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People Works Grants Provide Pathway out of Poverty for 170 Residents

This morning, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners approved a pair of grants from its People Works Program for two local companies to train and hire or place 170 county residents currently on public assistance over three years.

The People Works program is designed to facilitate the private sector employment of county residents who currently receive public assistance in order to allow these individuals to earn a high enough monthly income to become ineligible for assistance.

“We continue to partner with local employers to train and hire our social service clients into sustainable, living wage jobs,” said Franklin County Board of Commissioners President John O’Grady. “We’re thankful for i.c.Stars and Eastway for choosing to expand their operations in Franklin County and working with us to extend an opportunity for a pathway out of poverty for 170 more residents and their families.”

i.c.stars Columbus offers a technology-based workforce development and leadership training program for low-income adults. It was founded in Chicago and has chosen Columbus as its first city for expansion. Under the terms of the grant, i.c.stars will train 30 people per year for up to 3 years and receive \$1,000 in total reimbursement per trainee placed into employment at or above the target wage of \$21 per hour with benefits – \$500 at initial placement and another \$500 after a trainee successfully completes 90 days of employment.

The second agreement is with Eastway Corporation, one of the largest and most comprehensive not-for-profit organizations serving adults and adolescents struggling with mental illness in Ohio. Eastway is expanding its operations into Franklin County and will train and hire 80 residents over 3 years, and receive \$650 in total reimbursement per trainee placed into employment at or above a target wage \$12.50 per hour with benefits – \$325 at initial placement and another \$325 after a trainee successfully completes 90 days of employment.

“A good job is the first step up the ladder of opportunity,” said Commissioner Paula Brooks. “Both of these companies are in high-growth fields - technology and healthcare - positioning program participants for sustainable success and lifelong careers they can be proud of.”

“I’m so proud of the work we’ve been able to do to provide job training for folks that have been struggling and wanting a chance to prove themselves,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown. “People Works is providing that chance at a pathway out of poverty. If you are an employer and have a need for trained employees, we’d love to partner with you to help you find and train the employees that you are looking for.”

"I've truly been empowered today by accepting our approval from Franklin County Board of Commissioners," said Kimberly D. Gayle, Executive Director of i.c.stars Columbus. "i.c.stars originated in Chicago and have trusted us enough to bring its innovative business model to the city of Columbus. It is our desire to not only train underserved individuals in the IT software development and digital careers in Franklin County, but to create future leaders in our communities. We hope to be the change agents needed to make a significant impact necessary to fulfill the talent gap in technology by using our creative approach in finding under-utilized diverse talent."

"The need for the critical mental health services we provide at the Heritage of Hannah Neil is growing daily," said John F. Strahm, President and CEO of Eastway. "We are already serving 147 youth and their families since opening our doors earlier this year. To accommodate this need, our team is growing daily. This grant will help us identify and train the right people, helping us to provide the continuum of care that Eastway is known for. It's a win-win for everyone and we are grateful the county has selected Eastway as a recipient of these important funds."

Employers looking for help to train new and existing employees can call 614-525-7304 or visit <http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/smartworks/Programs/People.cfm> for more information.

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