

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Honoring Lisa Baldyga, JMG's October Specialist of the Month

TRAVERSE CITY, MI – Networks Northwest is proud to celebrate Lisa Baldyga, a dedicated Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) specialist who serves students at Northwest Education Services Career Tech Center and Northwestern Michigan College. Lisa has been honored by JMG, a program of Youth Solutions, as the October "Specialist of the Month." For more than seven years, she has supported youth through JMG with a combination of experience, compassion, and creativity that sets her apart.

Before becoming a JMG Specialist, Lisa spent more than two decades in the medical field, working in a variety of areas including hematology, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, oncology, and women's health. She enjoyed the fascinating aspects of her healthcare career, particularly in hematology assisting with bone marrow procedures, but admits the work could also feel heavy at times. Gardening and time spent outdoors became her way to balance the intensity of the job—an outlet she still treasures today.

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Lisa's journey to JMG began when two Michigan Works! colleagues encouraged her to apply for a position at the Beaver Island Lighthouse School. Intrigued by the chance to combine her love of the outdoors with mentoring youth, she stepped into the role and was immediately hooked. "Right from the start, I watched the students evolve, and in just a few months their growth was nothing short of amazing," she recalled. That experience confirmed her calling to become a JMG Specialist, where she has since made a lasting impact.

For Lisa, one of the greatest motivators in her work is seeing youth gain confidence. Whether at [Leadership Day](#) cheering on students as they conquer the high ropes course or at the [Career Development Conference](#) watching them overcome nerves to deliver award-winning presentations, she values the moments where youth begin to believe in themselves. "It's about planting those seeds of confidence," she explained. "You never know how those moments will impact their future."

A memory that stands out for Lisa is watching three of her students confidently share their stories at [Legislative Day](#) with Representative Betsy Coffia. "I just sat back and let them take over. They weren't shy—they owned their stories," Lisa said. "Representative Coffia even came back later asking to get another picture with them. It was one of those proud, blown-away moments."

Lisa recognizes that today's youth face unique challenges, particularly around mental health and affordable housing. "Some of my students are still trying to find a place to live, or they're crowded into apartments with others, or still living with parents in tough situations," she explained. "Those struggles don't go away—but as JMG Specialists, we step in to help." That support can range from helping with scholarship applications and connecting students to opportunities they didn't know existed, to providing gas cards, linking them to food pantries, or assisting with small car repairs through local partnerships. Beyond immediate resources, JMG equips youth with essential life skills like budgeting, planning, and financial literacy.

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She's intentional about creating safe, welcoming spaces for her students; her office at Northwestern Michigan College is even known as "the safe zone"—always stocked with snacks and open for conversation. "Sometimes they just sit and watch me work. Other times they open up. Either way, they know they're not alone." For Lisa, the real impact comes from the connections JMG provides—to employers, community resources, and opportunities—that bridge gaps and show students what's possible, even when life feels overwhelming.

Congratulations, Lisa, on being named **JMG's October 2025 Specialist of the Month!** Thank you for your compassion, your dedication, and the incredible difference you make in the lives of Michigan's youth every day.

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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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