

## ZACH — Career Readiness Certificate

Michigan Works! West Central's Career Readiness Certificate program is designed to help individuals successfully transition from education to employment by providing meaningful work experiences, employability skills training, career exploration opportunities and personalized career coaching. Through workshops, resume development, interview preparation, Talent Tours and ongoing support, participants gain the skills and confidence needed to achieve their educational and career goals.

One participant who embodies the impact of the program is Zach Walker.

Zach first connected with Michigan Works! West Central while attending Mason-Lake Adult Education, where he was working toward earning his high school diploma. Through determination, persistence and hard work, Zach achieved that goal and proudly graduated in spring 2025.

During the past two years, Zach remained actively involved in both the Michigan Works! West Central Youth Program and the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) program. Through these experiences, he participated in workforce development activities, career exploration events and educational field trips that helped prepare him for life after high school. When the opportunity to enroll in the Career Readiness Certificate program became available, Zach was a natural fit.

Like many young adults entering the workforce for the first time, Zach faced challenges related to confidence, communication, and understanding workplace expectations. Despite having limited work experience, he was eager to learn, gain hands-on experience, and



build a strong foundation for his future.

To support his growth, Zach was placed at Lakeshore Food Club as part of a Work-Experience opportunity. There, he developed valuable workplace skills in a supportive environment while receiving guidance from his Michigan Works! West Central Talent Specialist, Ann Walker, and worksite supervisor, Alison Glossinger. Through regular coaching and encouragement, Zach strengthened his communication skills, built confidence and gained a better understanding of professional expectations.

At the same time, Zach continued investing in his education by enrolling at West Shore Community College. Michigan Works! West Central staff assisted him with the enrollment process, including class registration and financial aid applications, helping ensure a

smooth transition into college. As he began this new chapter, he continued receiving support and encouragement to stay focused on his long-term goals.

"Zach is a delight to work with," Walker said. "He is motivated, driven and always willing to take on the next challenge. He never hesitates to step outside his comfort zone and take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow."

As part of the Career Readiness Certificate program, Zach also participated in Talent Tours that introduced him to careers and industries he had never previously considered. Visits to a local veterinary clinic and orthodontics office provided first-hand exposure to different professions and helped broaden his understanding of potential career pathways. These experiences allowed him to interact with professionals, ask questions and explore future opportunities in a meaningful way.

Today, Zach's hard work continues to pay off. He is currently employed in a seasonal part-time position and is actively pursuing an additional part-time job that will allow him to continue working while attending college. He remains engaged with Michigan Works! West Central and continues to receive support with resume development, interview preparation, job-search strategies and career planning.

Zach's journey demonstrates the powerful impact of combining education, work experience, career exploration and personalized support. Through persistence and a willingness to embrace new opportunities, he has developed the skills, confidence and experience needed to succeed in both the workplace and higher education.