

Clare Bedding helps to provide our area with firm mattresses as well as a firm local economy



Since 1936 the people at Clare Bedding in Escanaba have very quietly been producing a large number of high quality mattresses and box springs and bringing millions of dollars into our area. Many people may not know how much this company influences the economy of Delta County and the Upper Peninsula. With their goal of increasing their market share in Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois, this positive influence is sure to continue and grow.

Michigan Works! Is proud to work with the team at Clare Bedding. Recently the staff at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Delta County has assisted the company with recruiting and screening qualified applicants, employee handbook, employment law posters, employment applications and a variety of human resource related services. Don Balsavich says of the Michigan Works Services "Michigan Works! has proven to be a tremendous asset to our company, an extension of our human resources department. They continue to work closely with our management staff to keep us in compliance with ever-changing state and federal guidelines."

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- Don Balsavich

The mattresses made here in Escanaba ship regionally, primarily in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Northern Illinois. Clare Bedding is located strategically at the tip of Lake Michigan and can therefore very effectively serve these areas.

With an average daily production of 200 beds a day, the semi-trucks are constantly running and there is a lot of activity happening on Stephenson Avenue. Out of all the domestic factories, Clare has the highest average unit price. This is attributed to their commitment to the highest possible quality, customer service and continuous improvement. Clare Bedding has bragging rights to having the fewest returns of product, not only in their company, but also in the industry as a whole. Industry wide the average rate of return is about four to six percent, Clare bedding's average is only ¼ of one percent. They attribute this to a number of quality control systems used exclusively by their factory. These include using the highest quality raw materials available such as the use of heavy mill plastic to wrap products and cardboard boots to protect the corners of the mattresses and box springs.

One of the unique products produced at Clare Bedding is the "Marvelous Middle" on the Comfort Care Mattress line. It really is marvelous too; this is one comfortable and durable mattress. The trick is extra support in the center third of the mattress. The center third of the innerspring is reinforced with additional tempered steel coils to provide 25% more center support, preventing sagging. High-density foam creates a firmer edge, preventing edge breakdown and allowing a complete edge-to-edge sleeping surface. The patented stitching process anchors the comfort layers to the innerspring in the center third to prevent body impressions and upholstery fatigue. The exclusive and lifetime guaranteed blue watch band steel spring used in Flexsteel seating furniture is also used in conjunction with the company's exclusive Flexsteel mattress sets to deliver unmatched dura-

bility and resiliency in a sleep set foundation.

Continuous Improvement is a priority in Escanaba's Clare Bedding. In the initiative administered by their corporate representatives, Escanaba has been the number one factory since the initiative began. This is because they refuse to use short cuts. (continued on page 3)



Workers at the Clare Bedding factory assembling mattresses



Don Balsavich, President of Clare Bedding

Clare Bedding is 1 of 14 domestic factories that produce Restonic products. There are an additional 17 international factories in countries such as Australia, The Dominican Republic and Korea.

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President's Corner: Delta County's Business of the Year



Will Carne, President of
The Job Force Board

Michigan Works! The Job Force Board is proud to be able to work with area businesses, and often, we work with a business that stands out from the rest as an outstanding asset to the local community. Ross's Manufacturing is one such business. It is for this reason that we

are proud to name Ross's as Delta County's Business of the Year.

Ross's Manufacturing is becoming more well known in Delta County but in the Ice Cream Industry they are already very well known and highly respected. Ross's custard machines have become the standard in the industry. They have the highest production rates, are easy to use, and are quiet to operate. In the past, the custard market was limited because of an inferior design of the custard machines that were manufactured. Ross's has improved the design of the machines, including patents on barrel design and process control, allowing a superior quality machine that is more user-friendly.

Ross's Frozen Custard was born in Kewaunee, Wisconsin, the dream of Harold and Jean Ross. The family owned a restaurant that served top quality fresh food and custard. For five years, the Ross family owned and operated a restaurant first in Wisconsin, then Michigan.

While in the restaurant business, Mr. Ross began to re-manufacture existing frozen custard machinery for resale. In 1995, Mr. Ross designed and manufactured a new custard machine. Frozen Custard is a premium ice cream produced to its finest



Orrin Bailey and Will Carne, CEO and President of Michigan Works! The Job Force Board, while introducing Ross's Manufacturing as Delta County's Business of the Year

quality through a Ross's machine.

Ross's began in a 1000 square foot building and is now efficiently utilizing 35,000 square feet of manufacturing and office space within the Escanaba City Limits. They currently hold five patents for specific parts or processes within their industry and have two more pending. Within five years they have grown from manufacturing 13 machines a year to 200 machines in 2002 and next year's projections are for 240 machines.

Ross's is anticipating their new prototype direct draw machine (that can be viewed here at Thornbury's, Ross's test site for new products,) to greatly increase sales and production levels in the near future. Ross's is not stopping with this prototype either, they are constantly looking at new products and processes within their niche. Their core competencies are refrigeration, electrical and sheet metal. Working with those core competencies are two full time R&D staff who work all day, every day, on new ideas and ways to improve current products.

Ross's customer service is at the heart of the company, in fact, Ross's manufacturing holds the national award "Culvers Circle of Excellence Award" for four years running. This is very important since Culver's Frozen Custard is one of Ross's largest accounts.

Ross's promotes customer satisfaction and really does listen to their customers. Two of the recent improvements made to their machines were based on customer feedback. Custard machines are now more than a foot shorter than they used to be which is safer and more ergonomically correct for people who work in custard stores. Additionally there are fewer parts inside the machines than there used to be which makes cleaning them a lot easier for employees of custard stores.

Working in Partnership with the M-TEC at Bay College. Ross's provides a unique value added service to their customers. Scoop School is where new owners of custard machines can come to learn the trade. They learn about the business, health and safety issues, store management, and of course, running custard machines. During an intense two and a half days they even get a tour of the factory so they can see first hand the care and quality that go into each machine. The current class is Scoop School number 27. Customers also get a chance to network with fellow storeowners and meet Ross's staff personally.

Not only can customers come to Ross's for training but also Ross's goes to the customers. They have people traveling nationally 1 or 2 days a week to support customers.

Employee satisfaction is also important to Ross's. In order to promote employee satisfaction, Ross's has instituted flexible work schedules. Ross's also promotes continuing education for employees. Workers can choose to work weeks of four ten-hour days or five eight-hour days. Work hours have a structured start and end time but employees are permitted to leave during the day to attend classes. At this time 1/3 of the workforce is taking advantage of this opportunity. The company feels that this allows individuals to advance and better themselves while providing the company with a more educated and satisfied workforce.

Ross's is committed to providing the safest working environment possible. They are growing from a light manufacturer into a medium manufacturer which involves a big change in tools used and personal protection needed. They are way ahead of the curve and have prioritized safety and protective



From left to right: Will Carne, Harold and Jean Ross of Ross's Manufacturing and Orrin Bailey

equipment and training for all workers. It is an informal motto of the company to "send them home with what they came with".

Ross's feels it's employees are its most important resource. They offer fair wages and generous benefits. It is a goal of the management team to strive to improve the benefit package the company can offer to its workforce and even in these times of change in the insurance industry, Ross's has continued to increase the availability of these benefits to their employees.

Each hourly employee at Ross's receives a quarterly bonus, up to 20% of their normal wages for the quarter, this usually works out to about one month salary and the employer even covers the income tax.

If you thought that was big, think again. Traditionally, Ross's shuts down production completely for one working week during the holidays and all employees are paid for the holiday time over and above their normal vacation and holiday time.

Congratulations Ross's Manufacturing!

M-TEC Provides Power Industrial Truck Training

The M-TECSM at Bay College recently held a Power Industrial Truck / Overhead Crane Regulations Training for 23 individuals from throughout the Upper Peninsula. This training, done by the Michigan OSHA Consultation Education and Training Division, was intended as a "Train the Trainer" session, providing the necessary information to individuals so that they may in turn be able to train their coworkers on the safety issues.

The Michigan OSHA's Consultation Education and Training Division is a division that provides training, consultation services, safety development programs and hazard surveys to businesses in order to ensure the safety of workers in Michigan. The task of the Consultation Education and Training division is not that of monitoring for general compliance, but that of observing a work environment to check for compliance before an issue can ever arise and training individuals on safety issues, as well as helping to develop safety programs for businesses.

"Many injuries that occur are not because the business is not in compliance with regulations," said Dan Maki, Occupational Safety Consultant, "injuries often occur in areas that there are no rules about, like repetitive movement injuries from poor ergonomics." Dan went on to mention that many of their consultation services are to address non-regulated safety issues.

The need for "Train the Trainer" sessions, such as the Power Industrial Truck / Overhead Crane Regulations Training, arose from changes made to Federal OSHA regulation two years ago. These changes require more training and certification than previously needed. Michigan made amendments to our own local requirements to address these changes and the Michigan requirements are now more stringent than those of Federal OSHA making it necessary for each forklift operator in Michigan to hold an operator's permit, and in addition to this, there are physical requirements needed to hold an operator's permit.

Clare Bedding

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Their niche is quality and that is apparent in the materials they use in the products. These materials include such components as: wool from New Zealand; high quality latex foam; jacquard fabrics from Europe; and Dacron fiber that will not compress, compact or migrate through the pad.

The factory is also run in an environmentally sound manner. On average, eighty to ninety percent of scrap is recycled. This includes: scrap foam and trim; cardboard, insulation pads and even scrap metal bands and defective springs. Everything is sorted, separated and bagged up to go off to its respective recycling facility all at no profit to the company. They just break even on the effort.

Clare Bedding supports our local community in a wide variety of ways. From supporting area school sewing classes with needed fabric and tours of the factory, to donations for fundraisers. The Alliance Against Violence and Abuse, Holy Name School, U.P. Whitetails, Delta Area Chamber of commerce, Eskimo Fan Club, Red Cross or other special projects, Clare Bedding is certainly a good corporate citizen and a real credit to our area.

"M-TEC sets up and provides many trainings like this one," said Jayne Bernard, Director of Safety Training at M-TEC, "lately we have also been doing many safety trainings on site at the businesses."

The customized *Anytime, Anywhere* training provided by M-TEC allows organizations to hold on site safety trainings customized for their own safety needs. This availability of training has a large economic impact on our area because it greatly decreases the business expenses of training workers by not requiring expensive travel and hotel stays.

Bernard encourages everyone with safety concerns to contact the M-TEC at Bay College to see what type of safety trainings are currently available, or can be created. "We are dedicated to worker safety and hope that our trainings will make the entire UP a safe place to live and work." Jayne Bernard, Director of Safety Training, can be reached by calling 1-800-221-2001 or 906 - 786-5802 X 1510.



UPEDA Annual Meeting

The Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance will hold their next meeting, which is their Annual meeting, on November 7, 2002 at the Best Western Pioneer Inn, Escanaba, Michigan. The meeting will start at 10:30 am EST / 9:30 am CST and last until approximately 3:00 pm EST / 2:00 pm CST. During the course of the meeting, members and guests will get an overview of the accomplishments of the organization during 2002 and an outlook on plans for 2003.

It is also a great opportunity to network with other business professionals, governmental agency representatives, County Economic Development Boards and Directors and other stakeholders in the economic health of the Upper Peninsula.

Members from throughout the Upper Peninsula have joined to promote planned sustained economic development in the Upper Peninsula. The membership consists of private companies, utilities, and local and regional economic development agencies from across the U.P. The organization is involved in a marketing campaign and other activities that are funded through a matching-fund grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Agency.

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.

Stakeholders in the economic health of the Upper Peninsula are encouraged to attend as guests. The costs for the meetings are \$15 for members and \$25 for guests.

Reservations are requested to allow for meeting and luncheon arrangements. Please make your reservations with Karen Olsen no later than October 28, if possible. As the organization is non-profit, reservations made, but not kept, will be billed to cover the costs of the arrangements.

For more information about UPEDA, contact Karen Olsen, Executive Director, at (906) 235-0108 or ko@superiormichigan.com. Visit our website at www.superiormichigan.com.

Certified for Greatness

Seventeen-year-old Amber Vincent of Gwinn learned some valuable life lessons on her last visit to the Marquette Michigan Works! Service Center. She learned how she can “dress for success” and how a friendly smile can translate into dollars for the local economy.

Amber participated in a Youth Works! workshop held in cooperation by the Lake Superior Community Partnership, the Marquette Area Regional Education Service Agency (MARESA) and Michigan Works!



Amber Vincent of Gwinn Learned through Youth Works! Workshops

The Job Force Board.

Held throughout the summer and continuing this fall, the day long workshops teach youth between the ages of 14 and 21 basic employability skills. Topics have included customer service, tourism, cleanliness, teamwork,

job attainment and job retention. There is no cost to attend the workshops.

Sandy Spoelstra, of the Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP) has taught the tourism and customer service sessions at the workshops. “Last year the service industry in Marquette County was asked: What do your workers need training on? They answered: how to show up on time, how to dress, how to count money and be polite,” said Spoelstra. “ This class answers those questions and creates a better-trained youth workforce that can them better serve the tourism industry.

The youths who attend must “pass” a series of quizzes to earn a certificate. These certificates can then be used by area employers as evidence that the youth is prepared for the workplace during the hiring process. Many area employers have signed an agreement to interview youths who obtain this certificate, and find it a helpful tool to ensure high-quality workers.

If you would like to know more about Youth Works, please call or stop into your local Michigan Works! Service Center. The addresses and phone numbers are listed on the back page of this issue.



River Cities Participates in Youth Works!

How can a small business hire a student without busting it’s budget? By tapping into a great service organized by Michigan Works!

Some students who are in the Youth Works! Initiative qualify for an eight-week session at area businesses and Youth Works! helps to prepare them for this experience.

The River Cities Regional Chamber of Commerce participates in the mentorship program that helps prepare the future workforce.

“This is a great partnership,” said Sylvie Nelson, President of the River Cities Regional Chamber of Commerce, “Students get work experience they would not otherwise have the opportunity to gain and are responsible for tasks that sometimes go undone for a while because we’re too busy with other projects.”

For Melissa Aderla, 18, of Menominee High School, who interned at the River Cities Regional Chamber of Commerce this past summer, this was her first work experience.

“I get to find out what it is like in the real

world,” she said. And it also gives her the opportunity to build her resume and reference network for future work opportunities.

During her internship, Melissa was responsible for inputting data into computers for the River Cities Regional Chamber of Commerce, for filing, creating flyers and other marketing tools, while learning skills that will come in handy once she is ready for the job market.

Michigan Works! also has various other services for the youth of our area. One such service are the day long workshops that teach youth basic employability skills. Topics have included customer service, tourism, cleanliness, teamwork, job attainment and job retention. There is no cost to attend the workshops.

Anyone interested in participating in the Youth Works! Initiative should call or visit their nearest Michigan Works! Service Center. The addresses and phone numbers are listed on the back page of this issue.

Bringing Youth & Business Together Imagine the Possibilities...

Youth Works! for BUSINESS

We provide your business with:

- ✓ Motivated Youth
- ✓ Applicant Screening
- ✓ Labor Market Information
- ✓ Employment Regulation Information
- ✓ Save your Business Time and Money
- ✓ Placement Services



Our Youth Applicant Pool:

- ✓ Attends a soft skills pre-employment workshop
- ✓ Are screened by a professional Michigan Works! staff member
- ✓ Are talented, motivated and responsible
- ✓ Possess a wide variety of skills

Youth Works! for YOUTH

We help youth with:

- ✓ Job Information
- ✓ Applications to local business
- ✓ Career Exploration
- ✓ Education Opportunities
- ✓ Access to Computer Lab
- ✓ Employment Career Resources
- ✓ Soft Skills Training

Contact your Nearest Michigan Works! Service Center- (Contact information is on the back) for more details. 1-800-285-WORKS