

ANNUAL

REPORT

2021-2022



MINNESOTA
INDEPENDENCE
COLLEGE &
COMMUNITY
MICCC
Learn Skills. Experience Life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Board Chair Message.....	4	Staff Spotlight	13
MICC Programs.....	5	Participant Spotlight	14
Financials.....	6	Thank You, Donors!.....	16
Participant Spotlight	7	Participant Spotlight	19
MICC College.....	8	Tributes	23
MICC Careers.....	8	In-Kind Donors	23
MICC Social.....	9	Board of Directors.....	24
MICC Community	9	National Advisory Board.....	24
From the Advancement Department	10	Leadership Team.....	24
Hatlen Leadership Circle.....	11	Employer Spotlight	25
Community Partners.....	12	Opening Doors For More.....	26
Corporate Sponsors.....	12		



Dear Friends,

Over the 2021-2022 program year, participants, staff, families, and supporters came together like never before to propel Minnesota Independence College and Community's (MICC) vision of a world where autistic and neurodivergent adults thrive and are valued forward. Despite the challenges and uncertainties brought about by the ongoing pandemic, through respect, responsibility, and resilience, we were able to achieve countless milestones.



Transitioning into the fall, MICC welcomed a diverse incoming College Program class of participants from every corner of Minnesota and beyond. While many post-secondary programs faced enrollment challenges, MICC maintained and increased enrollment, a testament to our programs and the organization's strength. Staff and participants remained adaptable and collaborative to ensure we could safely deliver in-person programming all year.

In March, for the first time since the onset of the pandemic, friends, families, sponsors, and volunteers showed up to "Come Together (Right Now for MICC)," attending our beloved and highly anticipated theme-based gala. More than 750 people contributed to raising over \$500,000 to help us continue to deliver on our commitment to high-quality programming and services for autistic and neurodivergent adults.

This past year, participants in MICC's Social, Careers, and Community Programs built relationships, found purposeful employment, and gained and sustained their independence. No different than we proudly reported last year, MICC continues to have a 98% employment rate – well above the national employment rate of 58% for adults on the spectrum (Drexel Autism Institute).

As we look to solidify our strategic plan in 2022-2023, MICC's Board of Directors, Leadership Team, and entire staff are focused on working alongside participants to explore opportunities to strengthen programming and expand and improve the accessibility of our facilities. We will accomplish the challenges ahead like we have done this past year – by coming together.

The inclusive and diverse community that MICC has created makes me immensely proud. The future of participants, staff, and our programs is bright, and I'm eager to see the opportunities 2023 will bring. Thank you for your part in making MICC a flourishing community where autistic and neurodivergent adults can be exactly who they are.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy Gudmestad". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

Amy Gudmestad
Executive Director

BOARD CHAIR MESSAGE

On behalf of the MICC Board of Directors, we congratulate Amy, the leadership team and staff for another successful year. The programmatic and financial results highlighted in this report reflect their diligent commitment to the mission of MICC: making a difference in the lives of individuals AND their families affected by autism spectrum disorder and learning differences. My family and I are personally grateful to MICC!

MICC's core principles include continuous improvement, flexibility and yes - fun! As evidence, the new social program was expanded to meet ever-evolving interests of members; participant employment at graduation remained high at 92%; and, overall participation increased for college and community members.

A special thank you to the donors, employers, community partners, and corporations who contribute their time, talent, and resources to MICC. The achievements in this report would not be possible without all of you.

Thank you to the Board of Directors who kept a fiduciary eye on current practices, and also worked with Amy and the leadership team in the development of an agile decision making framework to navigate what's next.

I would like to acknowledge two members who rolled off the board for their exemplary service to MICC: Mark Ziegler served on the board for 9 years, including two years as Board Chair; and, Rochelle Brandl served two full terms on the board, and continues to serve MICC as a member of the MICC National Advisory Board. Thank you both for your over the top service to MICC!

I am thrilled that Katie Kemper is stepping into the role of MICC Board Chair. Katie brings extensive leadership experience, and a drive to ensure that MICC has the resources it needs to continue to deliver on its mission. I also welcome three new members to the MICC Board: Rudy Hernandez (Best Buy); Jake Konerza (Target), and Jan Wourema (consultant).

In addition to our three newest Board members, we welcome the return of three former board members in the role of Director Emeritus: Jill Lighty, Jeff Thayer and Mike Zalk. We look forward to the contribution of all to the MICC mission!

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as MICC Board Chair. I will continue on the Board and look forward to all the future holds for MICC.

Sincerely,

Jeff Gauvin,
MICC Board of Directors Chair, 2019-2022



Jeff Gauvin

MICC PROGRAMS

We offer five distinct programs starting with our Summer Program, leading to our three-year College and Careers Programs, and next, with our life-long Community Program. Finally, our vibrant Social Program is integrated into our summer, three-year and life-long program options.

MICC College.

The College Program is a three-year program that offers participants the opportunity to build foundational independent living skills while living on-campus and building relationships through activities and classes. Experiential learning is a cornerstone in all of our programming and paramount for participants to gain real-world knowledge to build independent living skills, vocational skills, and a network of personal relationships.



MICC Community.

The Community Program strives to empower College graduates to achieve their highest level of long-term independence in the community. Programming and service options are designed to provide person-centered social and emotional and problem-solving services, positive health and wellness supports, and continuing independent living skills development.



MICC Careers.

The Careers Program is integrated into both our three-year College Program and lifelong Community Program. Careers focuses on vocational skill development and the skills required to get and keep a job through an individualized, person-centered process to obtain access to the services, supports, and resources of participant's choice to achieve their desired career outcome. MICC has partnered with Century College to provide career certificate programs as part of our College curriculum in the areas of Culinary, Hospitality, Retail, and Health Services. Person-centered support services are provided through vocational skill-building curriculum and activities, and practicum experiences.



MICC Social.

The Social Engagement Program provides structured programming for participants to find their passions, develop friendships, and maintain healthy and active lifestyles to enhance their quality of life. Participants develop a sense of belonging and are accepted as their authentic selves while contributing positively to their community.



MICC Summer.

The Summer Program helps to develop valuable introductory independence skills. Taking the best of what MICC provides and incorporating a dynamic mix of expert staff from MICC's comprehensive College and Careers Programs ensures a fantastic summer opportunity.



FINANCIALS

Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2022

Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$688,858
Accounts and contributions receivable, net	\$507,220
Other assets	\$296,922
Property and Equipment, net	\$1,304,712
Investments	\$1,194,700
Total Assets	\$3,992,412

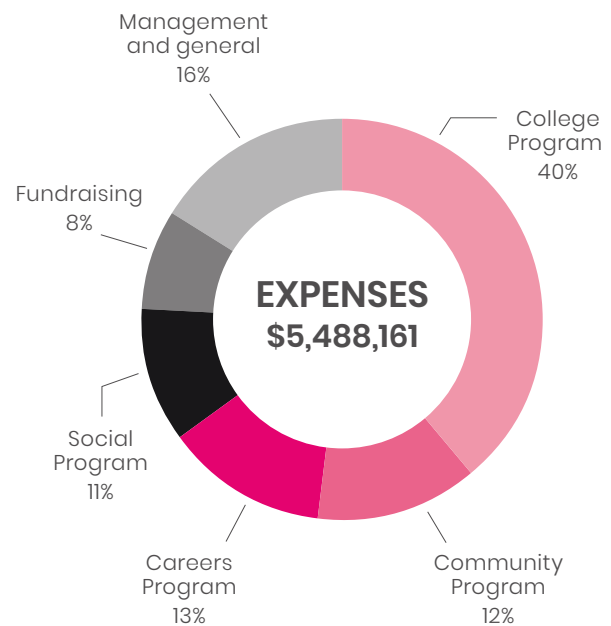
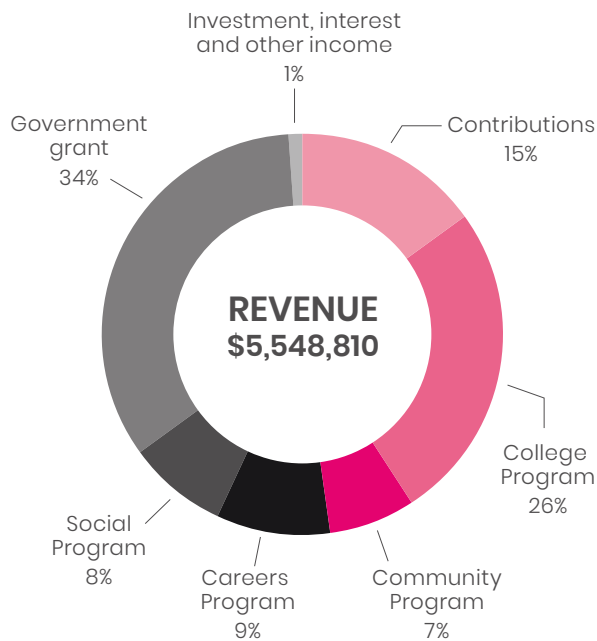
Liabilities

Current liabilities	\$378,536
Long-term mortgage payable	\$0
Total Liabilities	\$378,536

Net Assets

Without donor restriction	
Undesignated	\$2,417,698
Board designated	\$1,140,000
With donor restriction	\$56,178
Total Net Assets	\$3,613,876

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS \$3,992,412



PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

Kari

Kari graduated from MICC, then MLC, in 2008. During her College Program years, she volunteered at a thrift store and found she really enjoyed the experience of helping customers. Kari eventually began working there as a Merchandise Assistant which mainly involved restocking.

Six months later, she switched to a cashier role to have more interaction with customers. Kari continued to work at the thrift store for 13 years and was one of their longest-running employees. She was very proud to have great relationships with her co-workers and also got to know the repeat customers very well. She felt like a valuable employee.

However, after 13 years, Kari was ready for a change. She was ready for more responsibility and different opportunities. Kari now works at Fraser School and shares her journey in making a big change in her career.

What attracted you to Fraser School?

I used to volunteer there back in 2015 and I remember that I really loved interacting with the kids and helping the teachers. I talked a lot with my Job Developer and kept an open mind. I pursued Fraser because it has always been my dream job to work at a daycare.

Were you nervous and scared about changing careers? What helped you be resilient to take the risk?

I am usually nervous about change and starting something new. However, once I got to Fraser, I knew I made the right decision. Everyone was so welcoming! When I interviewed, I was able to self-advocate and told them I have a learning disability so it may take me longer to grasp things, but once I get to know how to do things,

I'm ok with it. It wasn't a problem for them and they said they would work with me to meet my needs.

What are your duties at Fraser and what do you like the most about working there?

I am a Kitchen Assistant and Classroom

Assistant. I deliver preschool and pre-K milk for lunch in five different rooms. I also prepare and deliver snacks in the afternoon, which is 11 rooms. Sometimes it's pre-packaged snacks and other times I use the oven to heat snacks up. Later, I go back to the rooms to clean up from the snacks. I have been First Aid and CPR trained with Fraser and I am working to get trained on changing diapers for the babies.

My favorite part is interacting and playing with the kids when I am between duties. I also love that there is a variety of stuff I do throughout the day. I like feeling I make a difference to the kids when I play with them and make them laugh. My co-workers are very supportive and have been really 'open arms' with me.

What advice do you have for other MICC participants who may want to try a new career path but are apprehensive to take the risk?

Follow your heart. If you are scared, just really listen to yourself. It might be scary, but that doesn't mean it's not worth doing. Also, talk to your Job Developer. My Job Developer was there for me not just when I was filling out the applications and interviewing, but also before that when I first expressed feeling like I needed a change. She listened to me and was very supportive.



Kari

MICC COLLEGE



This past program year,
MICC College Program
Advisors held an average of

408

ADVISORY MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS

per semester (not including session
where students were marked absent)

Over the course of the program
year, each student attended an
average of

375

CLASSES

that were based on specific
independent living skills
instruction

MICC CAREERS



The Careers Program
increased the number of
**EMPLOYERS WHO
EMPLOY MICC
PARTICIPANTS BY**

52%

97%

100% OF
PARTICIPANTS
WHO ARE
ELIGIBLE ARE
EMPLOYED

of Careers Program
participants self-reported they

**BENEFIT FROM MICC
CAREERS SERVICES
AND FEEL SUPPORTED
IN PURSUING THEIR
CAREER GOALS**

MICC SOCIAL



On average, our Social Program offered

81

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE WITH PEERS AND THE LARGER COMMUNITY

per month – this includes social activities, electives, excursions, and peer led clubs

Of the 81 opportunities offered, an average of

30

ACTIVITIES PER MONTH

included participants from the College and Community programs, allowing all participants to connect with across programs

MICC COMMUNITY



On average, the Community Program staff provided

298

HOURS OF INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES per month to our participants this past program year

Advisors provided an average of

106

HOURS OF ADVISORY SERVICES
a month to MICC participants

On average, the wellness team provided

117

HOURS OF NUTRITION, FITNESS AND WELLNESS
coordination services a month

The Community Program provided an average of

47

HOURS OF INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES
a month

FROM THE ADVANCEMENT DEPARTMENT

Minnesota Independence College and Community's vision is a world where autistic and neurodivergent individuals thrive and are valued. MICC's vision is only possible when the community around us believes in our mission and is willing to invest their time, talents, and treasure. Over the past year, our community has gone above and beyond, contributing in ways that lift our participants, support our staff, and bring life to our mission. On behalf of the MICC leadership, staff and participants, it is truly an honor to share our collective thanks to all the benefactors who have so generously invested in MICC.



Ben Lentz

**Ben Lentz,
Director of Advancement**



Come Together (Right Now for MICC) was the theme for MICC's 19th Annual Gala, where participants opened the program with a groovy and bubbly processional.

HATLEN LEADERSHIP CIRCLE



Beverly and Roe Hatlen

The Hatlen Leadership Circle (HLC) is named in honor of MICC's founders, Roe and Beverly Hatlen. Their vision and leadership launched MICC and their stewardship ensured our future. Like our founders, our donors in the HLC have demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to preserve and enhance our vision — a world where individuals on the autism spectrum and those with learning differences thrive and are valued.

\$1,000,000+ **Learn Skills.** **Experience Life.**

Beverly and Roe Hatlen
Family
Phillip and Jill Lighty

\$500,000 - \$999,999 **Achieving Personal** **Success**

Jerry and Jean Marie
Foss and Family

\$250,000 - \$499,999 **Strength and** **Determination**

\$100,000 - \$249,999 **Partnerships for** **Independence**

Blake and Nancy
Barnes
Dale E. and Jolita D.
Benson
Paul and Julie
Gulstrand
John Lavander and
Nan Owen

Geoff Barnard and
Diane Vosick
Mark and Mary Ziegler
Ginny and Michael
Walters*

Amy and Kai
Gudmestad*

Susi and David
Thompson*

\$50,000 - \$99,999 **Transforming Lives**

Judge Katherine
Constantine and
Mike Bono
Kay Constantine
Doug and Julie Craven
Clifford Hoffman
John and Shirley Horn
Glenn and Dr. Susan
Isensee
Greg and Gail Kenton*
Mark Milberger
Kurt and Ann Owen
Steven and Pamela
Schubach

Howard and Marlies
Terping
Jeff and Susan Thayer
Rick and Kate Hartfiel*

\$25,000 - \$49,999 **Learning by Doing**

Joseph and Adrienne
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Monzingo*
Chaim and Evelyn
Teitelbaum
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Jungmann
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Steve Hargarten and
Janis Cohn
Teri and Robert Crosby*
Thomas and Linda
Rundle

*denotes moving into a new giving level

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Apple Auto	Breck School	Juut	Southdale YMCA
Adaptive Recreation & Learning Exchange	Bridging Hearts	Lakewinds Food Co-op	Special Olympics Minnesota
AMC Movie Theatre	Brookdale Senior Living	Lund's & Byerly's	Speedway
AMF Bowling	Burlington Coat Factory	Lutheran Social Services	Starbucks
Arc's Value Village	Cat Eye Design	Margaret's Missions	St. Catherine University
Aurora on France	City of Richfield	Minnesota Masonic Home	Target
ASID	Colony Apartment Homes	MSP Airport	True Friends
Autism Advocacy & Law Center	Community Child Care Center	Pacer Center	UCare
Autism Mentorship Program	Cub Foods	Panera	University of Minnesota
Autism Society of Minnesota	Dairy Queen	Pinstripes	Up Yoga
Bee Squad Bee Lab	Davanni's	Pizza Luce Richfield	VEAP
Best Buy	Do Good Events	Richfield Disability Advocacy Partnership	Village Shores
Bloomington Mental Health Services	Edina Center for the Arts	Richfield-Bloomington Honda	Vitals
Blue Cross Blue Shield	Goodwill	Ryan Companies US, Inc.	Walgreen's
Bon Appetit	Great Wolf Lodge	Seven Hills Preparatory Academy	Walker Care Suites
Brave New Workshop	Guitar Center	Sierra	Wilderness Inquiry
Brookdale	Guthrie Theater	Southdale Library	Wilder Research
	History Theatre		Woodlake Lutheran Church
	Hunnington Bank		YMCA-Blaisdell

CORPORATE SPONSORS

Autism Advocacy & Law Center	Bremer Bank	Do Good Events	Littler Mendelson, PC
ASI Signage	Bumpy Lane	Eide Bailly, LLP	Old National Bank
Best Buy	Carval Investors	Franklin Center	Rabbit Creek
Brave North Technology	Colony Apartments	Groves Learning Organization	RSP Architects
	Cub Foods - Southdale		

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Mary Jo Bellinger, Financial Services Manager

How long have you been at MICC, and why did you choose to work here?

I have been at MICC for five years and chose to work here because I believe in the mission. I wanted to find a place to utilize my organizational skills, background, and passion for making a difference. I have a master's degree in Public and Nonprofit Administration from Metropolitan State University. I have worked for numerous nonprofits in database management, fundraising, and volunteer management roles, which have led me to my role as Financial Services Manager today.



Mary Jo Bellinger

How has MICC changed while you've been here?

It has been exciting to see MICC's financial accessibility explode by the ability of participants to utilize Minnesota waivers and other third-party funding to pay for programs and services. The number of individuals accessing these resources has tripled since I started! Initially, my position was a new part-time role, and now we have built a collaborative Financial Services team of finance, admissions, and transition staff dedicated to supporting participants and families.

What are your responsibilities at MICC?

I lead the Financial Services team in our efforts to ensure education around financial readiness, the accuracy of billing, and financial accessibility to MICC. I create and maintain the billing processes for all MICC programs, participants and families, and third-party funding. Much of my time is spent reviewing documentation regarding participant and family resources to build payment plans and assure accurate billing for all parties, including third-party funding agencies.

What do you like best about your role at MICC?

I like the combination of analyzing and organizing important information while also working with and leading the project management of the Financial Services team. One of my best skills is the ability to keep attention to small details while seeing the big picture. Ultimately, it is rewarding to work with MICC families to make our programs accessible to them.

Could you share one of your favorite moments while at MICC?

Receiving a personal thank you from families after partnering with them to resolve complex funding issues has been incredibly rewarding.

What do you like to do outside of MICC?

I like to go hiking and spend time out in nature. I enjoy spending time with and playing cards with my husband and two teenage boys.

PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

Evan

Evan, a participant in MICC's Community Program, graduated from MICC's College Program in 2019. He has worked for Walgreens as a Customer Service Associate for three years. As a Customer Service Associate, Evan is responsible for the front of the store. He is the main cashier on weekends. He informs customers about weekly sales and Walgreens incentives and ensures customers leave happy.

Evan attributes his successful transition from school to work largely due to the hands-on training he received through his practicum sites, Arc Value Village, Good Grocer, and Walgreens, as part of MICC's Retail certificate program. Evan emphasized the Walgreens Redi Program improved his skills by learning inside knowledge specific to Walgreens, such as stocking, completing outdates, updating weekly and monthly ads, and using a Telxon.

During the Retail certificate program, Evan's communication skills grew significantly. He shared, "I was shy at first, and apprehensive to talk to people. I learned to communicate better and to talk to customers."

When asked about his proudest moment, Evan responded, "The MICC Virtual Tour. I have a certain voice I put on when speaking to customers at Walgreens, and it became the same voice I put on with the virtual tour. Working at Walgreens helped me become more confident speaking to others."

Evan's advice to students currently enrolled in the Careers certificate programs is: **"Don't define yourself by your flaws or setbacks—you'll learn and grow from your setbacks."**

Evan did not always consider his communication skills as an area of strength, but now finds assisting customers the most fulfilling part of his role.



Evan



Community Program participant Annie enjoyed the sunshine (and a beautiful bouquet) at an outdoor MICC event.

THANK YOU, DONORS!

Donors July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

\$1,000,000-\$5,000,000

Minnesota Office of
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\$50,000-\$99,999

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Susi and David
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Susan Stuart Seiler
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Susanne Fry

Jeffrey and Judy Gauvin

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Green

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Hartfiel

Clifford Hoffman
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Jandro

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Nan Niesen

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Lindsay Schneider

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Schumacher

United Way Worldwide
c/o Frontstream

Mark and Karin Otness

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Lindsay Schneider

Sarah and Dan
Schumacher

United Way Worldwide
c/o Frontstream

\$1,000-\$2,499

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Altman

Amerect, Inc.

Amy Arbetter

AT&T - Matching Gift
Program

The Austin Memorial
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Autism Advocacy and
Law Center

Eric and Katie Barnes

Benevity Community
Impact - AT&T

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Special Olympics Minnesota	Brian and Mary Hassinger	Spire Credit Union	John and Martha Bordwell
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Tim Taylor	Anna and Ryan Hilfers	Sarah Steiner	Joan Brandl
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PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT

Jon

Jon, a Community Program participant, first began working at Dairy Queen in the Spring of 2017 when he graduated from the College Program. Since then, he has blossomed in his role at the front register.

Jon's supervisor, Toni, is grateful to have Jon as an employee. She described Jon in one word, "gracious." Jon is not one to highlight his successes, but for his supervisor, praise comes easily. Toni shared, "When Jon asks, 'How can I help you?' he really means what he says. Jon's careful attention to customers' needs has made him a familiar and trusted face at Dairy Queen."

Jon's Job Developer, Jeff, has experienced more than one customer sharing their gratitude for Jon's stellar customer service in his four-year stint there, including the Dairy Queen's CEO!

Over the past year, Jon has had to adjust to less customer contact than he'd like, but this has given Jon the opportunity to learn "back of the house" skills such as food preparation and cooking. Jon is on the path to a promotion as "Fan Captain," a Dairy Queen ambassador role.

Jon shared that the customers' and his coworkers' support are the main reasons that keep him coming back. Jon also made it clear he is very thankful to Toni for giving him his first job, and he is excited to learn about both the "grill" and "chill" tasks.

Since the Spring of 2017, Dairy Queen has hired four MICC participants and has been a model employer for the Careers Program.



Jon

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Artwork by Maggie T. hangs in the participant lounge.

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Community Program participants gathered ahead of racing at MICC's Independence 5K.

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EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT

World Market

Graduates: Jeffrey and Reese

In November 2021, MICC graduate Jeffrey wanted a change in his career. After working over 10 years at his previous position, Jeffrey looked for something new. Through another MICC participant, Jeffrey heard of a seasonal job opening at World Market in Bloomington and secured a position. He worked through the holiday season and was hired permanently after that. Jeffrey's job developer noticed a change in him since working at **World Market**. He was upbeat, engaging with new people, and "coming out of his shell."

Fast forward to April 2022, MICC graduate Reese was looking for a job. Reese was exploring many options and wanted to find the right fit. Knowing Jeffrey's success at World Market, her Job Developer suggested that she check out open positions there. Reese applied and was hired on the spot!

Since then, Reese has been working on the cash register and stocking. She is learning new skills and feeling confident in her new career. Reese said that one of her favorite things about her job is the people she works with, especially her supervisor, Casey. Casey shared that working with Reese and Jeffrey is a delight. She said they are always positive and bring a good sense of humor to the team.



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