

# NEWS RELEASE

United Way of  
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## **JobSTAR Sets Course for Stronger Families, Economy Through Resource Network Supporting Workers**

*Jackson County Businesses, Nonprofits, Organizations Join Forces*

JACKSON, Michigan [March 28, 2018] – A partnership of Jackson County businesses, nonprofits, associations and state agencies unveiled a resource network that will help local employees manage crisis situations that impede their ability to work.

JobSTAR, Jackson’s Business Network, embeds a Success Coach at participating businesses who can connect workers with services and support programs across an array of challenges. Employees connect with the Success Coach confidentially. Assistance aims at removing barriers that hurt many people’s efforts to work regularly and effectively. The Success Coach role is funded by sponsoring partners and participating businesses.

JobSTAR was announced at United Way of Jackson County’s annual meeting today.

“Jackson County is rich in talented people who are eager to work. But sometimes life gets in the way—a sick child, a broken car, financial debt, a struggle with emotional illness or substance use, just to name a few. JobSTAR’s goal is to help workers through those tough times and help them regain their lives. That benefits business by ensuring a steadier, more productive workforce,” said Ken Toll, President and CEO of United Way of Jackson County (UWJC).

JobSTAR formed through a partnership including UWJC, Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, Michigan Works! Southeast, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services,

and Family Service & Children's Aid. It is based on similar resource networks that have shown success elsewhere in Michigan and across the nation.

"We're excited to see how JobSTAR will strengthen our local workforce, our local businesses and the Jackson County economy," said Mindy Bradish-Orta, President and CEO of Jackson County Chamber of Commerce. "We know that a steady, productive workforce is crucial to a business's success. By helping employees get beyond barriers to work, we'll see reductions in absenteeism and turnover, greater productivity and a stronger economy that draws new investment."

Bradish-Orta identified the initial participating employers in JobSTAR: Industrial Steel Treating Co., Melling Tool Co., Jackson County Intermediate School District, LifeWays Community Mental Health, John George Home, Jackson Friendly Home, and United Way of Jackson County's enrollment office for CARE (Consumers Affordable Resource for Energy). The Success Coach will have a regular presence at each site.

Jim Coutu, Business Services Manager for Michigan Works! Southeast, said his experience with resource networks like JobSTAR has been positive.

"As our economy grows, employers desperately need skilled workers they can count on to make it to work and be productive," Coutu said. "Michigan Works! can help find the labor, but we can't always help people get past barriers to work. That's what makes the JobSTAR partnership so valuable."

Zoe Lyons, Director of the Jackson County office of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, said those barriers are many. "A working single parent can't find affordable childcare. An employee faces eviction. An unexpected medical need hits a family member. A worker struggles with depression or substance use. Any of those situations, and countless more, can keep someone from working. Working together, we can help that person get beyond those issues," she said.

Family Service & Children's Aid CEO Bob Powell called JobSTAR an important driver to building stronger families. "JobSTAR is a unique and powerful collaboration that leverages our

expertise so we can help more Jackson County families,” he said. “It’s exciting to be part of this effort and expand our ability to make a measurable, meaningful difference.”

Toll pointed out that the average cost to a business for each employee turnover is \$3,500—not counting the expense of posting and interviewing for a replacement, plus the impact on productivity. Resource networks like JobSTAR have reduced turnover to zero in many cases. “That alone is a powerful example of return on investment,” he said.

The JobSTAR partners also announced Scott Walker as the first Success Coach for Jackson County. A 13-year veteran in workforce development, vocational rehabilitation, and employment and training, Walker comes to JobSTAR from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Walker will begin his duties on April 2, visiting worksites and meeting employees at participating companies.

Meanwhile, the network is inviting other employers to get onboard.

“We think JobSTAR offers a great opportunity to strengthen families, businesses and our economy—big drivers for a high quality of life in any community,” Toll said.

### **About United Way of Jackson County**

United Way of Jackson County mobilizes people, organizations and funds to create a community rich in opportunities to eliminate poverty and allow all people to achieve financial stability and success. We are committed to helping 5,000 Jackson County residents develop a pathway to financial success by 2025. Visit our website at [www.uwjackson.org](http://www.uwjackson.org), or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

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