



CONTACT: CECILIA RILEY

MUSKEGON LAKESHORE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PHONE: 231-722-3751

FAX: 231-728-7251

criley@muskegon.org

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

Be a Muskegon STAR!

Anyone can be a Muskegon STAR! in the eyes of stakeholders working on the new community image campaign. A group of campaign coordinators have partnered to produce a new community specialist program called Muskegon STAR! Perception research showed that the majority of West Michigan residents have a lack of knowledge when it comes to Muskegon's assets. Therefore, this program was launched in conjunction with the Watch Muskegon marketing campaign, to educate the community's residents, volunteers and front-line employees on the area's assets and how to sell them.

"Sharing community information effectively with guests and residents creates a positive Muskegon experience," says Cindy Larsen, President of the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce. "These positive experiences help grow our local economy, enhance pride and increase quality of life."

Education is one of the three pillars of the community-wide image campaign, along with beautification and marketing. This training program is one of the ways in which area organizations plan to improve the community's image.

"More than 1.5 million people travel to the Muskegon Lakeshore each year for vacation and it is vitally important that we capture every possible opportunity to make a positive impression," said Bob Lukens, Community Development Director for Muskegon County. "Having certified Muskegon STARS! will enhance our destination's reputation for years to come, helping us to attract future visitors, meetings and events."

This half-day training program kicks off October 19, 2015 and will deliver information about the community's assets and how to share this information using a variety of customer service skills. At the conclusion of the program, participants are administered a test and then become certified "*Muskegon STARS!*" Participants will receive an official Muskegon STAR! pin, a certificate of completion, and an "Experience Pass" allowing entry to several Muskegon County attractions to get a hands-on experience of the community's assets.

- MORE -

“While it’s vitally important to train our community’s frontline selling staff, it’s equally as important to train our community residents and job seekers,” adds Brittany Lenertz, Deputy Director for Michigan Works! Muskegon-Oceana. “With more than 1,000 local jobs to fill, educating job seekers on how to sell the community and providing them with the customer service training to do it, is critical in so many industries across the community.”

The program curriculum has been established over the past several months, with two pilot training sessions held in the last month. “The response to the first couple training sessions has been overwhelming,” adds Larsen. “We have Muskegon STARS! contacting us stating that they have already used what they’ve learned during the training and recognize the value of the content.”

About the Muskegon STAR! Certified Community Specialist Program:

Coordinating Program Partners: Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce and Michigan Works! Muskegon-Oceana.

Additional Partners: Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Baker College of Muskegon, United Way of the Lakeshore, Muskegon Area Intermediate School District and the Watch Muskegon Campaign.

Training Dates and Times: The first official training will be held on October 19, 2015 with monthly trainings to follow on November 18, January 20, February 17, and March 16. All trainings take place from 1 – 5pm. *Class size is limited to 30 people.*

Training Location: All scheduled sessions are held at the Michigan Works! Office at 316 Morris Avenue, Suite 300, inside Terrace Plaza in Downtown Muskegon.

Training Cost: All trainings are currently free, however a nominal fee will apply in the future. Companies interested in having an on-site training with 10+ employees can pay a nominal fee to have the training brought in-house. Those interested in a corporate training, can contact Michigan Works! at 231-332-3926 to schedule.

How to Register: You can register for upcoming trainings at www.muskegon.org or by contacting the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce at 231-722-3751 or mlcc@muskegon.org

###