

Northern Stationers, Inc. benefits from Michigan Works!

If you need Office Supplies, Office Furniture/Systems Furniture, or Equipment, Northern Stationers, Inc. is the place to go. Northern Stationers, Inc. located at 502 W Washington Street in Marquette, also repairs certain office equipment.

Northern Stationers and Michigan Works! have formed a strong business relationship. When there is an open position at

Northern Stationers, Michigan Works! is ready to match the qualified candidate for the job, from a technician to a sales clerk.

"Michigan Works! does a great job at matching employee skills with the right position."
Denise Boushor, President

Michigan Works! provides many different services to help find the right candidate for the job. "There are not a lot of employment agencies in the area, and Michigan Works! fills that gap very nicely," said Denise Boushor, President of Northern Stationers. "We have been extremely happy with our services from Michigan Works!"

Michigan Works! posts the open job positions on the Michigan Talent Bank, conducts resumes searches and refers qualified candidates to apply at Northern Sta-

tioners. Team members from Michigan Works! also regularly call Denise at Northern Stationers to let her know the status of the job order, which includes giving her information about resume searches and responses to their job opening.

"Michigan Works! does a great job at matching employee skills with the right position. It's also nice to receive calls on the status of the job order" said Denise.

"Michigan Works! works continually to build a pool of qualified local job applicants," said Will Carne, President of Michigan Works! The Job Force Board. "When a job opens up at local businesses, like Northern Stationers, Michigan Works! already has qualified jobseekers to choose from."

Carne went on to say that Michigan Works! also has a vast business network,



The interior of Northern Stationers, Inc. in Marquette.

and is capable of utilizing various recruiting means, including helping the business to develop a marketing campaign for employee recruitment, and using partnerships with the local college and universities to recruit the qualified individuals needed to fill job openings.

If you would like to learn more about the services of Michigan Works!, and what is available to you business, please call or stop by your local Michigan Works! Service Center.



Northern Stationers, Inc. is located at 502 West Washington Street in Marquette

New Save-A-Lot Food Store Opens in Manistique

The new Save-A-Lot food store opened up in Manistique this May and Michigan Works! played an important role in the process. The new Save-A-Lot food store renovated the former Ken's Food store and created employment opportunities for a number of local residents that may have been lost when Ken's was closed. The new store provides high quality low cost food items for local residents and visitors to our area.

Save-A-Lot's strategy is simple – offer high quality food at terrific savings. At their stores, you'll save up to 40% compared to conventional grocery stores. Their quality is backed by a 100% unconditional guarantee. Their stores are bright and clean, with wide and uncluttered aisles. And you'll notice that they do things a little differently; to make sure you pay less.

Save-A lot stores are smaller and more efficient to shop in than conventional grocery stores. They carry only the items you purchase most often. The result is a quicker, more convenient experience. Save-A-Lot reduces operating costs by carrying only the most popular size and variety of each item. This means lower prices for their shoppers. Their custom

brands are made exclusively for Save-A-Lot. And they guarantee, unconditionally, that these exclusive brands meet Save-A-Lot's exacting standards for quality, flavor and freshness. Not only does Save-A-Lot carry an assortment of high quality brand items – they also offer a changing assortment of national brand items - all at a savings of up to 40%.

Michigan Works! was approached by the store's General Manager to help with advertising the new positions, taking applications, completing the initial screening and providing all applicants with a required showing of the Save-A-Lot employee video. The Michigan Works! Service Center in Schoolcraft County performed a wide variety of services for the business in a short time frame; only three weeks to complete the requested assistance.

Team members at Michigan Works! published each of the positions on the Michi-

"Had Michigan Works! not been available to help with the personnel process, the grand opening may have been delayed for at least a month."
John Ziminski, General Manager.

gan Talent Bank, which is an internet tool for posting job openings, and began accepting applications. A two-week deadline was set to have all applications into Michigan Works!. At the end of that time, the team conducted a prescreening of over eighty applications for twelve positions. The applicant pool was trimmed down to sixty and those applicants who made it through the initial screening were contacted and appointments made for them to view the store's required video tape.

The Save-A-Lot video was shown on three consecutive days, with three showings each day. The Michigan Works! team verified who attended the showings and provided the applicants with information on the final process. Once the prescreening was completed and all applicants had seen the required video tape, a packet of the applicants resumes were delivered to the General Manager at the new store. At that time the Michigan Works! team completed the requested service but offered to remain engaged in the process by assisting with the final interviews.

The General Manager extended his gratitude for helping him with the personnel issues while he worked on the set up of

Inside this issue:

Northern Stationers, Inc.	1
Save-A-Lot Food Store Opens in Manistique	1
Committed to Economic Growth in the U.P.	2
Building our Future	2
Respect the Rights of Your Employees	3
The UPEDA Spotlights WE Energies	3
International Trade	4
All American City Award Finalist	4
Chamber Members Strike it Rich	4
The Michigan Merit Award Scholarship	5
Kingsford High Seniors have Reason to Smile	5
Bay Appoints a New Dean of Nursing	5
"Breaking Traditions" Awards	6
Summer College for Kids	6
Helpful Tips for Job Seeker Success	7
2003 Schoolcraft County Job Fair	7
Calendar of Local Events	8

the new store. His comment reflects the value added to his store: "During the past several weeks I have been working around the clock in remodeling the existing facility. Had Michigan Works! not been available to help with the personnel process, the grand opening may have been delayed for at least a month." John Ziminski, General Manager.

Michigan Works! System Committed to Economic Growth in the Upper Peninsula

Business Community Development Through Continuous Improvement. Workforce Development is Economic Development. These statements are not just our mission and an axiom used by workforce development boards, They are the foundations for economic and business development in the Upper Peninsula, to which The Job Force Board is committed.

The Job Force Board has a long-standing commitment to partnering with economic development, on specific economic development expansion and attraction projects, business retention strategies and on economic development education issues. The Job Force Board, through its' Michigan Works! Service Centers has been an integral partner with economic development on attraction and expansion projects. The Job Force Board has been able to provide specific, relevant, and current data on the availability of skilled workers across the region, when called upon by economic development.

These efforts were an important ingredient in the attraction of business and industry to the former KI Sawyer Airbase, and the attraction of Issues and Answers in Escanaba, including many other successful pro-

jects. In addition, The Job Force Board has partnered with the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance to promote a unified business retention program across the Upper Peninsula called the Upper Peninsula Business Barometer. This proprietary system, which depends on an economic development modeling and analysis tool called the Synchronist Business Information System™, allows Michigan Works! and Upper Peninsula economic developers to better analyze and predict economic development trends and opportunities, as well as better serve the existing business base in the region.

The Board has also been a partner with organizations such as the Delta County Economic Development Alliance, Operation Action UP, local chambers of commerce, and others on the delivering of economic and workforce development educational efforts across the region. These efforts have included the Upper Peninsula Workforce Development Summit, various business training topics, and economic development education.

Now, The Job Force Board has entered into a new partnership. A partnership, which will allow the Board to provide as-

sistance to entrepreneurs at the initial phases of business development. The Job Force Board in partnership with First Step, Inc (Escanaba, MI), and the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center (Grand Rapids, MI) have opened a Biz Resource Center in the Michigan Works! Service Center in Marquette County.

The Biz Resource Center is a resource center that offers a library of books and other materials pertinent to establishing a new business, and self-directed computer technology for business research and for the formation of business plans. One of the most exciting features of the Biz Resource Center is the provision of Step-by-Step how-to guides published by Entrepreneur magazine for over 28 specific businesses. These guides provide a roadmap to starting very specific businesses – from micro home based businesses to manufacturing and e-commerce to importing/exporting businesses.

In addition, this partnership will allow users to access small business counseling services provided by First Step, Inc. Further, for persons interested in starting or expanding a business based on new tech-

nology and/or processes, special technology counselors are available to be brought into the area through the partnership with the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center.

To access the Biz Resource Room at the Michigan Works! Service Center, no appointment is needed. The operating hours are 8 AM - 5 PM, Monday through Friday, at 1498 O'Dovero Drive (across from Econo Foods), (906) 228-3075. To schedule a free and confidential business counseling session with a First Step, Inc. you may call (906) 786-9634. In addition, if you are interested in obtaining information about the technology specific business counselors with the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Centers, you may also call First Step, Inc.



By: Will Carne,
President of The Job Force Board

Building Our Future by Supporting Our Local Community

The Upper Peninsula Construction Council (UPCC) is launching a new community awareness campaign to inform residents and businesses of the positive impact skilled union labor has on the Upper Peninsula economy. The campaign, tentatively scheduled to launch in July, will include a variety of traditional media plus an update of the current Web site UPContractors.com.

“Our goal is to convey the positive benefits and uniqueness of our local union labor in the construction industry,” stated Tony Retaskie, Executive Director of the UPCC, and also a member of Michigan Works! The Job Force Board. “Two main differences are that the trades people have the opportunity to work for multiple employers, and training for the individual trades can be quite extensive.”

Construction companies employing local union trades people not only benefit from the experience and continual training these skilled professionals receive, but they also have the ability to take on larger, more complex projects because they can tap into a larger skilled workforce. “A U.P. based contractor can compete successfully against an out-of-town company bidding on the same local project because they will have access to the skilled trades people they need to get the job done, on-time and

within budget,” stated Mr. Retaskie. When it comes to economic impact, figures from 2001 show an overall contribution to the UP economy of almost \$83 million. This figure includes \$24 million dollars in health care benefits paid to providers and institutions, and almost \$570,000 in training for organized building trades apprentices and journeyman upgrades.

Currently, despite country wide economic issues, the Upper Peninsula is not experiencing any noticeable downturns in construction, which benefits the UP economy because the estimated \$83 million that circulates through our economy due to construction seems to be ever present. According to Mr. Retaskie, “The Upper Peninsula seems to be somewhat isolated from the effects of the Country’s economy. Though economic factors cause other regions to have peaks and valleys in construction, the UP seems to have much less noticeable highs and lows.” Due to upcoming, and continuing construction projects such as the border crossing station in Sault St. Marie, and projects at local colleges and universities, it does not seem that the current economic downturn has had as large of an effect on construction in the UP as it has had elsewhere.

Mr. Retaskie states that the smaller scale of the Upper Peninsula is one possibility to

why construction is more constant. In larger, more metropolitan areas, construction projects that cost several million, even hundreds of million dollars are much more common. But when in an economic downturn, it is much harder for these areas to maintain the monies needed to develop so many large projects at once. In contrast, the construction in the UP consists of many smaller projects, and fewer of the massive scaled projects common in larger areas. If a project of such large proportions is developed in the UP, it is because the construction is truly needed, and the financing of the project has been thoroughly planned in advance, making it more resistant to economic fluctuations.

Another possibility of why Upper Peninsula construction is more constant is that construction is an indicator of economic development. “The building trades are involved with, and support many of our local economic development organizations,” states Mr. Retaskie. “These organizations are a benefit to us all because they bring new business to our area, and then encourage us all to spend our money locally to insure our own economic success.”

One example of how the building trades support local development is in a recent career fair held at the Michigan Works!

Service Center in Marquette County. This career fair, held in partnership by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC), Michigan Works The Job Force Board, and the UPCC, featured representatives from 7 of out of the 11 skilled building trades. It helped job seekers learn more about the building trades, and also put them in contact with individuals who can direct them to employment in our area.

Overall, UPCC’s community awareness campaign shows recognition of the Upper Peninsula’s strengths that make the UP one of the best regions to live. We have highly skilled local labor, a lot of local involvement with economic development, and individuals that are devoted to investing their money locally to further our own economic development. Take a look around you and be proud to be a part of such a great and advancing region of our beautiful country.



By: Orrin Bailey,
Chief Executive Officer

Respect the Rights of Your Employees

The use of tobacco products has increasingly become a controversial topic throughout the country. With states banning, or considering a ban on smoking in public locations, many employers are left questioning what their stance could, and should be. Although a hot bed of discussion, it is clearly acceptable for employers to prohibit smoking on company grounds, and to discipline any employee who ignores company policy by smoking in the workplace.

“But,” according to a recent article titled “What About Smokers,” that appeared in the May 2003 issue of the *HR Mangers Legal Reporter*, “even when an office is smoke-free, the non-smoking employees still complain about the smell of smoke that clings to smokers, arguing that the smell gets on their clothes and hair etc.”

The article goes on to point out the fact that many complain of an unfair work environment where smokers take more breaks in order to grab a quick cigarette, leaving their non-smoking coworkers behind to pick up the slack. According to the article, this leaves many employers who dislike cigarette smoke wondering if they could refuse to hire someone who smokes.

The answer is no. Smoking is legal, and because of this, it cannot be a contributing factor in the decision of whether to hire an employee. In fact, over half of all states specifically prohibit employers from refusing to hire or from taking any other adverse or disciplinary action against employees or applicants who smoke at home and away from company grounds during non-working hours. In New Jersey, for example, employers generally may not re-

fuse to hire applicants who smoke and may not discriminate against smokers in any term, condition, or privilege of employment.

Even in states that do not specifically prohibit smoking discrimination, the law prohibits discrimination on the basis that the individual smokes away from work because the employee is in fact participating in a legal activity.

However, please note that all the above information states, “smoking away from work.” If the employer has mandated that smoking is prohibit on company grounds, and there is a specific schedule and allotted time for employees to take breaks, then all employees, including those who smoke, should be expected to follow company rules. With this being said, if smokers

duck out to smoke when not permitted, or smoke on company grounds when not permitted, they can be disciplined for doing so.

But be sure all employees, smokers and nonsmokers, are held to the same rules. An employer who upholds rules about the frequency and duration of breaks for employees who smoke, but then is lax on these same rules for non-smoking employees is showing discriminatory behavior that may cause unnecessary future conflict.

Overall, the thing to remember is that you as an employer can create a smoke free environment on your company grounds. However, remember to respect the legal right of your employees to smoke on their own time.

The UPEDA spotlights We Energies

We Energies is the brand name of Wisconsin Electric Power Company and Wisconsin Gas Company, the principal utility subsidiaries of Wisconsin Energy Corporation (NYSE:WEC). We Energies serves more than one million electric customers and nearly one million natural gas customers in Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Their electric generating system includes 24 power plants located throughout Wisconsin and Michigan. The company also provides water services to 2,500 customers in Milwaukee’s northern suburbs and steam services to 500 customers in downtown Milwaukee.

We Energies has been in the business of supplying safe, reliable and reasonably priced services for over 100 years. Looking forward, they seek opportunities and technologies to increase customer value, improve the environment and strengthen the communities they serve. In their businesses, they strive to build relationships with their customers through courteous,

enthusiastic and innovative employees dedicated to exceptional service.

We Energies offices serving the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin are located at: 800 Industrial Park Drive, Iron Mountain, MI 930 Seldon Road, Iron River, MI; 4222 CTH B, Land O’Lakes, WI; 2701 Lakeshore Blvd. Marquette, MI; We Energies corporate offices are located at 231 W. Michigan St., Milwaukee, WI.

Some recent accomplishments include: Wilderness Shores Settlement Agreement, an innovative, participatory process to license hydroelectric facilities using a comprehensive basin wide approach that balances cost, environment and power production.

The company recently constructed two ash storage facilities to stockpile fly ash produced in the winter months when demand as a concrete additive is low. The storage facilities enable We Energies to recycle

more ash annually to reduce the volume entering its landfill.

In 2003, We Energies was selected by the US Department of Energy to develop and install technology to reduce mercury emissions from coal fired power plants as part of the President’s Clear Skies Initiative.

Additionally, the company was named and received the prestigious Reliability One award for superior electric system reliability in 2001 in the Midwest region. Outage performance data of 21 Midwestern energy providers was reviewed as part of the annual benchmarking study.

We Energies primary goal for the future continues to be its commitment to focusing on the company’s core business of supplying safe, reliable and reasonably priced service.

As a founding member of the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance, We

Energies has been involved with the organization since 1999. The mission of the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance is to enhance, link and promote the unique aspects of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula as a viable location in which to invest and conduct business. It accomplishes this through regular networking, education, regional image campaigns, regional marketing campaigns, and creation of a regional information base. It is the goal of the UPEDA to provide a single point of entry for business attraction as well as the conduit of information and opportunities throughout the Upper Peninsula. UPEDA serves all fifteen (15) counties of the Upper Peninsula.

For more information about UPEDA, visit www.superiormichigan.com. For more information about We Energies, contact Karin Roff at (906) 779-2425.



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For more information,
visit www.jobforce.org

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International Trade - a Way to Increase Revenue By Linda Hirvonen, Director of the Delta County EDA



Linda Hirvonen, Director of the Delta County EDA and member of The Job Force Board

For many small businesses, a lean economy means looking outside traditional sales territories to increase revenues.

International trade offers opportunities for busi-

nesses of all sizes to increase their market. After all, 95% of the world's population and 70% of the world's income is outside of the United States. (fedgazette vol 15, #3).

According to the Small Business Association's (SBA) most recent data, 97% of all US exporters in 2001 were small businesses. These smalls accounted for about 29% of the US export value. The Federal Reserve of Minneapolis's *fedgazette* devoted much of its editorial space of the May 2003 volume to exporting. Their graphic shows that 14 out of 50 states total manufactured exports per capita in 2002 exceeded \$2,000.

Michigan was the fourth highest in per capita export dollars at \$3,252.00, with only Vermont (\$3,928), Texas (\$4,146) and Washington state (\$5,129) ahead of us. Indiana and Ohio were the only other Great Lakes states to exceed \$2,000 per

person. While Minnesota does not make the per capita list, it is #1 in our region in terms of number of businesses that export (6,688). No data is currently available for solely the Upper Peninsula.

Exporting takes time to develop. Many successful exporters report that they built their export business from just one customer. It takes time to learn to market in different cultures. Exported products must not only fill a demand, but they must be more unique or significantly better than the domestic ones they will be competing with for sales. Stand alone products, for instance, are often more successful on the export market. One must also consider changing economic conditions in the countries of export, and we know it can be difficult enough just to forecast in our own country!

Some of the issues facing exporters relate to working with different countries, like trade agreement conditions, tariffs and other taxes. There is often a struggle with fluctuating international currency exchange, and with getting letters of credit. The most common problems relate to shipping, finding an agent or distributor in other countries, and with documentation that won't get mired at the borders.

Finding local financing for what might be a one-time large order customer is also a challenge, and sometimes it is difficult to find local banks with export experience. Novice exporters also face difficulties in pricing as their own systems are often

inefficient, and their costs are higher than anticipated. Foreign patent protection is also an issue for American small business.

If you have questions about how to get started exporting, the Small Business Association has export assistance. You can visit their site at www.sba.gov.

There are also many local resources that may have valuable information about exporting. You could call me at the EDA, (786-2192) for copies of these SBA brochures: Opportunities in Exporting, How to Bank your Export Deals, and Take Your Cue from SBA: Expand your Mar-

kets to Russia.

Other possible resources for information would be the Dickinson Area Partnership, the Lake Superior Community Partnership, your local Chamber of Commerce, the Schoolcraft County EDC, as well as First Step and Northern Initiatives.

If you are unsure who to contact, or where to reach them, stop by your local Michigan Works! Service Center. They will be happy to point you in the right direction.



Chamber Members Strike it Rich!

Well, maybe not exactly rich, but this month 51 Delta County Chamber Members will have received dividend checks from Accident Fund Insurance Company of America totaling \$14,346. This is a direct result of being members of the Chamber and Workers Comp customers of Accidental Fund Insurance Company of America during the period from August 1, 2000 to July 31, 2001.

This member benefit—a share in the dividends of the policy—is in addition to competitive rates on this otherwise expensive but necessary coverage. Not only are the basic rates competitive, Accident Fund gives a 5% discount on workers compensation insurance rates to clients who belong to the Delta County Area Chamber of Commerce.

“The dividend check of \$263 more than



covered the cost of our Chamber dues,” said Brian Farrell of Northern Plumbing and Heating Supply. “Workers comp insurance is an expensive part of doing business,” said Elmer Dagenais of Elmer's County Market. “We sure appreciate the dividend.”

Initiated by the Delta County Chamber, this Chamber member benefit came as a result of a cooperative effort on the part of 17 UP Chambers who created an insurance “group” of their members, making them eligible for dividends totaling \$46,168 UP-wide. The UP Chamber group program will be evaluated again on May 1, 2004 for an additional dividend opportunity.

Marquette County an All-America City Award Finalist

Marquette County has been selected as one of the 30 finalist communities for this year's All-America City Award, the nation's most prestigious civic recognition program. The award nomination was submitted by the Lake Superior Community Partnership in conjunction with the County of Marquette, Medical Care Access Coalition, Noquemanon Trail Network and Project W.E.A.V.E.

The All-America City Award, a program of the National Civic League, encourages and recognizes civic excellence, honoring communities (neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties and regions) in which community members, government, businesses and non-profit organizations demonstrate successful resolution of critical community issues. Since 1949, more than 4,000 communities have competed and nearly 500 have been named “All-America Cities.”

The 30 finalists will participate in the final round of the All-America City competition to be held in Washington, D.C. on June 12-14. A delegation from each finalist community will present to a 10-member jury their innovative programs and local solutions addressing a wide range of social and community issues. The ten 2003 All-America Cities will be named on June 14 during a special ceremony at the Hilton Washington & Towers.

For a complete list of the 30 finalist communities, please visit the National Civic League web site at www.ncl.org.



Partnership Receives Donation

The Lake Superior Community Partnership was recently the recipient of a \$1,000 donation compliments of an award program sponsored by Wells Fargo.

The Wells Fargo Volunteer Service Award program honors those employees who give of themselves for the betterment of their community. Winning nominees receive monetary donation that are in turn given to the organization or charity they have chosen.

This year, K. Michael Skytta, President Community Banking, Wells Fargo Michigan, N.A., was nominated for his tireless volunteer efforts with the Partnership since its inception. Wells Fargo is recognizing those efforts and the Lake Superior Community Partnership will receive the \$1,000 donation.

“We are please to accept this donation from Wells Fargo on behalf of Mike's efforts,” comments Amy Clickner, Partnership Director of Operation. “Mike has been an integral part of this organization from the beginning. It is a passion for making our community the best it can be that drives Mike and our other volunteers. We are grateful for the award money and will use it to send Mike Gokey, our Director of Economic Development to the annual Development Corporation Site Consultants Conference in June.”



For questions regarding the Lake Superior Community Partnership, please call (906) 226-9658.