

**In The
Spotlight**

**OPERATION ACTION UP RECOGNIZES OUT-
STANDING UP BUSINESS AT ANNUAL MEETING**

Operation Action UP held its Annual Meeting at the Great Lakes Rooms of the University Center at Northern Michigan University. Key-note speaker, Mr. Gary Stern, President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, gave a presentation; prior to the Awards of Excellence being presented.

Award winners are outstanding businesses, products, programs, projects or organizations that have contributed to the economic well being of their area in the Upper Peninsula. Nominations were solicited from businesses, chambers of commerce, economic developers and the general public across the U.P.

"The Awards of Excellence are an important part of our annual meeting, comments John Marshall, Co chair of Operation Action UP. It is a way for our organization to recognize those outstanding efforts and contribution to the economic well being of the Upper Peninsula. This year's award winners have certainly proved their commitment to that end."

The luncheon speaker this year was Mr. Kevin Kopi, Executive Director of the Michigan Forest Products Council.

The 2004 Excellence Award winners honored at the meeting were:

Argonics Marquette

Argonics, Inc. is a local manufacturer and processor of polyurethane plastics. Located in Marquette, the company has been in business since 1994. In 1994, Argonics started out with only 9 employees, growing to over 65 employees to date including its own engineering and tooling development departments. Through the years, Argonics has developed, produced and held numerous patents.

Argonics currently makes over

5,000 different performance based polyurethane products and ships to a diverse range of industries around the globe. Industries benefiting from Argonics products include concrete, aggregate, agricultural, mining and construction equipment. In 1999, Argonics was honored as the "Michigan Best Small Business of the Year" by the Michigan Small Business Development Center.



**R.W. Fernstrum and Company Me-
nominee**

R.W. Fernstrum and Company is a global leader in the engineering, development and manufacturing of cooling technologies for the marine industry. By focusing their efforts exclusively on marine cooling, this third generation family-owned business has built a respected reputation throughout the industry for outstanding quality and service to their customers.

RW Fernstrum and Co is a business built on innovation. The founder, Robert W. Fernstrum, received a patent for the first rectangular tube keel cooler. In 1945, setting the standard for keel cooling for the US Army and Navy. Since then, they have continued the tradition of bringing the latest technology to the maritime industry, earning more keel cooling related patents than any other company. Today, the Fernstrum family is still at the helm of the company, ensuring that all of their marine cooling products provide their customers with the best in efficiency, quality and ease of installation.

**Kleiman Pump and Well Drilling
Inc Iron Mountain**

Kleiman Pump and Well Drilling Inc. was founded by William and Elaine Kleiman in 1946. In 1961, the official reins of the company were passed over to Harry Kleiman, who, with his wife, Kristen, continued to build the Company to the size it is today.

With 22 employees, Kleiman is a progressive and well-respected company in the water well industry. The company is fully licensed to operate in both Michigan and Wisconsin as drillers and pump installers, as well as, holding a mechanical contractor's license in Michigan. Kleiman provides diamond-drilling services along with rotary percussion mineral exploration drilling. Their customers include private, municipal, industrial and irrigation companies.

The company continues to remain in the family, as Erik Kleiman, a third generation Kleiman, begins his transition to management.

WE Energies Iron Mountain

The history of WE Energies dates as far back as 1896, when they began as the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Co. Since then, many changes within the company have occurred, including their name, which was changed to WE Energies from Wisconsin Electric-Wisconsin Gas in 2002.

WE Energies serves more than a million electric customers in Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula and more than a million natural gas customers in Wisconsin. In addition, they serve about 2,500 water customers and 500 steam customer in the Milwaukee area.

Their service area covers 18,000 square miles in Wisconsin and 5,000 (SEE BUSINESS ON PAGE 3)

COMMUNITY EVENTS

March 4th
LSCP Annual Dinner (5:30PM EST)
Location: NMU Great Lakes Room
Call Cheryl Shuty for more information
(906) 486-4841

March 7th
Bay Area Economic Club
Location: Joseph Heirman University Center
Call the Delta Chamber of Commerce for
more information (906) 786-2192

March 12th
Dickinson Area Partnership Dinner
Puttin' on da Ritz (6:00-12:00AM EST)
Location: Pine Grove Country Club
Call the Dickinson Area Partnership for
more information (906) 774-2002

March 14th
Business After Hours (5:00-7:00PM EST)
United Way
Location: TBD
Call Cheryl Shuty for more information
(906) 486-4841

March 21st
Economic Club Meeting (6:00PM EST)
Location: Ramada Inn of Marquette
Call Carrie Dubord for more information
(906) 228-6000

March 23rd
Business After Hours (5:00-7:00PM EST)
Marquette Co. Convention & Visitors' Bureau
Location: TBD
Call the Lake Superior Community
Partnership for more information
(906) 226-6591

April 1st
LSCP Event (12:00PM EST)
Community Excellence Award Luncheon
Location: Wawonowin Country Club
Call Cheryl Shuty for more information
(906) 486-4841

April 11th
Business Showcase
Range Agency
Location: Iron Range Agency
Call Cheryl Shuty for more information
(906) 448-4841

April 18th
Economic Club Meeting (6:00PM EST)
Location: Ramada Inn of Marquette
Call Carrie Dubord for more information
(906) 228-6000

April 20th
Business Showcase (5:00-7:00PM EST)
Landmark Inn of Marquette
Location: Landmark Inn
Call Carrie Dubord for more information
(906) 228-6000



Will Carne, President Job Force Board

Getting to the Bottom Line: Hiring People with Disabilities Is Good Business

Since the passage of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) nearly 15 years ago, there has been increasing evidence that suggests hiring someone with a disability has a positive financial effect for a business' bottom line in terms of reducing training costs, increasing productivity and boosting staff moral.

In the next ten years, the retire-

ment of massive numbers of experienced workers is likely to create wide spread skill shortages in many companies. Youth with disabilities could be a critical resource against future shortages. According to the National Organization on Disability Harris Poll 2000, 72% of working age people with disabilities have diplomas or higher education, but 55% remain unemployed. In addition, youth continue to become better educated. The number of college students with disabilities has risen over 400% since 1978.

One of the biggest business related expenses involves worker training or retraining due to staff turnover. The costs associated with recruiting and hiring an entry-level staff person for one year are more than their annual salary. Hiring

someone with a disability can drastically reduce those costs. According to a survey conducted by the US Chamber of Commerce, persons with disabilities tend to remain on the job longer and maintain better levels of attendance. The study revealed that workers with disabilities had an 80% lower turnover rate. This saves money each year in recruitment and retraining costs.

As a group, employees with disabilities meet the performance expectations of their employers. According to a 1990 Dupont survey of 811 participants, 90% of employees with disabilities performed average or better as compared to 95% of workers without disabilities. In a more recent study done there was no difference between the measured productivity of disability and non-

disability workers in attendance, task engagement, efficient or effectiveness.

In light of the skills shortage and rising recruitment/training costs anticipated in the next decade, the significance of this segment of the workforce might increase dramatically. As U.S. businesses compete in an increasingly global economy, individuals with disabilities continue to represent an important potential resource.

The Job Force Board's Disability Program Navigator Project will be working to make a difference to help the bottom line of business and to increase awareness of the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities.

To learn more about this project call (906) 789-0558 extension 216.

THE JOB FORCE BOARD'S DISABILITY NAVIGATOR SYSTEM STRENGTHENING THE APPLICANT POOL TO MEET EMPLOYER NEEDS



Rick Sanville (L) and Candice Elders (R) of the Job Force Board, review strategies of the Disability Navigator Project. Photo taken by Sean Depuydt/Northern Waters Photography.

With business as its primary customer, the Job Force Board has charged its Michigan Works! Service Centers to ensure that systems are in place so that a quality connection is made between business looking for

qualified workers and individuals seeking gainful employment. In order to build and maintain an applicant pool to meet the needs of business and industry, the Job Force Board is working with community

partners to ensure that the applicant pool is inclusive of people with disabilities.

The Disability Program Navigator System is a strategic effort that is being supported by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Employment and Training Administration (ETA), through a Work Incentive Grant. Through its Disability Program Navigator Strategic Project, the Job Force Board is seeking to increase the employment rate for disabled social security beneficiaries and others, improve their access to education, community resources and job training, strengthen partnerships among organizations that work with individuals with disabilities and as well increase and expand linkages to the business community that will result in increased hiring of individuals with disabilities.

Candice Elders and Rick Sanville, of the Job Force Board will provide leadership support the Board and to this strategic initiative.

Through the convening of Community Stakeholders Candice and Rick are in the process of developing and implementing strategies to increase employment and self sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

Key to this initiative will be the ability to achieve community stakeholder buy-in, to demonstrate the benefits to community stakeholders and their agencies, and to ensure non duplication of services and the maximization of resources to increase the use of Michigan Works! Service Centers by individuals with disabilities and to ultimately increase employment rates and self sufficiency rates of individuals with disabilities. The final product will be a template and a clearinghouse for other Workforce Investment Boards to use in order to increase the use of its One Stop Career Centers by individuals with disabilities and for business and industry seeking to hire individuals with disabilities.



UPPER PENINSULA HEALTHCARE ROUNDTABLE SETS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Upper Peninsula Health Care Roundtable, a business led partnership was formed to address the workforce issues of healthcare organizations across the Upper Peninsula.

The purpose of the healthcare roundtable is to build long-term industry relationships and coalitions and to leverage all available resources to ensure that the healthcare industry of the Upper Peninsula remains competitive and economically viable. At a recent Strategic Planning Session, the Roundtable met to review its defined strategic goals and to align systemic activities to address the goals. Top priorities including addressing employee recruitment and retention, developing career ladder models, supporting industry specific training curriculums to meet industry demands, building the skills of incumbent workers in the healthcare field and to develop systems to address public policy and regulatory issues facing the healthcare industry. Regional meetings with representatives from hospitals, long-term care facilities



Members of the Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable participate in January's Strategic Planning Session as on-going support to meet the workforce challenges of the healthcare industry.

and educational institutions were held prior to the strategic planning session to update members on roundtable activities and to orientate new members.

Job Force Board Member and Chair of the UPHCRT, Al Hendra commented, "The strategic session demonstrated the commitment the members have to create a system that works together to address our industry needs."

Representatives from Schoolcraft Memorial Hospital, Eastern U.P. Michigan Works!, Helen Newberry Joy Hospital, War Memorial Hospital, OSF St. Francis Hospital, Christian Park Village, Marquette General Hospital, Grandview Health Systems, the Upper Peninsula Healthcare Network, Iron County Medical Care Facility, Manor Care Health Services, Bay de Noc Community College, Northern Michigan University, M-TEC at Bay College, Gogebic Community College,

Upper Peninsula Area Agency on Aging, Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Michigan Works! The Job Force Board participated in this event.

The Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable was recently awarded a Michigan Regional Skills Alliance Grant from the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. The Department is also providing the Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable with technical assistance and training.

U.P. HEALTHCARE ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS ATTEND MICHIGAN'S FIRST HEALTHCARE LEARNING NETWORK



Keenan Wade (Left), MDLEG, presents an overview of the day's events.

designed to provide to the healthcare regional skill alliances resources and information to succeed in their efforts to address workforce issues within the industry. Governor Jennifer Granholm designated thirteen Regional Skill Alliances, industry focused partnerships that address workforce shortages. The Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable is one of eight healthcare RSAs awarded the designation.

The Learning Network Institute featured panel discussions that included Mr. Alan Yeck, M-TEC at

Bay College Director. Mr. Yeck, a member of the Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable (UPHCRT) and Career Progression Task Force, spoke to the activities the Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable has initiated, such as Marketing Career Awareness/Career Pathways to Career Progression, as strategies to address the workforce shortages identified by the healthcare industry. The Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable is working to establish a Career Progression model that includes ladders/lattices for entry-level, lower skilled workers to achieve increased levels of responsibility and increased wages.

As the healthcare regional skill alliances are working to address the

workforce issues within the industry, the Learning Institute also provided a technical overview on how to address the unique challenges of managing a healthcare alliance.

Mr. Yeck summarized the session as, "The Learning Network Institute provided opportunities for healthcare focused alliances to not only learn about available resources, but to create synergy with employers, workforce boards and educators from across the state that are focused on addressing the needs of a dynamic healthcare industry."

Other UPHCRT attendees included Cathy Klintworth, UPCAP; and Job Force Board representatives Orrin Bailey, Gwen Wood, Joe Esbrook and Deb Doyle.

STATE LEADERS JOIN MICHIGAN WORKS! IN HONORING UPPER PENINSULA AREA BUSINESS AND WORKER



Jack Bellinger, Marquette General Hospital Employee and Michigan Works! Alumni

Marquette General Healthcare Systems and its employee Jack Bellinger were recently honored at the Michigan Works! Alumni Event in Lansing on January February 2, 2005.

The Michigan Works! Alumni Celebration provides an opportunity to see firsthand how businesses and job seekers find value added services at Michigan Works! Service Centers across the State.

The event gives local workforce development the ability to put a human face on workforce development services, across the State of Michigan, twenty-seven recipients were recognized this year.

The event was well attended by Workforce Development Board members, business and industry, local elected officials, and workforce development professionals representing the 25 Workforce Development Boards. Representatives Steve Adamini, Rich Brown, Tom Casperson, and Senator Mike Prusi were present to honor the award recipients and recognize the efforts of Michigan Works!

In November of 2001, Jack Bellinger received a permanent lay-off notice from the Empire Mine where he had been a Maintenance Mechanic for over 4 years. Jack immediately sought out his local Michigan Works! Service Center in Marquette County and was provided with a variety of value added services to assist him in his transition into a new career.

"Michigan Works! was very instrumental in helping me find employment," said Jack. "My family and I really do not know what we would have done without them. We would have probably have left the state by know." Leaving the Upper Peninsula was something the Bellinger's did not want to have to do. "The UP and Michigan as a whole is a wonderful place to raise a family" said Jack, "We wanted our children to go school and grow up here. I have been to many places as a result of my military service, you will not find a better place to raise a family than right here in Michigan."

Upon visiting Michigan Works!

it was discovered that Jack was a United States Air Force veteran with service in the Gulf War. He was referred to the Veteran Representative who helped him launch a thorough job search. After a five month job search, Jack realized the local labor market did not support his skills as a Maintenance Mechanic and his unemployment benefits were coming to an end. When Empire Mine became Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) certified Jack looked at his career options and enrolled into the Nursing program at Bay College on a track to become a Registered Nurse.

Jack was facing new challenges. He was returning to the classroom after a lengthy absence along with the added responsibilities of husband and father of two who had to travel over 65 miles to attend classes.

With the help of the accommodating nature of Bay College, drawing from prior Air Force training, Michigan Works! Service Center assistance, as well as Jack's hard work and determination, Jack propelled to excellence! He graduated in May of 2004 carrying a 3.91 Grade Point Average, Registered Nursing licensing, and a full time position in the Cardiac/Intermediate Care Unit of Marquette General Hospital.

"Marquette General Health Systems is extremely satisfied with this jobseeker match from the Marquette Michigan Works! Service Center." reported Al Hendra, the organization's Assistant Administrator and Director in charge of Human relations, Al is also a Job Force Board Member, "We like Jack a lot. His supervisor has told us that he sets an example for the whole floor. Jack is dedicated and reliable, he really cares for his customers, this is something that is very important

when caring for patients."

When asked what made him switch from working on and maintaining equipment to a position in healthcare, Jack said the answer is simple "I went from working on machines and maintaining equipment that costs millions of dollars to caring for and working on the human body, and you cannot put a price on the human body. It is here that I can make the biggest impact and help people, and I want to thank Michigan Works! for this opportunity."

The Alumni Celebration recognizes those individuals who by hard work, determination, and the will to be economically self-sufficient have successfully entered the workforce. It is also a time to recognize the commitment and contribution of employers who have provided opportunities to those in search of a career. For further information on how Michigan Works! can assist your business call your local Michigan Works! Service Centers at one of the numbers listed: **Alger** 387-4937, **Delta** 789-9732, **Dickinson** 774-3647, **Marquette** 228-3075, **Menominee** 863-9957, **Schoolcraft** 341-1111.

BUSINESS: *(Cont'd Page 1)*

square miles in the Upper Peninsula. WE Energies employs 5,700 people with approximately 350 of those in Michigan. This equates to about \$1,000,000 economic impact in the UP for 2004 which is expected to grow to approximately \$8,000,000 in 2005.

Since 1963, Operation Action UP has been bringing together interested industrial corporations, financial institutions, utilities, institutions of higher learning, businesses and concerned citizens into a coalition that works to create a favorable economic climate and a strong employment base for the Upper Peninsula.