

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Lisa Sommer King, Assistant Director

517-316-1713

[lisa@micollegeaccess.org](mailto:lisa@micollegeaccess.org)

## Kalamazoo Area College Access Network Receives \$50,000 Startup Grant

**September 9, 2011 – Lansing, MI** – The [Michigan College Access Network](http://micollegeaccess.org) (MCAN) is pleased to announce the Kalamazoo Area College Access Network (KACAN) has received a \$50,000 Startup grant to begin implementation of its college access strategy.

Local college access networks coordinate programs, services and resources that lower the barriers preventing students, particularly low-income and/or first-generation, from pursuing postsecondary educational opportunities. Leaders in education, the nonprofit sector, business, government and philanthropy work together to design a local strategy to foster a college-going culture and dramatically increase the college participation and completion rates.

By working across Kalamazoo County's nine school districts, KACAN will help to shift the college-access discussion to a more comprehensive effort made throughout Kalamazoo County and position it to be more economically competitive in the decades ahead. According to Jason Luke, Education for Employment/Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency Counselor, "KACAN will assist many of our local young people in obtaining the higher education needed to begin their careers." Each of the county's nine schools districts and Kalamazoo RESA, as well numerous community agencies have shared the necessary funding for KACAN to begin. The local agencies that have contributed thus far are the City of Kalamazoo, Greater Kalamazoo United Way, Kalamazoo Community Foundation, Kresge, Upjohn Institute, and Western Michigan University.

Kalamazoo Area CAN's mission is to dramatically increase college awareness and access among students in Kalamazoo County, with an emphasis on low-income and first generation college-goers. KACAN will coordinate and support county-wide college awareness and career preparation activities to facilitate an engaged community that supports college access for all students.

"Local college access networks play a critical role in helping build and sustain a vibrant economy in Michigan," said Brandy Johnson, director of the Michigan College Access Network. "By developing a local network, the community works together in identifying current assets and gaps to ensure they are building a strong and highly successful college access strategy."

Currently, 35.6 percent of Michigan's 25 to 64 year olds possess at least an associate's degree, ranking Michigan 33<sup>rd</sup> among all states. Michigan's rate lags behind the national average of 37.9 percent. It is MCAN's goal to increase Michigan's postsecondary educational attainment rate to 60 percent by the year 2025.

Our Goal: 60% college attainment by 2025

# MICHIGAN

## COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

### **About Michigan College Access Network**

As the leader in the state's college access movement, MCAN's mission is to dramatically increase Michigan's college participation and completion rates, particularly among low-income and first-generation college students of all ages. MCAN also supports two statewide college access initiatives: MichiganCAP, a one-stop-shop for students to plan, apply and pay for college at [www.michigancap.org](http://www.michigancap.org), and KnowHow2GOMichigan, a public awareness campaign designed to encourage and prepare low-income students and their families to take the necessary steps toward college ([www.knowhow2gomichigan.org](http://www.knowhow2gomichigan.org)).

For more local KACAN information, contact Jason Luke at [jluke@kresa.org](mailto:jluke@kresa.org) or visit [www.micollegeaccess.org](http://www.micollegeaccess.org). You can also find MCAN on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/micollegeaccess](http://www.facebook.com/micollegeaccess).

Our Goal: 60% college attainment by 2025

---