



MONROE COUNTY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

enriching lives

Main Campus

1555 South Raisinville Road
Monroe, MI 48161-9746

Whitman Center

7777 Lewis Avenue
Temperance, MI 48182

www.monroecc.edu

Press Release

Contact:
Joe Verkennes,
Director of Marketing,
(734) 384-4207

June 10, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LEARNING BANK TO CLOSE
JUNE 26 DUE TO LACK OF FUNDING

*Last Graduation Ceremony June 18; Presentation to County
Board of Commissioners Planned for Later that Evening*

MONROE, Mich. – After fending off closure for nearly two years, the Monroe County Learning Bank will officially shut its doors on June 26 due to a lack of funding.

Launched in 2009 by a collaborative of a dozen Monroe County organizations to expand opportunities for county residents to achieve basic skills needed for success in postsecondary education and training, the Learning Bank was originally funded by a \$300,000 grant awarded to MCCC by the state.

The partners who started it, which together make up the Learning Bank Network, include MCCC, MBT, 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.

Funding for the Learning Bank has been in question since September 2012, when state funds were exhausted.

(more)

Located in the City of Monroe's Orchard East neighborhood in the former Monroe Bank & Trust bank branch at 1102 E. Front St., the Learning Bank prepares adult learners with the basic skills needed to achieve a college education, including GED preparation; 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.

The Learning Bank has been kept open month by month through a reduction in hours combined with an emergency grant from the state of \$50,000, another \$50,000 in financial support from MCCC, and rent-free space and an additional \$14,000 from Monroe Bank & Trust, as well as a patchwork of funding from network partners, local service organizations, foundations and the community at large.

The La-Z-Boy Foundation and Knabusch Charitable Trust No. 2 each contributed \$15,000; the United Way of Monroe County awarded \$6,000 in grants for tutoring services and GED testing; and the Rotary Club of Monroe committed \$3,000 to fund GED testing. In addition, numerous other community supporters and service clubs came forward to individually offer monetary and grassroots support to keep the Learning Bank Network open.

But funds have run out, and no additional grants or donors have been identified. MCCC cannot afford to continue to keep it open at a cost to the college of \$9-\$10,000 per month.

At the time of the launch in 2009, MCCC President David E. Nixon and MBT President and CEO H. Douglas Chaffin expressed the critical need for a project such as the Learning Bank Network to increase the employability of a significant number of Monroe County citizens who lack basic educational skills needed for employment and postsecondary education.

(more)

“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,” Nixon said. “We need to arm adult learners throughout Monroe County with the basic skills, education and ability to obtain jobs in this emerging, knowledge-based economy.”

“We believe this collaboration to be significant and powerful,” Chaffin said. “It will impact the community positively by providing much needed resources from a variety of partners to increase the number of adult workers with the skills needed to succeed in Michigan’s emerging economy.”

The statistics from The Learning Bank’s four years of existence bear out the predictions of Nixon and Chaffin.

According to Vuncia Council, coordinator of the Learning Bank Network, 83 students have earned their GED through the Learning bank Network since 2009 and about 75 percent of those went on to college, compared to a typical traditional adult education transfer rate of approximately 12 percent. More are scheduled to earn their GED later this month. Bedford Adult Education, which was integral in helping the Learning Bank Network get started and assists the network by offering all of the same wrap-around services that the Learning Bank offers, also has a very high success rate for its students, earning a performance award for 2011-2012.

About 250 students have participated in a success course and been screened using PowerPath Education to Employment, an easy-to-use engagement, screening and intervention system that focuses on how a person learns, rather on than what a person knows.

About 50 students are still participating in various aspects of the Learning Bank Network’s offerings, and Council and the network’s partners are working to ensure those students complete as much of their respective programming as possible by June 26.

(more)

“I have visited adult basic and literacy programs in 43 states over the past 35 years,” said Dr. Laura P. Wesiel, executive partner of PowerPath, in a letter to Council in January describing how she reviews programs based on 10 key attributes, such as friendliness of environment, use of best-practice research and principles of engagement.

“I can honestly say that I might see one program in each state – if I am lucky – that can model these 10 attributes, talk it, walk it, live it and not give a single excuse for not being the very best. The Learning Bank of Monroe County is incredible! 10 out of 10. A joy to observe!”

The Learning Bank Network will honor its final graduating class during a celebration on June 18 at Monroe County Community College.

The ceremony is scheduled for 6 p.m. in the dining room of the Audrey M. Warrick Student Services/Administration Building, which is located on the college’s Main Campus at 1555 S. Raisinville Rd.

That same evening, representatives from the 12 partners who make up the Learning Bank Network and network volunteers plan to appear before the Monroe County Board of Commissioners at 7 p.m. to present the history and success of the initiative and discuss the continuing need in Monroe County for the types of services it provides.

###