



PRESS RELEASE

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JET ANNOUNCES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating 50 years in workforce development, JET (formerly known as Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training or NEMOJT) is a regional unit of government established under a joint powers agreement between the seven counties of Northeast Minnesota. It is the grant recipient and administrative entity of federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds, state and county grants as well as private donations.

According to Dennis Wain, JET's first Executive Director who served for 33-years retiring in 2007, JET got its start in 1974 in response to the high unemployment throughout the country at the time. Wain worked alongside NE MN county commissioners to start the agency with the first emphasis on getting unemployed workers back into the workforce. Also, the agency created summer job opportunities for close to a thousand youth each year. In later years, JET became known for its services to dislocated workers receiving Unemployment benefits. JET continued to grow as it partnered with the county Social Services departments in the 7-county region to offer specific employment and training services to help recipients transition off of public assistance. Throughout its fifty years, the agency focused on vocational training to meet the needs of industry throughout the region and has been able to adjust their focus as the region's economy and needs changed over time.

Since 2007 JET's contribution to the communities and workforce has been guided by directors Michelle Ufford 2008 to 2019 and Marie Domiano 2019 to present. Randy Back, with JET for 28 years filling both counselor and leadership roles, offers a snapshot of noteworthy achievements including JET initiated Incumbent Worker training in Northeast Minnesota which later became JET's business services now known as the Talent Development Program (TDP) to help employers upskill and retain regional employees. JET continued to innovate when embracing Youth Outreach to Schools throughout the region with the Minnesota Youth Program and secured a Higher Education Career Advisors Pilot grant. This led to the creation of "Career EdVenture Powered By JET", which offers free youth career counseling services for school districts in the seven counties of NE MN. During the "Great Recession of 2007-2009" JET assisted youth with federal Economic Stimulus resources and enhanced youth programming delivery to provide work opportunities during a time of double-digit unemployment and additional challenges for youth and young adults. JET led a Department of Labor initiative to provide knowledge about and assistance with "Green Economy" with Renewable Energy initiative partnering with Minnesota Technical and Community Colleges to support training and work internships in solar and renewable energy. Meeting economic challenges JET served the needs of impacted workers during the iron range mining shutdown of 2014-17 impacting over 2,000 mine workers and 4,700 construction, manufacturing, and wholesale trade (MPR 4/11/2016). For services provided to the workforce and communities JET was awarded service provider of the year in 2016 by the MN Department of

Employment and Economic Development. JET has been an integral part of entrepreneurship by delivering and supporting the national initiative of Growing America Through Entrepreneurship (GATE) and GATE II, as well as administering the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Taconite Assistance grant assisting employers during a period of economic uncertainties. JET's delivery of programming to move families off public assistance programs and into gainful employment has led to award winning recognition for service excellence and Minnesota Department of Human Services awards to numerous staff as program counselors of the year and lifetime achievement awards for agency and counseling excellence for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) and Diversion Work Program (DWP). JET has been a key agency involved with moving families out of poverty since the MFIP's inception in 1996 and all agency programmatic successes have been built around the values of serving individuals holistically while supporting the local communities to meet a common good.



Most clients find their experience with JET to be life-changing as Leah Saaristo, a former client can attest, "I was at a low point at the end of COVID and wanted to finish my degree to be not only proud of myself, but to give myself the opportunity to pull out of a life I didn't want to continue. I wanted more for myself, to grow and thrive. My Career Counselor was so helpful. She assisted me in fixing my car, paying for my books and awarding me scholarships toward tuition each semester, and eventually graduating. She even helped me move to a larger city for more opportunities in my new career. I had been offered a few higher level marketing positions and ultimately chose a position as Communications Specialist at the University of Minnesota. Now I'll be able to finish a master's degree and buy a house. Without JET's services and my counselor, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to achieve any of this." ~ Leah Saaristo

JET is located in CareerForce locations in Duluth, Grand Rapids, International Falls, Hibbing, Virginia, Cloquet, and Aitkin. JET staff also provide services on-site at local community and technical colleges as well as in K12 school districts throughout the region and are available to travel to any site where career guidance is needed. Services include career planning and exploration, personalized job search strategies, funding for postsecondary education, and financial resources to support job search activities.

For more information about JET find us at www.nemojt.org. For questions about this news release please contact: Marie Domiano, Executive Director, at Marie.Domiano@nemojt.org