



## **JUSTICE MATTERS AND KANSAS WORKFORCEONE ANNOUNCE NEW WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO ADDRESS ELDER CARE SHORTAGE IN DOUGLAS COUNTY**

### **Kansas WorkforceONE, Inc. and Dwyer Workforce Development to Partner on Innovative Initiative**

**Lawrence, KS (February 18, 2025)** – Justice Matters and Kansas WorkforceONE, formerly Heartlands Works, Inc., today announced the launch of a groundbreaking workforce development program aimed at addressing the growing shortage of elder care workers, starting in Douglas County and expanding into 16 additional counties. This initiative, which kicked off in 2025, is a collaboration between Kansas WorkforceONE and Dwyer Workforce Development (DWD).

The program is a direct response to findings from Justice Matters’ 2021 Community Problems Assembly, which identified a critical shortage of qualified healthcare professionals for seniors in Northeast Kansas. After an in-depth, two-year research process, Justice Matters found that while higher wages and training opportunities existed, they were insufficient in attracting and retaining skilled staff in the elder care sector. To ensure a sustainable healthcare workforce, the organization recognized the need for a comprehensive approach—one that combines training, support, and incentives to create a steady pipeline of qualified workers.

To help meet this need, Justice Matters selected DWD, a national leader in innovative workforce development, Kansas WorkforceONE, a local workforce development agency and other local entities. DWD’s model provides training and placement support for individuals facing barriers to employment, with a focus on healthcare careers. The program will offer healthcare training, case management, job placement, and need-based wraparound services such as housing, childcare, and transportation support.

“This partnership represents a crucial step in addressing the elder care crisis in our region,” said Margie Dyck, Co-Secretary, Justice Matters. “By combining DWD’s proven workforce development model with Kansas WorkforceONE’s local workforce expertise, we are creating an effective, sustainable solution to the shortage of elder care professionals in Douglas County. This initiative is about more than just filling positions; it’s about building a future where our seniors receive the care and support they deserve.”

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between DWD and Kansas WorkforceONE was signed in October 2024, with the goal of training, supporting, and placing at least 25 individuals in senior healthcare jobs in Douglas County in 2025. This pilot program will serve as a model for future expansion.

“We’re proud to be a part of this critical initiative,” said Barb Clapp, CEO of Dwyer Workforce Development. “As a national nonprofit focused on solving the healthcare workforce crisis, we are committed to expanding our innovative, holistic workforce development model to new communities who have a focus and commitment to workforce development solutions in healthcare. The need for qualified elder care workers is urgent, and we’re excited to work alongside Kansas WorkforceONE to provide a sustainable solution for Douglas County.”

Since its founding in 2021, DWD has successfully trained and placed nearly 5,000 individuals in healthcare careers, across Maryland, Texas, and Florida. In addition to free healthcare training, DWD offers wraparound services tailored to individual needs, such as financial assistance for housing, childcare, and transportation. The organization’s efforts have resulted in nearly \$80 million in annual earnings for its Dwyer program graduates.

Kansas WorkforceONE, Inc. also brings valuable local leadership and experience to the table. “By partnering with DWD, we’re helping to ensure that our community’s healthcare workforce is ready to meet the growing demands of senior care,” said Deb Scheibler, Executive Director, Kansas WorkforceONE. “This program will provide additional opportunities for local residents, while strengthening the healthcare system in our counties for years to come.”

This collaboration is an exciting step toward solving one of the most pressing issues facing northeastern Kansas—securing a sustainable and skilled workforce to care for the region’s aging population.

A press conference will take place on **February 27 at 2pm CST at Peaslee Tech in Lawrence, Kansas** to announce the new program and partnerships.

For more information on the program or to apply, please visit [www.dwyerworkforcedev.org](http://www.dwyerworkforcedev.org).

#### **About Justice Matters ([www.justicemattersinkansas.org](http://www.justicemattersinkansas.org))**

Justice Matters is an Interfaith non-profit organization consisting of religious congregations joined together to fulfill the following mission – to move Lawrence toward a city where justice rolls down like a mighty river; to surface, understand and address issues of justice in the region; to strengthen understanding of the scriptural imperative to do justice.

### **About Dwyer Workforce Development ([www.dwyerworkforcedev.org](http://www.dwyerworkforcedev.org))**

Dwyer Workforce Development is a unique 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to provide comprehensive support to individuals who lack opportunity and aspire to pursue a career in the healthcare industry, alleviate a severe healthcare workforce shortage, and improve the lives of seniors and the community at large. Dwyer Workforce Development provides program participants – Dwyer Scholars – Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training, job placement support in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, need-based wraparound services, and person-centered case management to foster successful outcomes. For more information, visit [www.dwyerworkforcedev.org](http://www.dwyerworkforcedev.org) and follow DWD on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

### **About Kansas WorkforceONE, Inc. ([www.ksworkforceone.org](http://www.ksworkforceone.org))**

The Local Area 1 Workforce Development Board exists to connect employers to a motivated workforce having skills to obtain and maintain meaningful employment throughout its 79-county community. The workforce system in Local Area 1 is seen by employers as “the” source for a well-trained and competitive workforce. This workforce is qualified to meet the needs of employers, both now and in the future creating economic growth and vitality.

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