



DELTA COUNTY EDA – ENCOURAGING BUSINESS TO *COME GROW WITH US*

Today economic development organizations are typically built around partnerships; consider it a current best practice. The Delta County Economic Development Alliance (EDA), created partnerships before partnerships were cool. This summer, the Delta County EDA celebrates its 11th year of operation.

Communities and stakeholder groups judge the success and merit of economic development entities in many different ways. The Delta County EDA is certainly judged successful by Delta County stakeholders. For instance, the first 10 years of the EDA witnessed economic ups and downs – nationally and locally. However, Delta County led the Upper Peninsula in job creation; 2000 new jobs created, accounting for 34% of all new jobs in the UP!

Leading the Delta County EDA to many of these successes is the current Executive Director, Linda Hirvonen. She joined the Delta County EDA in 1997, after returning to the Upper Peninsula from West Virginia. Linda is the third Executive Director employed by the Alliance, and follows Michael Marcks, and the late Ray Schieber. The Delta County EDA is truly a public/private partnership seeking to improve and grow the economy of Delta

County. In 2003, the partnership consisted of 22 financial contributors. These contributors included Delta County, the cities of Escanaba and Gladstone, Delta County Chamber of Commerce, and many financial institutions, utilities, manufacturers, and other private sector firms.



Linda Hirvonen, Executive Director of the Delta County EDA.

The Alliance works to promote economic development as a partnership across all of Delta County. According to Hirvonen, “When a company in one community expands, it helps the whole community. The same is true for an attraction project. In the end, it is counterproductive for two communities within the same county or even region to think of themselves as competitors for a project.” This thinking and approach to economic development partnerships is not just for Delta County either. Linda Hirvonen, also sought to bring this approach to the Upper Peninsula economic development community as a whole too.

In 1998, Linda Hirvonen invited the UP’s economic development leaders to a meeting in Delta County to discuss common goals. With the assistance of Doug Bovin, then Director of Operation Action U.P. and Hirvonen, over the next 12 months, the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance was formed, and embraced many of the same principals that the Delta County Alliance was formed on.

Locally, Linda Hirvonen credits the attraction of Issues and Answers, a Virginia Beach, Virginia survey and research firm as one of the most exciting projects she has worked on professionally. One day “out of the blue,” according to Hirvonen, she received a call notifying her that Delta County was in consideration with several other states for this out-bound research call center. Over the next several months, Hirvonen and the Alliance Board developed partnerships throughout the community to develop a proposal that eventually brought Issues and Answers to Delta County.

Issues and Answers, credited the quantity and quality of the areas labor force as one of the key factors in their location decision. Linda Hirvonen agrees with that, and notes that as one of the best selling point when she is encouraging existing and new business to come and grow in Delta County. In addition, Linda is able to call upon a vast

network of partners to meet a prospects needs. These partners include MichiganWorks! The Job Force Board, Bay de Noc Community College, M-TEC at Bay College, Service Corps of Retired Executive, and 1st Step.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Hirvonen calls upon her background as an educator to improve the quality of life in Delta County as well. Her commitment to life-long learning encouraged the pursuit to create an economic club in Delta County, allowing local business and community leaders to learn about what is happening in Delta County as well as nationally, and internationally. This pursuit paid off, and in March 2004 – the Bay Area Economic Club wrapped up it’s second year, bringing national and internationally known leaders in their respective professions to Delta County to share their knowledge – and help Delta County grow as a community.

When Linda has a few rare moments when she is not encouraging others to come to or grow in Delta County, she is taking time to enjoy some of her hobbies, including golf, gardening, spending time at their “camp,” and traveling with her husband Michael Allkins; in addition to spending time with their two sons.

To learn more about the Delta County EDA, you may visit their website at www.deltami.org.

UP ORGANIZATIONS BAND TOGETHER TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS AND PROMOTE ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY

Thanks to 1st Step Inc., and Michigan Works! The Job Force Board, Upper Peninsula residents and small businesses have access to key business resources.

1st Step and Michigan Works! The Job Force Board, formally announced today the grand opening of the new **Biz Resource Center** located at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Delta County at 2831 N. Lincoln Road, Escanaba. The Delta County BRC joins the Marquette County BRC launched last year located in the Michigan Works! Service Center at 1498 O’Dovero Drive in Marquette.

The Biz Resource Center (BRC) is a joint venture between the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center

(MI-SBTDC), 1st Step, and Michigan Works! The Job Force Board.

“In total, there are 14 Biz Resource Centers located throughout the state, with four of the Centers positioned right here in the Upper Peninsula” said Sally Mulder, MI-SBTDC, “Delta County joins the Hancock center located at Finlandia University; the Center located at the Michigan Works! office in Sault Ste. Marie, and Marquette’s”

The BRC provides a one-stop location where current and future small business owners can receive assistance and advice. Available resources include the latest in computer technology, hardware and software, and an extensive small business ref-

erence library of hard copy books and publications to help entrepreneurs plan or expand their business.”

The Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center (MI-SBTDC) enhances Michigan’s economic well-being by providing counseling, training, research, and advocacy for new ventures, existing small businesses and innovative technology companies.

“Using the BRC’s self-instructional resources can result in a well-crafted, comprehensive business plan, which can be used to guide a client through the first steps of business ownership, product or service expansion” stated Paul Arsenault, owner of Concepts Consulting, Inc.;



Dave Gillis, 1st Step SBTDC Regional Director, speaks at the Biz Resource Center’s Open House.

Chairman of the Board, Six County Employment Alliance; and member of the SBTDC State Advisory Board “Not only are the BRC’s an excellent resource for the new business start-up, it is also designed to serve existing small businesses. As a long-time private business owner, I can tell you from experience, I wish they had these resources available a long time ago.” (See Business page 6)

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COTTAGE COMFORT AND SHORES FINDS SUCCESS AT MICHIGAN WORKS!



Mark and Jan Sundquist (R) with new hire, William Wilbur (L)

When Mark Sundquist, Owner of Cottage Comfort and Shores, needed to find a qualified, professional for a recent sales position opening for his expanding business, he immediately turned to Michigan Works! because Cottage Comfort and Shores had utilized the services in the past, they knew that they could count on the valuable business support offered through Michigan Works!

With one quick phone call to the Michigan Works! Service Center in Alger County, the position was immediately posted on the Michigan Works! Talent Bank. Because Michigan Works! is familiar with their business customers, the process was effortless. Michigan Works! staff began collecting resumes and applicants for the small business, and within a short period of time, Mark had a large pool of applicants to choose from. By allowing Michigan

Works! to collect applications and resumes, Mark saved valuable time and staff resources. Through this process, they found a qualified skilled candidate to fill their position. In regards to services received through the Michigan Works! Service Center in Alger County, Mark Sundquist comments that he appreciates the, "outstanding, timely service related to job postings and candidate potentials" and the "excellent follow up!"



William Wilbur (L) with Mark Sundquist (R), Owner of Cottage Comfort and Shores.

Cottage Comforts and Shores was incorporated in may 2000 as 4-Seasonal homes, Inc. with a DBA as Cottage Comfort & Shores, a new business in Munising serving the entire U.P. They are a small diverse locally owned and operated retail and service store. Cottage Comfort and

Shores, owned by Mark and Jan Sundquist, specializes in sales and services for Marquis Spas (#1 selling spa for previous spa owners) Porta-Dock (roll-in dock and boat lifts) gas and wood fireplaces and stoves by Avalon and Jutul, custom and kit saunas by Helo, and Homecrest outdoor furniture. In addition to retail sales, they offer guided outdoor adventure services and rentals of kayaks, snowshoes and x-country skis. They take pride in the knowledge and application of their premium products and personalized professional services. Cottage Comfort and Shores has received numerous awards by Porta-Doc and Marquis Spas. They are actively involved and contribute to local sponsored events and school activities and are a member of the Alger County Chamber of Commerce.

For more information on their products and services, call Cottage Comfort and Shores at 906-387-1954, or stop in and view their products at 129 East Munising Avenue. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with special hours for customers who wish to make appointments for test soaks in the spas.



M-TEC- THE ONE STOP SHOP FOR ALL SAFETY AND TRAINING NEEDS

Does your organization need help in making your workplace safe? If so, M-TEC is your one stop shop for your safety training needs.

M-TEC provides safety training that is customized to meet your company's needs. Training is available by trainer or computer-based training programs. The M-TEC at Bay College has entered into a training partnership agreement with Coastal Skills. Coastal Skills training CD's are available for training through the M-TEC at Bay College. Coastal's award-winning Clarity Multimedia CD-ROM courseware combines live-action video, high-end graphics and Real-Life Situations in many of the programs to deliver powerful training that makes a lasting impact. This is self-directed interactive training with tremendous benefits. Your company can choose from a variety of training components such as Accident Investigation, Health Safety, Forklift Safety and Certification, Industrial Ergonomics, Environment Awareness(Air, Water, Wastes, Chemicals), Hazmat, Hearing, Office Safety and other others.

Looking for an affordable solution for your annual crane inspections or training that are OSHA, MIOSHA, and MSHA/Certified? M-TEC can supply that for your company needs in areas such as Mobile and Overhead Cranes, Aerial Bucket/Automotive Lifts and Underhung Monorail and Hoist equipment.

M-TEC brings you the latest in safety related seminars, training and services. To begin planning your safety training goals, just contact Jayne Szkalowski, Director of Safety Training at the M-TEC. (906)786-5802, Extension 1510.

BUSINESS: (cont'd from page 5)



With regional, satellite and affiliate offices statewide, the MI-SBTDC network positively impacts the economy by strengthening existing companies, creating new jobs, retaining existing jobs, and assisting companies in defining their path to success.

"The Biz Resource Center gives our services an added dimension. Now entrepreneurs have a place where they can ask questions and research their business in a quiet, professional and creative atmosphere," states Dave Gillis, 1st Step SBTDC Regional Director. "It truly is a place where small business owners can

receive encouragement and information. The philosophy of the Center is to provide small business owners with the tools, information and one-on-one advice that will give them the best chance at being successful."



Paul Arsenault, owner of Concepts Consulting, Inc.; Chairman of the Board, Six County Employment Alliance, speaks to Sally Mulder, of MI-SBTDC.

"The Michigan Small Business Development Center provides counsel, training,

research, and advocacy for Michigan's new business ventures, existing small businesses, expanding new businesses, new technology companies, and innovators" said Will Carne, President of the Job Force Board "More than 691,200 people received technical assistance in Michigan through the Small Business Development Center & The Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center program."

Entrepreneurs and small business wanting more information about the services available at the MI-SBTDC Business Resource Center can contact Dave Gillis at 1-800 (562) 9828. Interested entrepreneurs can contact Michigan Works! at 1-800-(562)-4808 extension 0, visit www.jobforce.org or visit one of the BRC's in your area.

Contact us toll-free! 1-800-285-WORKS!

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ATTORNEY GENERAL MIKE COX GUEST SPEAKER AT THE EMBEZZLEMENT CONFERENCE AT M-TEC

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox spoke on the subject of small business crime at the May 5 Embezzlement Conference held at the M-TEC at Bay College. The U.S. Commerce Department has estimated that 30 percent of business failures result from employee theft or embezzlement. Many of these are smaller firms that can't afford theft and the resulting losses. The government agency also estimates that American companies lose \$20 billion to \$40 billion annually from employee theft. In response to this epidemic, the Delta County Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Technical Education Center (M-TEC) teamed up to present this critical preventive conference.

Alan Yeck, Executive Director for Business and Workforce Development at Bay College described the typical scenario: "You've turned

years of dreams and hard work into reality and you have your own business. Your business has grown to the point where you have less time

robbed you." The embezzlement could be accomplished through high or extra paychecks, writing checks to themselves, diverting

fices, said, "Embezzlement is a significant problem in our area. This issue involves businesses, both large and small. It also involves nonprofit of volunteer organizations. Clearly it is important that business owners, managers and volunteer directors know how to prevent and deal with this serious problem."



Especially in these current economic conditions, small companies have the most to lose because embezzlement, stolen trade secrets, or missing inventory can cripple a small firm or even put it out of business. The only way to prevent this is to devise prudent, effective controls in all areas of potential exposure. This conference provided attendees with real life case studies; discussed profiles of typical embezzlers and their methods and to take a proactive stance in protecting your business.

to oversee all the aspects of your operation so you hire a few people. They're good workers and you trust them. Until the day you discover that this trusted employee has

funds to an accomplice or through computer file manipulation just to name a few. Tom Butch of Butch, Quinn, Rosemurgy, Jardis, Bush, Burkhart & Parks, P.C., Law Of-

DELTA AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY – DRIVING IT HOME

In 1989 several studies showed the need for a local transportation agency that could help the citizens and organizations throughout Delta County whom were in need of affordable and convenient public transportation. The Delta Area Transit Authority (DATA) was formed under Public Act 196 with the sponsorship of the Delta County Board of Commissioners.

DATA was an immediate success. The ridership within the first year of operation was greater than anyone had projected for the first five years of operation. Since 1989, the number of riders per year has steadily increased until about 2001 when it leveled off and has held steady through the past few years.

Ray Leach, Executive Director of Data says, "Our success is due in part to the dedicated staff of drivers, mechanics and office personnel working as one unit towards a common mission and the communities of Delta County who utilize our services." With a fleet of 15 ADA compliant buses and up to 12 of them being in

operation at any one time, DATA makes a definite impact on Delta County. Even when budgetary constraints forced the agency to take a hard look at what it could provide, DATA was able to keep its core mission of serving Delta County residents and organizations intact. "In 2001 and 2002, DATA faced some very challenging fiscal issues, and still does, but we have been able to streamline our operation and have learned how to do more with less. Even though our budget limits are very real and present, it does not stop us from finding unique and inventive solutions to transportation problems facing the residents of Delta County," Mr. Leach says.

A few of the services DATA offers are Subscription Rider Service, Demand-Response Service, Gladstone-Escanaba Shuttle Service and Contracted Rider Service. Subscription Rider Service is a regularly scheduled, repetitive route service that any Delta County resident may take advantage of. Mr. Leach says of this service, "The rates on this service is variable as to the mileage and area covered, but it

is one heck of deal for anyone who is interested."

Demand-Response Service is another item DATA offers. This service is based upon fleet and driver availability and the rates are variable based on mileage. "The Demand-Response Service can at times be a challenge, but we try never to turn down the opportunity to help someone when they need to get somewhere," said Ray.

The Gladstone-Escanaba Shuttle Service is unique in that it is a fixed route service between the hours of 8AM and 5PM with a bus leaving the Gladstone Senior Center 20 minutes after each hour and a bus leaving the Delta Plaza Mall every hour, 20 minutes to the hour for a fee of \$1.50 each way. The unique part is that DATA will make stops along the way to drop-off passengers along the route.

Contracted Rider Service is an offering DATA makes for organizations throughout Delta County. Some of the organizations that use DATA for these types of services are the State of Michigan Family

Independence Agency, Michigan Works!, YMCA of Delta County, Pathways, Delta Area Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Corporation. This service allows DATA's customers to provide transportation for groups of people who might otherwise have no way of getting to their destinations. Mr. Leach commented, "Some of our newest customers to access this service has been a few of the local school districts. We have been able to be there for them when they have had a need."

When asked about what is in the plans for the future of DATA, Ray says with a gleam in his eye, "Serving Delta County in the most effective and efficient manner possible." As he furiously diagrams possible future routes, proposed transfer stations, and figures their cost effectiveness on his dry-erase board he says, "We are always searching for new and innovative ways of delivering affordable and convenient transportation to the residents, businesses, and organizations throughout Delta County. This will be the cornerstone of our future successes."

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May 5, 5-7 pm
Sydney's Restaurant, Munising

September 29, 5-7 pm
Delta County location

September 14, 5-7 pm
Menominee County location

October
Dickinson County location

Thanks to all who attended our Schoolcraft County celebration in Manistique on April 7!

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- Supplying information on employment policies and legal issues

30 Years of Business!

MICHIGAN WORKS! business is UP

The Job Force Board

and the Six County Employment Alliance
Serving Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee and Schoolcraft counties.

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MARQUETTE COUNTY
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