Central Iowa America’s Promise Project

PARTNERSHIP LEAD ORGANIZATION – UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL IOWA (CENTRAL IOWA WORKS)

SERVICE AREA
IOWA: Polk, Dallas, and Warren; and serves the following cities: Des Moines, West Des Moines, Ankeny, Urbandale, Johnston, Clive, Waukee, Altoona, Indianola, Norwalk, Grimes, Pleasant Hill, Perry, Windsor Heights, Bondurant, Carlisle, Adel, Polk City, Saylorville, Mitchellville, Dallas Center, Woodward, Van Meter, Granger, and De Soto.

GOALS
* Support 380 clients in Central Iowa with training and job placement in health care careers.
* 93% of clients will complete a training earning them a certification.
* 80% of clients will obtain employment in health care.
* Partner with employers to create sustainable apprenticeship programs.

TARGETED POPULATIONS
* Unemployed, underemployed, and incumbent workers
* Specifically, refugees, veterans, individuals with disabilities and/or criminal backgrounds
* Low-income individuals qualifying for the (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) WIOA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TARGETED INDUSTRY
Healthcare

PARTNERS
* Employers and Industry Representatives: Broadlawns Medical Center; Candeo; EveryStep; Iowa Digestive Disease Center; Mercy Medical Center; UnityPoint Health; Wesley Life
* Workforce Boards: Central Iowa Workforce Development Board; Iowa Workforce Development
* Economic Development Agency: Greater Des Moines Partnership
* Education and Training Providers: Des Moines Area Community College; Mercy College for Health Services; Signature Healthcare
* Others: Iowa Department of Human Services; Bureau of Refugee Services; Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families

ACHIEVEMENTS
* HealthWorks is exceeding enrollment goals, on track to support more than 500 clients by 2020.
* Through 2018, 203 individuals (85% of those no longer in the program) have successfully completed a training and gained a new credential.
* Healthworks has supplied Central Iowa with 149 certified nursing assistants (CNA), 30 Direct Care Professionals, 14 Sterile Processing Technicians, 6 Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) and 7 Registered Nurses!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
* Partnered with a refugee services group to offer a pre-CNA track to give English Language Learners a jump start into health care.
* Partnered with employers on two Registered Apprenticeships to allow clients to earn money while they train to be a Certified Nursing Assistant or Certified Medical Assistant.
* Lobbied the local community college to expand its Licensed Practical Nurse program to accommodate students with limited transportation. In the interim, we coordinated a van to transport students to the classes outside the city limits.
* Coordinated partnership meetings where employer partners from across the healthcare field can share ideas and collaborate to solve collective hiring issues.
Refugee, graduate, future nurse

Tara had attended school while living in a refugee camp in Nepal for 18 years but didn't have a diploma. She arrived in the U.S. at age 21 unsure about the culture and the rules of her new country. She began to practice English by talking with strangers and watching YouTube videos, but she was nervous about her ability to take a test.

Tara was referred to Central Iowa HealthWorks from another United Way program that helped her get her high school equivalency. Through HealthWorks, she obtained her CNA and began working as a Certified Nursing Assistant at a local retirement home.

But Tara didn't stop there! It was always her dream to become a nurse. She said she wants to be a nurse to honor her grandmother, who worked so hard to take care of Tara and her siblings.

Tara has completed her prerequisites and will start nursing school at Des Moines Area Community College in the fall.

From homeless to Registered Nurse

Rhonda always wanted to be a nurse. And when she turned 53, she knew it was now or never. Rhonda's big smile and friendly personality hid the worry she often felt living paycheck to paycheck, working multiple low-wage jobs that offered little security. In the fall of 2016, she took her savings and enrolled at Mercy College of Health Sciences in Des Moines.

But two weeks into her nursing program, things took a turn for the worse. Rhonda broke up with her boyfriend and found herself without a place to live. The next months and years would involve five moves, a series of bug-infested apartments, a few bouts of living in her car or crashing on classmates' couches, and the turmoil that would eventually require her to withdraw from school due to lack of funds.

Rhonda felt like she had to give up on her dream of ever becoming a nurse. But hope arrived when a professor recommended she contact Central Iowa Healthworks. The program was able to support her through her final two semesters of school by covering the cost of tuition and books. The Healthworks Pathway Navigator also provided her with the encouragement she needed as she continued to struggle with housing issues. The nursing program itself is often overwhelming and having someone she could call when things seemed hopeless was a huge help to Rhonda.

This December Rhonda graduated from Mercy College. She’s also found permanent and stable housing. She passed her licensing exam and just accepted her first job as a Registered Nurse.