

WESTERN ILLINOIS WORKS

Serving Adams, Brown, Hancock, Henderson, Knox,
McDonough, Pike, Schuyler, and Warren Counties

Partner Testimonial Lisbeth Lefler, JWCC

Introduction

In my role, I assist students entering the Adult Education GED and ESL programs and provide career services as students work their way through the programs.

If students are unsure of what they want to do next, I work with them to narrow down what might be a good career fit based on their skills and interests.

Whenever possible, I connect students to our partners who might be able to provide funding for schooling or work experience. I also help connect students with JWCC, or the school of their choice, for additional education or training. Other students choose to go directly into the workforce, in which case I can assist them with their job search and application process, or work in partnership with WIW to find openings in their field of interest that could turn into a career.

Our WIW Experience

JWCC worked more loosely with WIW before the 2014 WIOA legislation established adult education as a core partner. The availability of funding through the WIOA Out-of-School Youth Grant led JWCC to partner with WIW. This partnership provides us more resources and practical ways to provide workforce readiness services more directly to each student.

I am proud to represent JWCC and WIW due to the impact these opportunities have on the students' lives. Many of our students have had a lot of challenges and sometimes don't believe they can achieve their goals and live above their previous struggles.

I believe WIW plays an important role in providing a bridge for individuals who might otherwise just settle for poverty and a life of unfulfilled dreams. In addition, WIW also serves to empower and provide skills that would otherwise be missing from our workforce and the economy of our communities.

As we often see, wasted skills and discouraged individuals affect future generations, so by helping individuals gain skills and elevating them above their struggles, we change the trajectory of their children and grandchildren as well.

As a WIW partner, JWCC Adult Education serves as a steppingstone for individuals to position themselves ready to be catapulted forward – often with the help of the WIW assistance and programs. On a personal level, I love to see people find their purpose and achieve beyond their dreams.



- **Partner:** John Wood Community College (JWCC)
- **Name:** Lisbeth Lefler
- **Title:** Adult Education Transition Coordinator
- **# of Years as Partner:** 8



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In my experience, WIW serves as a bridge-builder for broken dreams for individuals and as an important partner to local and regional employers. Not only do the individuals benefit from the programs – their success may even inspire their network and families to pursue *their* own dreams in becoming everything they can, and that we as a society need them to be.

The most challenging aspect as a partner of WIW is to help people understand the value of the opportunities set before them. It's truly within their power to change their lives.

On the flip side, it is very rewarding to see our students flourish doing things and going places they never thought they could. A changed life is the greatest reward for all of us.

We have had several students who qualified for WIW programs including some who just finished their first college course through an ICAPS logistics class. They all agree it was a great introduction to college level education. They also agree the class will help them get a good-paying job.

A couple of students stated the logistics class is directly related to their chosen career path. Another student just finished her CNA class, while other students have gained important skills through the Paid Work Experience program.

If another agency or an employer is curious about becoming a WIW partner, I would want them to know that these workforce programs create one of the best pipelines for undiscovered and previously untrained talent and skills – resources that are so vital to our society becoming the best it can be.

Looking forward, the opportunities ahead for the partnership of JWCC and WIW include expanding the ICAPS programs to serve more students and adding all career fields. With these partnerships, we can provide much-needed credentialing leading to self-sustaining wages.

I'm excited to see the programs grow and students leap into the future with their dreams and skills coming together.



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