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WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

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YWCA OF MCLEAN COUNTY

WORKING TO REBUILD LIVES



CLAY JACKSON, THE PANTAGRAPH

Ali'ce Cobb facilitates a course module on measurement conversions from metric to standard Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026, at the YWCA McLean County's Certified Manufacturing Associate Apprenticeship Program.

Clean Energy grant lets YWCA pivot to manufacturing training

D. JACK ALKIRE
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BLOOMINGTON — YWCA of McLean County announced in January it was closing its candle store, Labyrinth Made Goods, and all remaining products would be sold at a heavy discount.

But that's not the end of the Y's vocational training story. Something more wide ranging came along.

The candles and scents were made by clients in their Labyrinth Outreach Services, which helps formerly incarcerated individuals with reentry into society with housing, job skills and training and all manner of clerical needs.

"It made sense from the apprenticeship standpoint of things (because) these

individuals are now working to rebuild their lives," said Alicia Whitworth, vice president of development and public relations.

But the grant that was funding Labyrinth at the time lapsed.

And since they could not apply for that grant two cycles in a row, people at YWCA had to pivot, Whitworth said, in how they provide skills training.

So, they decided to create the Certified Manufacturing Associate Apprenticeship Program, said Vicki Hightower, vice president of adult services and grants. The apprenticeship program contains 25 modules based on manufacturing and engineering basics over five weeks, Hightower said,

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Labyrinth shifts approach to helping former inmates

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BLOOMINGTON — The YWCA of McLean County is shifting how the organization helps formerly incarcerated individuals readjust to society.

Previously, the staff at YWCA's Labyrinth reentry services would receive a call from Illinois Department of Corrections when someone needing services, like

transitional housing, was being released, sometimes with only hours' notice, said Liz German, president and CEO of the local YWCA.

"That's really a reactive, crisis place to operate from," she said.

Going forward, instead of "catching" people as they try to reenter the community, the

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CLAY JACKSON, THE PANTAGRAPH

YWCA McLean County President and CEO Liz German, left, and Vice President of Development and Public Relations Alicia Whitworth talk about Labyrinth Outreach Services' shift from a reactive service for formerly incarcerated people to a proactive approach, working with clients before they leave incarceration.

STATE OF THE UNION

Trump to target skeptical voters

GOP hold on Congress vulnerable in midterms

JOSH BOAK AND MICHELLE L. PRICE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's State of the Union address Tuesday is likely to be a test run of the message Republicans will give to voters in November's elections for control of the House and the Senate.

The president and his party appear vulnerable, with polls showing much of America distrusts how Trump managed the government in his first year back in office. In addition, the Supreme Court last week struck down one of the chief levers of his economic and foreign policy by ruling he lacked the power to impose many of his sweeping tariffs.

Though Trump is expected to focus on domestic issues, his intensifying threats about launching military strikes on Iran over its nuclear program cast a shadow over the address.

Here are a few things to watch as Trump tries to make his case:

Economy and immigration

Trump swept back into the White House on promises to bring down prices and restore order to immigration in America. Public sentiment turned against him on both issues.

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ECONOMY

Businesses wary after tariff ruling

MAE ANDERSON
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Businesses face a new wave of uncertainty after the Supreme Court struck down tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump under an emergency powers law and Trump vowed to work around the ruling to keep his tariffs in place.

The Trump administration says its tariffs help boost American manufacturers and reduce the trade gap. But many U.S. businesses had to raise prices and adjust to offset higher costs caused by the import taxes.

It remains to be seen how much relief businesses and consumers will actually get from Friday's ruling. Within hours of the court's decision, Trump pledged to use a different law to impose a 10% tariff on all imports that would last 150 days; on Saturday, he said he'd raise that to 15%. He also said he'd explore other ways to impose more tariffs.

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