

**News Release**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **First of Its Kind Career and Leadership Program Coming to Cadillac 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

CADILLAC, MI— Cadillac Area Public Schools (CAPS) and Northwest Michigan Works! are proud to announce that CAPS 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be the first students in the state to participate in a Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) Middle School program. The primary mission of the JMG Middle School Program is to assist students in grades 6-8 develop leadership skills that will help them transition successfully from middle to high school and beyond. Career Specialists provide an array of counseling, skill development, advocacy, career association, and experiential learning opportunities that will improve student academic performance, school behavior, attendance, confidence, participation, and self-esteem.

JMG is already available as a career and college readiness program for students at Cadillac Public and Innovation High Schools and at the Wexford-Missaukee Career-Tech Center. This expanded partnership between Northwest Michigan Works! and Cadillac Area Public Schools will make the JMG program available to local 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

"While the JMG Middle School program will be the first of its kind in Michigan; JMG has a long track record of success in our region," said Susan Ward, Northwest Michigan Works! Jobs for Michigan's Graduates Manager. "This was the 5th year in a row we received state and national recognition for our work equipping young people with the skills to overcome barriers and succeed in education, employment, and in life. We are excited for this new opportunity to ensure our youth receive this life-changing programming even earlier in their school career."

The JMG Middle School program will be offered to students in the 8th grade Living Skills classes at Cadillac Junior High School. The 8th grade curriculum focuses on dreamwork, lifestyles, negotiations, career-based learning, leadership development, and high school transition. Students participate in activities to enhance their transition to high school.

"We are excited to partner with Michigan Works and JMG to offer additional supports for our 8th graders transitioning into high school," said Michael Outman, Cadillac Junior High Principal. "They will be providing lifelong skills that will not only help them in the classroom but in the workforce and community for years to come."

Jobs for Michigan's Graduates is the leading program of Youth Solutions, Inc., a premier youth opportunity organization delivering employability and education services to young people across the state.

"Youth Solutions, Inc. is proud to partner with Networks Northwest to deliver the Jobs for Michigan's Graduates (JMG) program and their expansion into middle school," said Sonya Blanzky, Director of Operations, Youth Solutions, Inc. "It is so important that young people explore different career pathways earlier and the relationships Networks Northwest has built in their community helps ensure that youth have these opportunities. We hope this is the first of many JMG programs to expand into middle school."

In addition to the programs in Cadillac, Northwest Michigan Works! also coordinates JMG high school programs at CASMAN Academy in Manistee, Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District, the Traverse Bay Area ISD Career-Tech Center, and Out of School programs in Cadillac, Kalkaska, Manistee, and Traverse City. During the 2019-2020 school year the Northwest Michigan Works! Jobs for Michigan's Graduates program served over 340 youth. Students participating in the JMG program had a 99% high school graduation rate, 78% employment rate, and a 91% positive outcome rate which is a combination of employment, enrollment in post-secondary education, or enlistment in the military.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by emailing Dan Boss at 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

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.