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THE MONROE COUNTY
LEARNING BANK NETWORK
PROVIDING CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATION AND JOBS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EMERGENCY STATE FUNDING KEEPS LEARNING BANK NETWORK DOORS OPEN

Workforce Development Agency Grant Ensures Operational Funding Through June 30

MONROE, Mich. – After fending off closure month-by-month with donations, the Monroe County Learning Bank Network has been awarded a \$50,000 grant from the State of Michigan to sustain operations through at least June 30.

Located in the City of Monroe's Orchard East neighborhood, the Learning Bank Network prepares adult learners with the basic skills needed to achieve a college education.

Learning Bank Network funding has been in question since September when state funding was exhausted. A patchwork of funding from network partners, local service organizations, foundations and the community at large over the last few months have sustained the program as other funding sources were being sought.

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The La-Z-Boy Foundation, Knabusch Charitable Trust No. 2, and Monroe County Community College have each contributed \$15,000 in support of the Learning Bank Network. Monroe Bank & Trust, a key partner in the development of the Learning Bank Network, is providing space rent-free and has contributed an additional \$14,000 in funding to support operations. The United Way of Monroe County has awarded over \$6,000 in grants to the Learning Bank Network through their Community Impact Grant program to fund tutoring services (2011) and GED testing (2012). The Rotary Club of Monroe committed \$3,000 to fund GED testing for the students. In addition, numerous other community supporters and service clubs have come forward to individually offer monetary and grassroots support to keep the Learning Bank open.

“This project is pivotal because basic skills development is a major barrier for many in our county who seek to increase their employability through higher education,” said MCCC President Dr. David E. Nixon. “There are an estimated 18,000 individuals in Monroe County in need of a GED. That is a striking statistic. We need to arm these adult learners with the basic skills, education and ability to obtain jobs in this emerging, knowledge-based economy.”

The state funding award came as a result of an unsolicited emergency funding request submitted by Monroe County Community College to Dianne Duthie, state director of Michigan’s Office of Adult Education. Duthie authorized funding for the Learning Bank Network as a pilot project with the expectation that, if successful, the program could be replicated in other parts of the state.

“We are grateful that the state has stepped in to once again fund this important service to our community,” said Nixon. “This now gives the Learning Bank Network an opportunity to seek sustainable funding opportunities for a service that has become indispensable to our community.”

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U.S. Representative John D. Dingell (D-Dearborn), State Senator Randy Richardville (R-Monroe), and State Representative Dale Zorn (R-Ida) offered assistance securing the emergency grant from the state.

The collaborative of a dozen Monroe County organizations will now be able to continue providing opportunities for county residents to achieve the basic skills needed for success in postsecondary education and training.

“The Learning Bank Network is a powerful compilation of educators and service providers that each bring to the table unique contributions to meet the diverse needs of adult learners,” said Dr. Grace Yackee, vice president of instruction at MCCC.

The Learning Bank Network partners include Monroe County Community College, Monroe Bank & Trust, Bedford Adult Education, Monroe Adult Education, Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA)/Michigan Works!, Monroe County Intermediate School District, Monroe County Opportunity Program, City of Hope CDC, Arthur Lesow Community Center, City of Monroe, Monroe County Library System and United Way of Monroe County.

The emergency grant application specified that the Learning Bank Network would continue its current efforts to coordinate and integrate county services to provide adult basic education and GED preparation in the southern and central regions of the county.

In addition, as a pilot project the Learning Bank Network will begin to develop planning committees to evaluate the feasibility of utilizing distance learning to enhance adult educational opportunities throughout Monroe County at minimal cost, particularly in rural areas; enhance the use of short term career pathways to fulfill existing skilled employment needs in Monroe County; survey and

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track success rates of Learning Bank Network completers who are subsequently able to transition off of welfare; and explore additional opportunities via the training of at-risk high school students and remediation of students at partnering universities.

The Learning Bank Network enrolls between 175 and 200 students per year for adult basic education and GED preparation. About 75 percent of those who complete Learning Bank Network programs go on to transfer to MCCC – compared to a typical traditional adult education transfer rate of approximately 12 percent.

In addition to GED preparation, the Learning Bank Network offers a host of related services, such as group and individual tutoring, career counseling and advising; skill-building seminars in college and career success; courses in financial literacy, parenting and other life skills; and direct access to employers for internships, career exploration and possible jobs.

To facilitate individually paced, flexible progress for students, there are multiple access points through all of the partner locations, as well as year-round entry into the process.

The Learning Bank facility, a converted MB&T bank branch, includes a reception area, two classrooms, two offices, a conference room and two restrooms, including one that is ADA-accessible.

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