

# Iowa Workforce Monthly

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## Work Opportunity Tax Credit

Employers can receive valuable tax credits by taking advantage of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program (WOTC) was created to assist individuals from certain targeted groups to enter or re-enter the labor force. You can receive tax incentives for hiring workers from these targeted groups.

Recent changes to WOTC include:

- 1) an age limit increase to 40 for Qualified Food

- Stamp Recipients;
- 2) the income eligibility criteria was eliminated for Qualified Ex-Felons;
- 3) the amount of time in which the employer has to file the Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request (IRS form 8850) was increased to 28 calendar days;
- 4) the Welfare-to-Work program was repealed and its tax provisions consolidated into the WOTC Program as Target Group (I).

If you would like more information, about WOTC contact:

**Barbara Bobb – (515) 242-6240**

## IOSH Reminds Iowans of Carbon Monoxide Dangers

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a dangerous problem that is often heightened during winter months. Iowa Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is urging Iowans to be cognizant of the dangers caused by the colorless and odorless gas that can overcome an individual without warning.

“Carbon monoxide poisoning can sicken an individual quickly leading to severe illness, coma or death,” stated Iowa Labor Commissioner David Neil.

While carbon monoxide poisoning is possible all year round, it is especially important to watch for exposure in the winter.

Exposure can be limited by:

- Never using a generator indoors or within an enclosed space such as a garage, crawl space or basement. Opening windows and doors may help to prevent buildup of the gas.
- Make sure generators have 3-4 feet of clear space on all sides for ventilation purposes.
- Generators used outdoors should not be placed near doors, windows or vents that could lead to a buildup of carbon monoxide in an occupied space.
- Check all space heaters and stoves frequently to ensure carbon monoxide is not building up.
- Never leaving vehicles running in a closed garage.

# One On One



with Elisabeth Buck, IWD Director

I have truly enjoyed serving as the Director of Iowa Workforce Development for the past 3-1/2 years.

I have also enjoyed the relationships and friendships I have developed with all of you. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with such dedicated workforce professionals.

We have accomplished a great deal over the past 3-1/2 years, not because of anything that I have done, but because each of you has repeatedly gone above and

beyond to do great work on behalf of the people of Iowa.

A few highlights for me include:

- leading the monumental initiative to “integrate” our workforce office services, including a complete overhaul of our customer service model
- transforming the workforce system, through the integration effort, from a self-service model to an integrated, skills-based model with value-added staff assisted core services
- developing an aggressive

and strategic Reemployment Services program to engage workers early

- leading the misclassification task force pursuant to Executive Order 8, which resulted in the establishment of a misclassification unit. It has resulted in uncovering more than \$30 million in unreported wage in just over one year.

## Workers’ Compensation Commissioner Christopher Godfrey Testifies Before Congress

Iowa Workers’ Compensation Commissioner, Christopher Godfrey, testified before the Committee on Education and Labor, Subcommittee on Workplace Protections last week regarding potential changes in impairment ratings commonly used in workers’ compensation disability claims.

Iowa convened a Workers’ Compensation Task Force to review the 6th Edition AMA Guides and determine whether Iowa should adopt the new edition or remain with the current 5th Edition. The eight member task force recommended that Iowa not utilize the 6th Edition of the AMA Guide and remain with the 5th Edition.

“Iowa’s self-effectuating workers’ compensation system relies upon disability payments that are reliable and consistent,” stated Commissioner Godfrey. “The decision of the AMA to alter the existing impairment paradigm significantly impacts both Iowa employers and injured workers. This system-altering change occurred without open discussion or transparency.”

“Furthermore, if there is to be a change in the level of compensation paid to injured workers, either a change up or down, that change should be made by Iowans and not an unelected group of people unwilling to identify themselves.”

The 6<sup>th</sup> Edition was rejected by the Iowa Task Force as it substantially altered the framework for assigning disability impairment ratings. Additionally, there was concern with the lack of transparency involved in developing the new guides – especially since the AMA is unwilling to share who was involved in assigning value or changing the framework. The Task Force also noted that the 6th Edition is riddled with errors, lacks peer review, and has not been tested to avoid disparate treatment due to race/culture/educational standards.

## Lakes Area and Kossuth ECI to Hold Joint Meeting

The Lakes Area Employers’ Council (ECI) and Kossuth County ECI will be meeting jointly on Tuesday, Feb. 22, 2011, from Noon to 2:00 p.m. at Iowa Lakes Community College, 1900 N Grand Ave, Spencer, Iowa 51301. All employers, human resource personnel, accounting, payroll, and other staff members are invited to attend. Featured speaker will be Mike Whitmore, Compliance Assistance Specialist with the Division of Labor, Iowa Workforce Development. Mike will share the following:

1. How to be prepared for an OSHA audit.
2. How to support your progress concerning safety issues with good recording keeping.
3. How to avoid expensive fines and penalties.
4. Most importantly – how to keep your work site safe with an ongoing, systematic approach to safety in the workplace.

Questions will be entertained by Mike Whitmore.

All business owners, human resource professionals, personnel staff, attorneys, paralegals and payroll/accounting staff are invited to attend. There is no fee to attend but pre-registration is requested for planning purposes by Friday, Feb. 18, 2011, to Bob Becker at (712) 262-1971 ext. 126 or Robert. Becker@iwd.iowa.gov. This program has been approved for 2.0 (General) recertification credit hours towards PHR, SPHR and GPHR recertification through the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI).



# IWD Assists Ex-Offenders in the Work Search Process

Iowa Workforce Development works with offenders to find gainful employment after being released. One goal of the workforce advisors in correctional facilities is to network with employers to address issues they may have in hiring ex-offenders.

Part of that assistance is having offenders take the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) tests. These tests are required by many employers and trade union apprenticeships. Having offenders take these tests prior to release provides the offender with another

tool to demonstrate their competence in the work place and saves employers money from having to administer these tests. The NCRC tests measure skills in three areas: math, reading and information gathering. If sufficient scores are obtained, offender will receive a gold, silver or bronze certificate.

Offenders are also offered work readiness classes that emphasize job applications, resume writing, interviewing skills and effectively addressing the criminal history issue, which helps them present themselves better in

interview. These offenders are entered into the IWD work search database that can be accessed at any IWD office after release.

One-on-one consultations with a workforce advisor is provided to offenders before their release to discuss employment options. They may also view online job openings to help them compete more effectively in the job market.

Other assistance provided to employers is the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) and Federal Bonding

information. WOTC provides employers who meet certain criteria with financial incentives to hire ex-offenders.

The Federal Bonding program provides employers with insurance that protects them against financial loss due to ex-offender theft. This bonding is at no cost to the employer for the first six months of an ex-offender's employment.

## eFile for a Fast Income Tax Refund!

Receive your Iowa income tax refund in 10 days or less when you electronically file your tax return(s).

You can eFile through the Iowa Department of Revenue Web site, file through a tax professional, or purchase income tax software. Last year, 78% of Iowa income tax returns were eFiled.

Beginning January 14, click the eFile logo on the Iowa Department of Revenue Web site

([www.iowa.gov/tax/](http://www.iowa.gov/tax/)) for links to income tax software for online filing of federal and Iowa income tax returns, and to find out if you qualify to file for free.

Then, follow the simple instructions to eFile!

Online filing is fast, easy, and secure.



**File electronically.  
Good for the environment. Good for you.**





# Regional Update

## IowaWORKS Central Iowa Holds Service Provider Fair

On Thursday, December 16, IowaWORKS of Central Iowa sponsored a Service Provider Fair at the Polk County Convention Complex. Over 35 area service providers participated and provided attendees with information about their programs. The need for this event stemmed from the 3,000 Central

Iowans that have or soon will exhaust their unemployment benefits. The unique opportunity to have all the service providers together under one roof at one time provided attendees with a great deal of resources. A huge thanks to everyone involved in making this event a great success!!!



## IowaWORKS Loess Hills New Iowa Center Participates in Diversity Fair for Students New to Iowa

The New Iowan Center welcomed students new to Iowa at Iowa Western Community College's Diversity Fair.

The annual diversity fair helps promote the awareness of diverse

populations in our community.

The fair is a great way to reach the new international students that arrive on a regular basis. They have a need for a lot of information and

referrals to get acclimated to living and working in the Midwest.

Students who attended the diversity fair were from various countries including Nepal, Thailand, Bolivia, Egypt, Mongolia,

Canada, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, Lithuania, Angola, Belgium, Chile, Turkey and Japan.





# IowaWORKS Greater Siouxland Naturalization Ceremony

As a part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the New Iowan Center, the Sioux City office held a Naturalization Ceremony for 15 people to become U.S. Citizens, from countries including Mexico, Central America, South America, and Africa. The 185<sup>th</sup> Refueling Wing provided Color Guard for the event. Below are few photos from the ceremony.



# Noteworthy Employee Acknowledgements and Accomplishments

We appreciate the feedback we get from our customers. Here are a few noteworthy comments we've received:

– Matthew Dake sent in a note thanking **Sharon Ortega, Des Moines**, for being

a great assistance during a messy docketing issue. “Her professionalism was very much appreciated,” said Dake.

– Sharon Lamkin sent a note to thank **JoAnn Hickok, Des Moines, Kim McCormick, Des Moines** and **Liz Pruisner, Des Moines**, for going out of their way to help.

“I have set up a lot of states and I have to tell you that most of their people were not helpful at all. It is refreshing when I come in contact with

people like JoAnn, Kim and Liz,” said Lamkin.

– **Jeanie Wright, Waterloo**, sent in this nice story about helping someone find a job.

*“I returned from lunch today and heard a raised voice in our Membership area. When I went to check I saw a man standing there excitedly telling staff “I got a job!!! Thank you for all your help, I thought I should come back and tell you they hired me as an Electrician at the casino – I couldn’t have done it without you! Thank*

*you! By the way, come on out and spend your money – keep me working!”*

*I’ve heard these stories, but never witnessed one first hand... wow! What a good feeling to see lives being impacted by what we do!”*

If you would like to send us your noteworthy comment, send it to:  
kathryn.hommer@iwd.iowa.gov  
or 515-281-5407.

## Iowa Workforce Monthly

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Des Moines, IA 50319  
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For Deaf or Hard of Hearing, call Relay 711

*Iowa Workforce Monthly* is intended to help keep Iowa employers, job seekers and IWD employees informed about critical employment issues affecting Iowa. For more information, contact Kathryn Hommer via e-mail at [kathryn.hommer@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:kathryn.hommer@iwd.iowa.gov) or 515-281-5407.

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To read past editions, visit  
[www.iowaworkforce.org/director/](http://www.iowaworkforce.org/director/)

**Equal Opportunity Employer/Program**

**Auxiliary aids and services are available to individuals with disabilities upon request.**

## Employee News

### New Hires

Shantel Anderson	Brei Johnson
Gary Bateman	Rose Lee
Adam Beattie	Kyle Paxton
Katelyn Borden	Angela Peterson
Lisa Brown	Dawn Peterson
Tracey Ceaser	April Sikes
Kristy Dees	Alyssa Slaby
Jon Hallengren	

### Anniversaries

#### 5 Years

Susan Johannsen  
Pam Rosa

#### 10 Years

Lori Gregory  
Ann Morris  
Brian Stewart  
Vonceil Stewart-Kai  
Kham Ung  
Jeanine Patten  
Jeanine Cozart  
Chandrasekhar Jagarlamudi

#### 20 Years

Penny Maxwell  
Paula Shroyer

#### 25 Years

Bryan Anson  
Christian Foshier

#### 30 Years

Sharon Wolfe  
Debra Wooton

### Promotions/ Transfers

Bradley Herrig  
Kimberly Lochner  
Kristin Macy  
Stephanie Windust  
Sharon Wolfe  
Sharon Gaulke-Lily  
Joseph Mowers  
Raymond Taber

