New program to help prepare former foster youths for jobs

(MADISON) – A new employment assistance program for former foster care youths was launched today in Fond du Lac County.

The Fond du Lac County Department of Social Services (FCDSS) designed the Transition to Independent Living Employment Program (or “TILEP”) to help young adults from 18 to 21 who have aged out of the foster care system get the job training, skills and services needed to obtain employment, stay employed and have successful careers.

The new program is part of Governor Scott Walker’s “The Year of A Better Bottom Line” initiative, designed to enhance participation of people with disabilities in the workforce. About half of foster youths ready to transition to independent lives have some type of mental or physical impairment, often associated with past trauma. The plan has been tailored to assist these youths who may face work challenges.

“Youths who have spent time in foster care often struggle to make a successful transition to adulthood,” said Gov. Walker. “Initiatives like the Transition to Independent Living Employment Program and Fostering Futures, in which Tonette is deeply involved, help empower them to overcome their challenges and find their niche within their communities.”

Speakers at the kick-off event at the Fond du Lac City/County Government Building included Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Eloise Anderson, Fond du Lac County Social Services Director Pat Lancour, DCF Office of Youth Services Director Wendy Henderson, former foster care youth Turkessa Hayes, and Sandy Ritchie, manager of Domino’s Pizza in Fond du Lac. Also participating were members of the Fond du Lac County Youth
Employment Program Advisory Board, local employers and community partners, and former foster care youths interested in the program.

“This new type of job training will be an important resource for young people coming out of foster care,” said DCF Secretary Anderson. “Many of them can use help improving their work skills, and by making this job training program interesting to them, it will be rewarding for them to obtain jobs and maintain a career path.”

Pat Lancour, FCDSS Director, explained. “The program will teach participants initial ‘soft skills’ of employment, such as reporting to work, interacting with supervisors and co-workers, and attention to tasks. Then, specific objectives and training activities will be identified for each trainee.”

The Transition to Independent Living Employment Program was structured to serve as a model. “We proposed the design to help neighboring counties and expand the network for the youths,” said Lancour.

“This is another great example of helping people overcome challenges and train for jobs,” said Anderson. “Wisconsin will benefit from the success of these youths as they prepare to join the workforce and transition to independent living.”

For more information about TILEP, contact Fond du Lac County Social Services at (920) 929-3400. Learn more about the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families programs at www.dcf.wi.gov.

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