

**News Release**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Local Jobs for Michigan's Graduates Program Receives State and National Recognition for Serving Youth**

NORTHWEST LOWER, MI— Staff members with the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) program in northwest Michigan have received state and national recognition for their work equipping young people with the skills to overcome barriers and succeed in education, employment, and in life. The Northwest Michigan Works! Jobs for Michigan's Graduates program served 316 youth during the 2020-2021 school year. Students participating in the JMG program had a 100% high school graduation rate, 89% full-time employment rate, and a 91% positive outcome rate which is a combination of employment, enrollment in post-secondary education, or enlistment in the military. Northwest Michigan Works! coordinates JMG programs at Cadillac's Mackinaw Trail Middle School, Cadillac Public and Innovation High Schools, CASMAN Academy in Manistee, Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District, the Traverse Bay Area ISD Career-Tech Center, the Wexford-Missaukee Career-Tech Center, and drop out recovery programs in Cadillac, Kalkaska, Manistee, and Traverse City.

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) High Performer awards and JMG 5 of 5 PLUS awards were presented to four JMG Specialists from northwest Lower Michigan. They were each recognized for their dedication to exceptional JAG programming and for meeting or exceeding national standards in five categories measuring student success, including graduation rate and job placements. The High Performer and 5 of 5 PLUS award recipients were: Lisa Baldyga, the JMG Specialist at the Traverse Bay Area Career Tech Center, Kim Benz, the JMG Specialist at Cadillac Public and Innovation High Schools, Mike Vandermus, the JMG Specialist for the Char-Em ISD, and Leanne Bush, the JMG Specialist at the Wexford-Missaukee Career-Tech Center.

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The manager of the JMG programs in northwest Lower Michigan also received special recognition. Susan Ward received the first ever JMG Outstanding Manager of the Year award. She was recognized for going above and beyond to help her team with whatever their needs are.

Along with the individual awards, the Northwest Michigan Works! JMG program received a national 5 of 5 Award for the sixth year in a row. Recipients of the JAG 5 of 5 award have met or surpassed all of JAG's five rigorous performance metrics dedicated to ensuring young people succeed in education and employment.

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates equips young people with the skills to overcome barriers and succeed in education, employment, and in life. It is the leading program of Youth Solutions, Inc., a premier youth opportunity organization delivering employability and education services to young people across the state.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dan Boss at [dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org](mailto:dan.boss@networksnorthwest.org) and stating preferences for resolution, file format, and file size. Or phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: [networksnorthwest.org/media](http://networksnorthwest.org/media).

Founded in 1974, Networks Northwest facilitates and manages various programs and services for the-10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, Small Business Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business, and community services Networks Northwest offers if you visit our website, [networksnorthwest.org](http://networksnorthwest.org). Networks Northwest's member counties are Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.