

PAYDEN — Jobs for Michigan's Graduates

When Payden first connected with Michigan Works! West Central, she had one major goal in mind: finish high school to build a future she could be proud of. But like so many young people, COVID-19 turned her world upside-down. Even after things opened back up, virtual learning just didn't feel right, and finding a school that "clicked" was harder than she expected.

But Payden didn't give up, and neither did the people around her. The JMG team at Michigan Works! West Central jumped in to help her explore different school options. Staff showed up for her, helping with homework, navigating tech issues, and giving her the support she needed. Together, they became Payden's cheering section.

And then everything changed.

Payden found a school that finally felt like the right fit, somewhere she could grow, breathe and be herself. At first, she was quiet and a little unsure, but as she got involved in CDC with Youth Solutions and went on Talent Tours, something incredible started to happen. She began to bloom.

Payden brought a work ethic most adults would admire. She always found a part-time job, never complained and never backed down from a challenge. Big task? Small task? Didn't matter. Payden took it on with grit and maturity beyond her years. All that hard work has paid off.



Spring 2026, Payden is set to graduate a full year early. And she didn't stop there; she saved her own money to travel across the country and tour colleges, determined to build the future she wants. Her next chapter? Studying to become a veterinary technician and turning her love for animals into a career.

Payden's story shows what's possible when you combine support with determination. She faced obstacles,

change, uncertainty, and pressure, yet she kept pushing, growing, and choosing her future one step at a time.

If there's one thing Payden proves, it's this: You don't have to have everything figured out. You just have to be brave enough to start, keep going, and believe you're capable of more than you think.

And Payden? She's just getting started.