his high school diploma.



“I wouldn’t be able to work at the park or any other job for that matter, without a GED,” said Hoover, who realized that many employers require not only experience, but a high school education. That’s why Albright refused to stop there with Hoover. She referred him to Julie Weiss, case manager with Hope Network, an adult employment and training program, who helped him not only obtain his GED, but also paid for him to receive automotive training through the Mecosta Osceola Career Center.

“Now Hoover has a very positive work experience under his belt, his GED and several automotive certifications which position him well in the job market,” said Weiss.

“Everyone involved really pushed me to do better and be better ... and now I’m attending Baker College for business management. Things have really started to fall into place for me since I’ve completed my GED and received the help I needed to better my life,” said Hoover. “My wife Teresa and I just purchased our first house, and I feel confident I will be able to provide for my family, including my special needs daughter. It just feels really good knowing I’m on a path to success.”

Michigan Works! West Central is the only Michigan Works! agency in the state that holds the license to administer the GED and is also the only GED testing site in Mecosta and Osceola counties. Since Michigan Works! West Central started providing this service in 2008, 123 people have received their GED. Every Monday and Wednesday evening GED prep classes are held at the Michigan Works! in Big Rapids to help individuals study and prepare for the test.

“Providing this service to the community is something we felt was imperative to preparing the workforce,” said Paul Griffith, executive director of Michigan Works! West Central. “Anyone can come in and be a part of our GED prep classes, and we’re very proud of those who have earned their GED. That’s one barrier removed for many people.”

For more information on obtaining a GED or other services provided through Michigan Works! West Central, call (231) 796-0049 or visit www.michworkswc.org.

Pictured left to right: Jerri Bozeman, Hope Network site manager; Brandon Hoover; Linda Albright, Eagle Village case manager