

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Apprenticeships Work” for Thompsonville Couple

THOMPSONVILLE, MI – Northwest Michigan Works! congratulates **Thomas Gavett** on starting his apprenticeship as a **Water Systems Operation Specialist** with the **Thompsonville Department of Public Works (DPW)**. His journey was inspired by his fiancée, Serena Kozora, a graduate of the Childcare Apprenticeship at Whistle Stop Learning Center, LLC.

Thompsonville, a small local community with limited workforce opportunities, is embracing apprenticeships as a way to train and retain skilled workers in critical professional roles. The program provides hands-on training, mentorship, and classroom learning while allowing participants to earn wages as they develop specialized skills.

Serena Kozora completed her Childcare Apprenticeship through a partnership with Whistle Stop Learning Center, LLC and Northwest Michigan Works! in May of 2025. She gained her Childcare Development Associate Certification along with the US Department of Labor National Occupational Credential. Her positive experience motivated Thomas to pursue a similar pathway in the public works field.

With the support of his employer and Northwest Michigan Works!, Thomas was hired and helped launch a new apprenticeship program tailored to Thompsonville's needs.

"I really wanted to get this job, so much so that I attended the village's board meeting to find out more details. At the meeting I learned that I probably didn't have the needed credentials for the position, but

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thanks to Northwest Michigan Works! involvement I am now receiving the necessary training for the position." – Thomas Gavett, Apprentice.

"Thompsonville Department of Public Works is excited to announce that we have successfully developed our first registered apprenticeship program for Water Systems Operation Technician. In partnership with Northwest Michigan Works! and through a referral from Whistle Stop Learning Center, we learned how beneficial registered apprenticeship can be for our apprentice, the employer and the community. Our program was customized to meet the specific needs of the Village of Thompsonville DPW and we are very pleased to have registered our first apprentice," Rob Conrad, DPW Superintendent/Water Operator.

"The Northwest Michigan Works! Apprenticeship Team is honored to be developing new programs that serve a wide variety of industries across our ten-county region. Watching apprenticeship opportunities take root and grow organically has been one of the most rewarding experiences for our team. When employers motivate other employers and apprentices inspire new apprentices, it generates a powerful chain reaction, one that demonstrates the real impact registered apprenticeships are having for our businesses, residents and the entire region," said Evelyn Szpliet, Regional Director of Apprenticeship Services at Northwest Michigan Works!

Northwest Michigan Works! serves as a certified US Department of Labor registered apprenticeship intermediary and sponsor; helping businesses across the ten-county region, develop, launch and manage innovative training solutions.

For more information about apprenticeship programs in Northwest Michigan, visit nwmiworks.org/apprenticeships

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dana O'Dell at dana.odell@networksnorthwest.org and stating preferences for resolution, file format, and file size. Or phone (231) 929-5075. Check our online Media Room at 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!, APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC), 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. Networks Northwest's member counties are Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.

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