

Flinn's Flowers and Garden Center enters its 17th summer

As Flinn's Flowers and Garden Center enters its 17th summer season business is really blooming. Seventeen years ago, Wally Flinn was working at a local grocery store that offered a small garden center during the spring and summer. When the grocer decided to discontinue this service, Wally decided to go out on his own. He started with one employee who would watch the shop while Wally continued to work at the grocery store and now during the peak season there are up to 30 people working at Flinn's and Wally certainly has no time for a second job.

When you hear the phrase "Full Line Garden Center", you are hearing about Flinn's. The Green Goods Division is a big part of the operation. They grow 90% of their own perennials and 25% of their own annuals. Flinn's offers over 400 species of perennials; over 300 species of trees and shrubs and over 200 species of annuals. When they do need to bring in products they buy from two main suppliers: Bailey and Monrovia Nurseries. The Hardscape Division offers a full line of retaining wall and paving brick products from such brand names as Navastone. The Floral Division is a full line florist who can serve all occasions from weddings and funerals to other special occasions, they are connected with Teleflora and yes, they do deliver. Flinn's floral division has won numerous awards

from the Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Floral Association, one as recently as March of this year.

A fast growing division is the Water Garden Division. Four years ago they had four square feet in the store dedicated to Water Gardens, today there are thirty six square feet filled with bubblers, pumps, liners, stones, plants, fish and anything else you might need to build your own backyard sanctuary. Not only do they sell the products, they design, build, install and maintain anything you need. They would even bring the water if you needed them to.

This philosophy is apparent in all aspects of the business. When it comes to landscaping and lawn maintenance they do everything the customer needs. With an extensive background in landscape design, installation and maintenance, Flinn's has garnered numerous awards for Best Industrial Concession at the State Fair for their landscaping for Bob's Homes. During the winter, these talented landscape pros stay busy removing snow. And guess what, they even get out of the truck to clear doorways and sidewalks. Additionally, you can have your in ground sprinkler system installed and maintained by their professional staff.

Another exciting aspect at Flinn's is Holi-

day decorating. Starting with door-to-door sales of "Holiday Delight Silhouettes", customers are now coming to the door at the store. The staff at Flinn's will design, install, maintain, take down and store all of your Holiday Decorating needs. At one place in Menominee they put up and take down half-a-million lights each year.

Flinn's is an active supporter of local groups and charities some of which include: The Bonifas Fine Arts Center; All Scouting Groups; 4-H; School Systems and more. They happily give tours to students and other interested parties. If you would like to take a tour, give them a call. All of their staff are proficient in all of the product lines and they even have an on staff Horticulturalist who used to teach Horticulture at the University of Tennessee.

Flinn's customers are true blue and for good reason, they even come from as far away as Racine WI, and Houghton MI to shop here and learn more about gardening. Customer Service really is number one at this garden center and you can really see that at the seminars that are held for people to be able to learn more about using and getting the most from the wide variety of products at Flinn's. Some of the upcoming seminars include one-two hour sessions on: Roses; Perennials; Ponds/Water Gardens; Bare Root products such as trees and



Front: Christa Christensen and Rhonda Husbye
Back: Brendon Flinn and Wally Flinn

shrubs; and Retaining Walls and Paving Bricks. You can get more information by watching for their ads in the Escanaba Daily Press or by calling the Store at (906) 786-5000. You can also get more information about Flinn's on the web at 111.growwise.com.

Michigan Works! Has been providing a variety of services to Flinn's Flowers and Garden Center and Wally says, "Getting the handbook has been great, we have been working on getting one for some time but could never get to it because we are so busy. Your help has been tremendous, we really didn't know it was out there"

Gardening season is right around the corner, so stop by at the four-acre facility at the corner of North 30th Street and US 2/41 soon.

Michigan Works! collects applications for MeadWestvaco

Being part of a focused team effort brings to mind words like teamwork, cooperation and collaboration. These words can be used to sum up the effort that the Michigan Works! Service Center team in Delta County put toward assisting one of the area's largest employers in updating their current file of employment applications.

Michigan Works! was approached to assist MeadWestvaco with updating their current inventory of applications. With a clear mission of answering MeadWestvaco's need for assistance, the Michigan Works! team set upon completing the task on time and to the satisfaction of our business customer. Several members of the Michigan Works! team were brought together in a series of meetings with the employer to outline a clear objective that would satisfy their hiring needs. These meetings established items such as how long applications would be accepted and even how they would be accepted. With the end in mind,

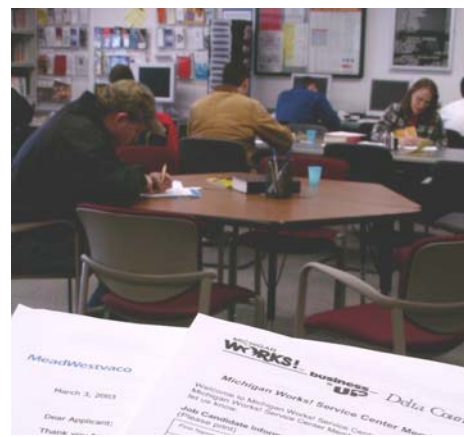
establishing a bank of highly qualified candidates was the mission of the Michigan Works! team.

"Once again, Michigan Works! was tremendously helpful with MeadWestvaco's application process," said Roxanne Guindon of MeadWestvaco. "Holly Peoples and the staff were very accommodating and easy to work with. They kept in touch from start to finish to make sure we were satisfied throughout. I would recommend Michigan Works!"

The methods for gathering a pool of qualified candidates have changed over the years. With modern technology and advanced resources, traditional methods for accepting applications are no longer the only option that Michigan Works! utilizes to meet the challenging task of finding qualified employees. The team at Michigan Works! used the Internet to broadcast the upcoming event and also expanded the use

of the fax machine to ensure the reach of Michigan Works! throughout our area was complete and thorough.

After reviewing several possible scenarios for the application process at a final team meeting, Michigan Works! opened the —Continued on page 2—



Michigan Works! was recently able to help collect over 800 applications for MeadWestvaco.

Inside this issue:

<i>Flinn's Flowers and Garden Center</i>	1
<i>Michigan Works! collects applications</i>	1
<i>President's Corner: Referral Marketing</i>	2
<i>Michigan is a Small Tech hot spot</i>	2
<i>Spotlight of Steve Balbierz</i>	3
<i>UPEDA spotlight of UPPCO</i>	3
<i>Biz Resource Center now open in Marquette</i>	4
<i>Community Excellence Awards</i>	4
<i>Apply Now for the LSCP Leadership Academy</i>	4
<i>Bay offer combined courses online</i>	5
<i>State awards \$25,000 rebuild grant</i>	5
<i>NMU Distinguished Faculty selected</i>	5
<i>Business Leaders set up scholarship</i>	5
<i>View Master campaign wins gold award</i>	6
<i>Applebee's and Michigan Works!</i>	6
<i>Sixth Grade Learn About Career Pathways</i>	7
<i>Four students prepare with Youth Works!</i>	7
<i>M-Tech Safety Training</i>	8
<i>Community Events</i>	8

President's Corner: Referral Marketing

What would you say if I told you that I know the most effective form of marketing for your business? What if I told you that this form of marketing was free? That's right, the most effective way to spread the word about your business, and to increase your profitability is absolutely free! The method that I'm talking about is one that has been known since the dawn of business itself, yet is often overlooked. It's referral marketing, or simply stated, getting new business by word of mouth advertising.

Check any of your local want ads. I guarantee that you will see at least one job opening for a sales position where the business that is hiring proudly displays the statement "No cold calls required!" The reason why this statement has become a source of pride lays in the fact that cold calling, (trying to gain new customers by calling on people who have little to no familiarity with a business,) ends up being a disheartening experience that consumes both time and money. When tasked with sales through cold calls, one must be prepared because rejections are more prevalent than actual sales.

Referral marketing brings in more and better customers than cold calling because the customer already has knowledge of the product, and often times, was referred by a relative, friend or trusted business associ-

ate. This causes the customer to be more trusting and receptive to sales. Because of this preconceived "trust," the customers gained through referral are more likely to be long term, repeat customers. For this reason, business that focus on sales often rely heavily on referrals, and even advertise that fact as a strong "benefit" when recruiting new employees.

But what if you work in a business where the focus is not sales? Does referral marketing hold any benefit? Simply stated, all businesses involve sales. For example, think of the profession of a plumber. Generally, this profession is not thought to be a sales position, but successful plumbers realize that they are indeed in sales. Plumbers "sell" their knowledge and skills in plumbing to potential clients. If these clients are satisfied with a job well done, they talk. They refer their friends and family and they do so for free.

Because of the huge benefit of referrals through current customers, good customer service is essential. But to establish good customer service, you must first determine who your customers truly are. Most obviously, your customers are those who buy your product or services directly from you. But don't be so shortsighted. In many cases, the person buying the product or service does not use it. Example: a land-

lord pays for the service of a plumber, yet the end user is not the landlord, but the tenant. Therefore, good customer service must extend to both the landlord, and the tenant. Even though the landlord may be ecstatically happy with your low cost and the speed that you delivered service, if the tenant is continually complaining about your shoddy workmanship, you've provided poor customer service and have caused negative word of mouth advertising that will lose future work for you.

Also, try to think of every contact as a potential customer. Someone who you meet today may need your services or products in the future. If you are rude, or speak negatively of your customers and business, this person will remember what was said, and will likely seek out your competitors in the future instead of you. If you are upbeat, and speak as though you are the foremost authority in your line of work, that person is likely find you when they need to. Not only that, if this "potential" customer feels confident about how you portray yourself, they may readily refer you to their friends and family.

Most importantly, establish a business network. Get out and meet other people who work in different industries. Introduce yourself to new people, establish relationship with them and become their friend. Has your dentist ever referred you to a good car dealer? Or has your investment broker ever referred you to a good dentist?

These people are using their networks! They are referring you to one of your friends with the hopes that their friend will in turn refer customers back to them.



By: Will Carne,
President of The Job Force Board

A great way to make business contacts that will expand your network is to get involved with your community. Volunteering with local organizations like the Kiwanis or your local Chamber of Commerce are a great way to find captive audiences of people who may potentially help to market your business to others.

This, of course, is a simplified look at referral marketing. If you want more information, or a more in-depth explanation, there are plenty of fine books on the subject available at your local library or bookstore. Or, stop by or call your local Michigan Works! Service Center to see what information and networking opportunities are available to you. Overall, the basic premise to gaining customers by referral is to make your customers happy, and to establish a network of people who trust your skills, abilities and products. People will inevitably talk. The key is to get them to talk about you.

Michigan Is A Small Tech Hot Spot

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) recently announced that *Small Times* magazine has named Michigan one of the top states in the race to become the nation's center for the small tech industry. Michigan came in ninth in the annual small tech hot spots rankings found in the March/April issue. When comparing the volume of MEMS and microsystems companies by state, Michigan came in third place nationally.

"Michigan is the proud home to many up-and-coming small tech companies," said Michigan Governor Jennifer M. Granholm. "Through the implementation of my Technology Tri-Corridor plan, we hope to continue to develop this cutting edge industry, ensuring that Michigan will finish at the head of the pack in this race."

The top ten states in the *Small Times* ranking are: California, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Maryland, New York, Illinois, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

For MEMS and microsystems, the top 10 states based on the number of companies

are: California (1); Massachusetts (2); Michigan, New Jersey and Texas (tied for 3); Illinois and Pennsylvania (tied for 6); North Carolina (8); New York (9); and Minnesota (10).

States that win the small tech race are likely to reap significant economic rewards. The National Science Foundation projects a \$1 trillion annual market by 2015 for nanotechnology alone.

"This year's *Small Times* magazine rankings show how the leading states, including Michigan, are achieving this new growth," said Steve Crosby, vice president and managing editor of Small Times Media. "A common theme in every success story is a balanced cluster of new and existing businesses, world-class research, investment capital and a supportive government."

The term "small tech" in its common use includes the development and applications of microelectromechanical systems (MEMS), microsystems and nanotechnology.

Thousands of small tech devices are in common use today, including sensors for

automobile air bags and inhaler parts used to administer proper doses of asthma medication. Micro devices and sensors are considered enabling technologies that are having a significant impact within a wide variety of industries.

Michigan's leadership in the small tech industry was apparent in its selection as the host for the seventh annual International Conference on the Commercialization of Micro and Nano Technologies, held in Ypsilanti last fall.

Small Times Media LLC, headquartered in Ann Arbor, Mich., is the leading source of business news and information about the small tech industry. The company offers full small tech news coverage through its bimonthly magazine, *Small Times*, a daily news Web site, and a weekly e-newsletter, *Small Times Direct*.

The MEDC, a partnership between the state and local communities, promotes smart economic growth by developing strategies and providing services to create and retain good jobs and a high quality of life.

This article was reproduced from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's website, <http://medc.michigan.org>

MeadWestvaco

—Continued from page 1—

Service Center doors on Monday March 3rd with quality checkpoints and jobseeker flow plans in place to ensure that this event was completed to meet and exceed the expectation of the employer, while maintaining fluidity to meet also the expectations of the job seekers. Michigan Works! accepted over 800 hundred resumes throughout the six-day application process. MeadWestvaco was able to gather each day's applications from the Michigan Works! Service Center, and due to the preparation for this process, the Michigan Works! team was able to ensure that all applications were completed correctly, including those from the far reaches of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

Business is the number one customer and that has remained the focus of Michigan Works! for a number of years now. It is this focus and the desire to meet all of the human resources needs of our area businesses that drives the Michigan Works! team to successfully meet the needs of one of our largest employers. If you are interested in finding out how Michigan Works! can help your business, call or stop by your local Michigan Works! Service Center.

Job Force Board Member Spotlight: Stephen Balbierz

Stephen Balbierz is one of our outstanding community members who gives of his time and work experience by serving on The Job Force Board. The Job Force Board consists of local figures from education, public and private industry that work together as the strategic advisory board for Michigan Works! in the central six counties of the Upper Peninsula.

Mr. Balbierz's profession is that of the "External Affairs Director" for SBC Communications, Inc. SBC Communications, Inc (www.sbc.com) is one of the world's leading data, voice and Internet service providers. Through its world-class network, and its subsidiary's trusted brands- SBC Southwest Bell, SBC Ameritech, SBC Pacific Bell, SBC Nevada Bell, SBC SNET and Sterling Commerce- SBC companies provide a full range of voice, data, networking and e-business services, as well as directory advertising and publish-

ing. A Fortune 27 company, America's leading provider of high-speed DSL internet access services, and one of the Nation's leading internet service providers, SBC companies currently serve nearly 60 million access lines nationwide. In addition, SBC owns 60 percent of America's second largest wireless company - Cingular Wireless - that serves more than 21 million wireless customers. Internationally, SBC has telecommunications investments in 28 countries.

In his position as the External Affairs Director, Mr. Balbierz is responsible for government affairs, community relations, corporate giving and all other external affairs. He states that one of his challenges in this position is the reshaping of outdated regulatory policy on both the state and federal level. Of his professional accomplishments, Mr. Balbierz is most proud of working with many organiza-

tions to create and support programs that have benefited seniors, youth, higher education, the arts and various economic development initiatives.

Mr. Balbierz became involved with the Job Force Board because he is interested in seeing family sustaining job creation in the U.P. He states that the most satisfying aspect of working with The Job Force Board is knowing that our Upper Michigan Operation is working closely with industry, as well as job seekers, to build a strong foundation for the future employment of our young people.

When asked what accomplishments of Michigan Works! stay most vivid in his memory, Mr. Balbierz responded, "The Numerous Cases! The numerous success stories that have brought to light the human elements of the Michigan Works! System." He went on to say that he is

proud in seeing the many fine staff of Michigan Works! assisting customers in so many different ways.

In addition to working at SBC and volunteering on The Job Force Board, Mr. Balbierz is very active by working with Operation Action U.P., the Lake Superior Community Partnership, the Marquette County Ambassadors, and Marquette West Rotary.

Michigan Works! wants to thank Stephen Balbierz for his continued support for the Michigan Works! System, and for being so devoted to promoting the economic growth of our region.



Stephen Balbierz

The UPEDA Spotlights UPPCO

The Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance is proud to provide the following highlight of one of its members!

Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO), incorporated in 1947, is an electric utility engaged in the generation, purchase, distribution, and sale of electric energy. Since 1998 UPPCO has been a wholly owned operating subsidiary of WPS Resources Corporation (WPS: NYSE).

UPPCO's service territory extends into 10 of the 15 counties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, covering approximately 4,460 square miles of primarily rural countryside. The main industries in UPPCO's service area are forest products, iron mining and processing, tourism, and small manufacturing.

The company serves 99 communities and

adjacent rural areas at retail, and five municipalities, two rural electrification associations, and two investor-owned utilities at wholesale. Customer density is approximately 11 customers per square mile. At the beginning of 2003, UPPCO had 45,069 residential customers; 5,489 small commercial and industrial customers; 12 large commercial and industrial customers, and 424 other customers for a total of 50,994.

UPPCO owns nine hydroelectric generating facilities, one natural gas-fired facility, and two fuel oil-fired combustion turbines. In 2002, the company purchased about 83% of its energy requirements on the wholesale market.

In 2002 UPPCO's payroll was nearly \$10.4 million. In addition, the company paid taxes of approximately \$5.5 million

and contributed over \$125,000 in grants to charitable and economic development projects in its service territory. Of the aforementioned grants, nearly \$70,000 was contributed by WPS Resources Foundation, the philanthropic entity of UPPCO's parent company.

UPPCO is a member of the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance. 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



UPPER PENINSULA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

conduit of information and opportunities throughout the Upper Peninsula. UPEDA serves all fifteen (15) counties of the Upper Peninsula.

For more information about UPEDA, contact Karen Olsen, Executive Director at (906) 235-0108 or KO@SUPERIORMICHIGAN.COM. Visit UPEDA's website at WWW.SUPERIORMICHIGAN.COM.

For specific information about UPPCO, contact the Corporate Communications Manager, P.O. Box 130, Houghton MI 49931 or email Janet Wolfe at jwolfe@wpsr.com



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Biz Resource Center Opens at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Marquette

1st Step Small Business & Technology Development Center and Michigan Works! The Job Force Board formally announced the grand opening of the new **Biz Resource Center** located at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Marquette County, 1498 O'Dovero Drive on Tuesday, April 8, 2003 at 9:30 a.m.

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. The Marquette BRC is one of 14 Centers located throughout the state with four of the Centers positioned in the Upper Peninsula; Hancock, Finlandia University; Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan Works!; now in the Michigan Works! Service Center in Marquette County, and soon to be relocated to the Michigan Works! Service Center in Delta County.

"Using the BRC's self-instructional resources can result in a well-crafted, com-

prehensive business plan, which can be used to guide a client through the first steps of business ownership, product or service expansion" stated MI-SBTDC State Director, Carol Lopucki.

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

—Continued on page 6—



Paul Arsenault, Chairman of the SCEA and JFB member, welcomed guests to the Grand Opening of the Biz Resource Center in Marquette.

Winners of Community Excellence Awards Announced

The Marquette County Ambassadors have announced the recipients of the 14th Annual Community Excellence Awards. The recipients were honored at a dinner and awards ceremony held on Friday, March 21 at the Wawonowin Country Club. This year's honorees have made positive changes in our area and contributed a great deal to our community. Chosen as Citizen of the Year is Gary Nelson; Organization of the Year is the Negaunee Irontown Association; Business of the Year is Wilderness Sports; Business Person of the Year is Dennis Bell of Bell Financial Services.

Forward thinking business people were also honored at the Community Excellence Awards, as part of the afternoon's pro-

gram, eight businesses were recognized for their investment in the community with Progress Awards. The awards are presented to business people who have made major renovations and/or expansions to their business or have invested in the area through new construction and included: Buck's Restaurant, Cliff's Shaft Mine Museum, Michigamme Moonshine, the Michigamme Museum, the Moose Barn, Northern Veterinary Associates, Schneider Iron and Steel and the Ishpeming Zephyr Stop.

For the past fourteen years, the Marquette County Ambassadors have used the Community Excellence Awards to honor citizens, organizations, businesses and business people of western Marquette County

that have contributed to the area. Criteria that nominations are based on include implementation of a recognizable improvement to the area; contribution through time, resources or efforts to community oriented projects and demonstrated leadership.



Leadership Academy Now Accepting Application

The Lake Superior Community Partnership established the Leadership Academy with the firm conviction that today's leadership has an obligation to nurture tomorrow's leaders. The program is designed to bring together new, emerging and potential leaders from the area to address pertinent community needs, strengthen individual leadership abilities and encourage participants to personally commit to assuming new leadership roles in the community. In short, the Lake Superior Leadership Academy (LSLA) is meant jump start Marquette County's future leaders.

"The Academy provides its participants with an insider's view of virtually every important aspect of life in the central Upper Peninsula,"
Mark Curtis Class of 2000, NMU

With the upcoming May graduation of the Class of 2003, the total number of Academy participants will grow to over 100. Surveys have shown that graduates are moving into positions of leadership in local government, on non-profit boards and at their places of business. The Academy is working.

"The Academy opened doors to me that I didn't know existed. The experience is thought provoking and action provoking. I wish everyone could go through the program."
Heather Steltenpohl, Class of 2003,
Peter White Public Library

"There is not an infinite supply of community leaders," states Academy chairperson and graduate of the Class of '99 Carl Bamert. "We try to give the people that are likely to move into those positions of responsibility a well rounded education about how their county wide community works. Armed with that education and the network developed throughout the class, they are better prepared to step into leadership roles."

The Academy educates future leaders by focusing on eight specific topics, one per monthly class session. Intense exposure to the topics of regional economy, tourism, education, arts and culture, health and human services, the media, government and the justice system give participants an underlying understanding of the community's inner workings. That understanding forms a strong foundation for them to build on

going forward. "The Academy presents an exceptional learning experience for individuals looking to make a difference in their community", states Rhea Dever of Constant Training and graduate of the Class of 2000.

The Academy is accepting applications for the Class of 2004 now through May 16th. Potential participants can receive applications for the class by calling 486-4841 or stopping in either Partnership office.



Sue Tollefson (left), of the class of 2002 and Jean Barnes (right) of the class of 2003 put leadership into action at the Lake Superior Leadership Academy's annual Habitat for Humanity work bee. Tollefson is employed by Northern Michigan University and Barnes is with the Girl Scouts of Peninsula Waters.

We Need You!

War Memorial Hospital is one of the high-quality area medical facilities partnering with Michigan Works! to address the current needs of the U.P. healthcare industry.



We Need You!

OSF St. Francis Hospital is one of the high-quality area medical facilities partnering with Michigan Works! to address the current needs of the U.P. healthcare industry.



Nurses We Need You!

Dickinson County Healthcare System is one of the high-quality area medical facilities partnering with Michigan Works! to address the current needs of the U.P. healthcare industry.



DICKINSON COUNTY HEALTHCARE SYSTEM