



the **herald-palladium**
Southwest Michigan

Local News

Area to get \$3.5M for job programs

Print Page

Michigan Works! to receive \$136M from stimulus

By **KEVIN ALLEN - H-P Business Writer**

Published: Saturday, May 2, 2009 1:06 PM EDT

BENTON HARBOR - Michigan Works! offices around the state will receive more than \$136 million in federal economic stimulus money to help the unemployed develop new skills and find jobs, and more than \$3.5 million of that funding will be coming to Southwest Michigan, the governor's office announced this week.

"We'll use this funding to increase the number of people we serve through our existing programs and services, such as training and re-employment for adults who are unemployed or interested in career advancement," Todd Gustafson, executive director of Michigan Works! in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties, said in an e-mail to The Herald-Palladium.

"We will also expand our youth services, including career development and exploration, dropout prevention, training and education," he said. "We've already tripled the amount of youth we're going to serve through our tri-county summer jobs program."

The agency in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties will spend \$1.6 million of the money on youth activities, \$1.2 million on dislocated-worker activities and \$700,000 on adult activities, a press release said.

Michigan Works! has been faced with a growing demand for its services during this recession.

The combined jobless rate in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties was 12.5 percent in March, according to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Traffic to Michigan Works! offices in the three counties has increased 70 percent during the past year, Gustafson said.

The agency expects to serve a record 34,000 people in the next year, he added.

"In order to accommodate the increased demand, we've opened a new service center in Lake Michigan College's Bertrand Crossing campus and we renovated our Dowagiac office with new technology and space to hold more job seekers," Gustafson said.

"This has helped, but we still need more resources for training."

kallen@TheH-P.com

Copyright © 2009 - Herald Palladium

[x] Close Window