



## PRESS RELEASE

# 2019 COABE OUTSTANDING WORKPLACE OF THE YEAR PROSPERITY INITIATIVE, CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

## February 15, 2019

COABE's mission is to inspire educators so adults succeed and communities thrive. We exist to provide leadership, communication, professional development, and advocacy for adult education and literacy practitioners to advance quality services for all adult learners. One way that we engage in these activities is by spotlighting excellence in the field. The Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) represents the field of 55,000 adult educators and provides a variety of services, including professional development through annual, state-of-the-art national conferences, more than 50 webinars annually, and publication of the *COABE Journal*. COABE also launched an award-winning national public awareness campaign and an advocacy campaign that has mobilized the field to more than 100,000 connections with legislators since inception in April 2017. COABE also highlights excellence in the field of adult education by providing competitive, national-level awards valued at \$10,000 each, special recognition awards valued at \$2,000 each, incentive grants to encourage and promote best practices in the field, and scholarship opportunities, all through special funding provided by The Dollar General Literacy Foundation. It is with great pleasure that COABE announces Prosperity Initiative through Catholic Social Services as the winner of this year's Outstanding Workplace of the Year Award.

The mission of the Prosperity Initiative at Catholic Social Services in Rapid City, SD, is to align collaborative approaches to move people who aspire to break the cycle of poverty. The Prosperity Initiative is a vision created by the John T. Vucurevich Foundation that strives to move families in Rapid City from poverty to prosperity through a continuum of success from cradle to career by providing resources to the entire family through community collaboration. The Prosperity Initiative is implemented through Catholic Social Services in partnership with Love INC. Partnerships and collaborative efforts to improve situations for learners are instrumental in attainment of goals. Learners struggling with poverty are often overextended by taking care of the issues associated with daily life; educational improvement becomes a lessened priority. By establishing a coaches' network consisting of trained individuals from eighty-eight entities, the networking and educational components established in the Rapid City Community have led to amazing outcomes for students with the most barriers to education and employment.

Pathways to Prosperity provides direct services to students who are in the crisis of poverty. The referred participants can benefit from intensive, customized mentoring. The program focuses on research-based methods to build relationships and connect with additional community services to remove the obstacles to their success. Recognizing that transportation, childcare, and housing can be issues bringing learning to a screeching halt, the program is helpful in mitigating some of those factors and brainstorming creative ways to solve the problems. Students who choose to participate fully in the process can then focus on education and obtaining the skills that will earn a livable wage. The partnership has grown and evolved into a very rewarding collaboration because of the intensive approach to providing wrap-around services for adult learners. Students participating in the Prosperity Initiative have been highly successful. Not a single mentored student has quit or left the program, and 80% of the participants have completed their high school equivalency. Of those completers, 50% of them have gone on to postsecondary education. All the completers have gained at least one stackable industry recognized credential and 85% are gainfully employed. Congratulations to The Prosperity Initiative for the life-changing assistance they are providing for the students in Rapid City!

To learn more about COABE's prestigious award program, go to [www.coabe.org](http://www.coabe.org) or contact [awards@coabe.org](mailto:awards@coabe.org).