

**News Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Northwest Michigan Business and Employee Receive Michigan Works! Impact Awards**

LANSING, MI— A Charlevoix woman and her employer received Michigan Works! Impact Awards for utilizing a local Business Resource Network (BRN) to help the employee overcome homelessness and other challenges. Sandra Zeinog, Wojan Window & Door Corporation, and other Impact Award recipients from around the state, were recognized March 4 in Lansing at a special ceremony attended by Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist, local lawmakers, and statewide talent development officials.

Zeinog was alone, homeless and dealing with other personal challenges when she started working at Wojan Window & Door Corporation in Charlevoix. Wojan's HR Manager, Jill Harrell, learned about the challenges Zeinog was facing and referred her to a Business Resource Network (BRN) success coach. The BRN was developed by Northwest Michigan Works! in partnership with Char-Em United Way. The success coach visits participating employers on a weekly basis to provide community-based referrals and support to remove worker barriers and increase retention while reducing turnover.

"It was less than three weeks and the [success coach] had helped me find another place," said Zeinog. "I was very happy."

"Northwest Michigan Works! has been a terrific partner to Wojan throughout the years," said Harrell. "It's easy to see that they are committed to understanding the unique needs of our region and then using that knowledge in ways that help employers like us succeed."

Zeinog's success coach also helped her secure household furnishings with vouchers from community partners and worked with her on budgeting skills, Zeinog was able to catch up on past bills, obtain a lower-cost vehicle, meet all her financial and legal obligations, and get off probation.

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“It’s been a real honor to partner with Northwest Michigan Works!,” said Jeffery Neill, Char-Em United Way Board president. “It’s amazing what you can do when you work with other professionals to make our world a greater place. The work we are doing now will impact generations of families in our communities, and I can’t think of anything more valuable.”

The Impact Awards, hosted by the Michigan Works! Association, recognize the economic development success being achieved in communities across Michigan. During the event, local lawmakers present tributes to dozens of honorees from across the state.

“Sandra’s success in overcoming so many obstacles is a testament to both her desire to succeed and to the wonderful services available in our community to help our residents in need,” said state Sen. Wayne Schmidt (R-Traverse City). “Congratulations to Sandra on accomplishing her goals and to the team at Northwest Michigan Works! for all that they do to assist the residents in our community with their needs and career goals.”

Award winners included employers, workers, Michigan Works! organizations, and partners from across the state.

“Northwest Michigan Works! continues to show time and time again that they are committed to understanding the unique needs of our region and then using that knowledge in ways that help employers and job seekers alike succeed,” said state Rep. Triston Cole (R-Mancelona). “Their dedication to ensuring that Sandra got the assistance she needed to get back on her feet makes them such a valuable asset to our community.”

The Michigan Works! Association is a non-profit membership organization that provides services and support to Michigan’s talent eco-system. For over 30 years, the Association has been the go-to resource for federal, state and local workforce initiatives. The Association’s work ensures top-quality services and support for Michigan’s talent pipeline. For more information, please visit [michiganworks.org](http://michiganworks.org).

Photo Information: Anora O’Connor, Executive Director, Char-Em United Way (front row, left), Jill Harrell, Wojan Window & Door (front row, 2nd from left), and Sandra Zeinog, Impact Award Recipient (front row, 3rd from left) were joined by State Representative Triston Cole (back row, center) and staff members from Northwest Michigan Works! at the Michigan Works! Impact Awards in Lansing.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Dan Boss at [danboss@networksnorthwest.org](mailto:danboss@networksnorthwest.org) and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5047. Check our online Media Room at: [networksnorthwest.org/media](http://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.