

MAY, 2010

## **Local Manufacturers are an Economic Engine for Mason County**

Michigan Manufacturing Week recognizes the significant contribution manufacturing makes to the state's economy and employment. Although industrial jobs fell eleven points in 12 months and Michigan lost 80,000 jobs as a result, 14,619 manufacturing companies employed 657,000 contributing 21 percent of Michigan's Gross State Product.

Service-related employment in the U.S. is growing while manufacturing is shrinking as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product. But that trend belies the resurgence of technology and innovation into the manufacturing environment. Companies analyze diversification into emerging industries such as homeland security, military equipment retrofitting, aerospace products, medical devices, and alternative energy components.

I have had the opportunity to tour several Ludington area companies in the past few months in an effort to understand the challenges our manufacturing community anticipates for the future. Manufacturing employment accounts for hundreds of stable, well-paying jobs with a payroll of \$80 million that has a positive impact on our economy.

Companies indicate experiencing modest increases in advance orders and production this year as compared to a disastrous 2008 and a flat 2009. Despite Michigan's business climate today, which ranks among the least attractive, local companies continue to show stronger signs of recovery than in other regions of the state and nationally.

It is not by accident or good luck that local companies buck these downward trends. The character and dedication of a talented workforce, the importance management and labor place on best industry practices and the value business owners place on community citizenship and involvement exemplify the reasons behind their strategic successes.

The depth of talent and skill runs deep in these companies. I am very impressed by the attention to quality, safety and efficiency demonstrated by associates across company organizational charts. Both management and labor have bought into a "best industry practices" philosophy implementing lean manufacturing, technical training and process certification. The quality of the products produced and the loyalty demonstrated by a skilled workforce confirms this philosophy is working.

Area manufacturers provide much more than wages and local taxes, though. Company owners have embraced a sense of community and citizenship that benefits everyone in Mason County. The level of generosity, involvement and commitment to education, healthcare, culture, the arts, recreation, tourism, the environment, commerce and economic development is a remarkable track record for any community of any size.

Join in celebrating with our manufacturers and their associates during Michigan's Manufacturing Week by acknowledging their contributions to our local economy and applauding their community-mindedness. We are very fortunate to have such high caliber manufacturers and dedicated workforce working together for the community.