

September 13, 2005- September 23, 2005

Media Packet

- **Hancock grad donates \$1M to school foundation**
- **Local resident starts up Ferris scholarship fund**
- **Ferris funds at issue**
- **College of Business welcomes students**
- **Fraternity raises money for American Cancer Society**
- **Giving pharmacist dispenses good cheer**
- **Former Midlander creator behind characters**
- **Dorm Décor; Styles evolve, but basics haven't changed**
- **Die Tech: Think 'Virtual' Tool & Die**
- **Starting All Over**
- **Join Ferris to 'Cover the Seal in Coins'**
- **Ferris student welding society donates to hurricane relief effort,**
- **College Night set for Monday**
- **Ferris 'covers seal in coins'**

Daily Mining Gazette

August 12, 2005

Hancock grad donates \$1M to school foundation

HANCOCK - John P Nelson, Hancock Public School class of 1937, was a quiet man.

School photographs of the football team show a tall, young Nelson, politely smiling from his place in the back row. School records reveal a good student who participated in many extracurricular activities and was well-liked by his classmates.

After graduating from high school, Nelson went on to earn a business degree from Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan. He worked as a CPA for General Foods, which later became part of the Philip Morris Companies Inc.

His life was one of a quiet, hard-working man, who never married or had children, but held his alma mater close to his heart and made provisions for it upon his death by setting up two trusts worth a total of \$1 million.

During his professional and retired years, he returned to his hometown regularly to attend Hancock Public Schools reunions.

Marjorie Maunder Symons, Hancock, a former classmate of Nelson's, remembers. "We called him Pete. His name was John Peter, we never knew him as John in school."

Symons remembers a common friendly relationship with Nelson, with whom she shared some classes and a few dances at the school.

"He was very quiet, never rambunctious or forthcoming. He just kind of kept to himself," said Symons, also of the class of 1937. "He was a nice, nice kid."

Symons frequently talked with Nelson when he returned to Hancock for school reunions. However, at the 2003 reunion, Symons noticed he wasn't there. "I remembered saying to my husband. 'Oh, Pete wasn't here this year.'"

At the time of Nelson's death in the spring in 2004, he was a resident of a rest home in Tucson, Ariz. He was laid to rest in a Hancock cemetery in August of last year.

"When we found out he had passed away, we didn't realize he had set up a trust for us," Vaara said.

Last fall, Vaara received a call from one of Nelson's nephews in Palm Springs, Fla., executor of Nelson's estate, informing him that Nelson had named Hancock Public Schools Foundation Inc. as beneficiary in a trust.

"We had no idea we were getting this money," Said John D. Vaara, Superintendent of Hancock Public Schools, who remembers Nelson as a friend of Gordon Barkell, former superintendent of the schools.

Vaara recalled that in discussions with Barkell at class reunions in recent years. -Nelson was concerned that the foundation was a sound entity. Barkell reassured him that the foundation had a board of elected officers that met quarterly, was audited regularly and adhered to all procedures required of a 501(c) 3 charitable organization. Barkell assured him "that level of integrity would remain.

At that time, neither Barkell nor Vaara received any indication from Nelson that he planned such a substantial donation to the foundation.

In the first trust, the foundation received 80 percent and Nelson's college alma mater, Ferris State University-, received 20 percent. Nelson requested the \$784,500 amount from the first trust be donated to the foundation in memo*, of his sister Verna Pearce, who preceded him in death. The second trust amounted to \$130,000 for a total donation of over \$1 million.

A branch of Wells Fargo in Tucson, Ariz., had been managing the trust funds on behalf of Nelson.

"A gift like this is just astonishing," said Ruth Ann Smith, foundation board president. "It's unfortunate we were unable to thank him," she said noting his role as a quiet benefactor, and adding. "maybe that was part of his wishes."

"He was religious about sending his contributions to us every year," said Vaara, stating that Nelson's donations prior to his death had been regular and had totaled, along with matched contributions from his employer, nearly \$82,000 Over 10 years

Nelson began giving to the endowment in 1990- with a gift of \$100. Each year, his gifts gradually grew from \$100 to \$1,000, then from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Each time, Nelson meticulously completed the paperwork necessary to ensure that his gift would be matched in amount by his employer.

He was a very quiet, unassuming man. He never asked anybody to make a big deal about his said Vaara.

Current value of the foundation's endowment fund is \$1.7 million. Monies spent are from the interest accrued only not from the fund value itself.

The purpose of the foundation is to enhance programs for all students in the Hancock Public Schools, according to Smith. If a teacher has a need for equipment or special teaching aids - for example, a telescope for an astronomy lesson in a science class - the teacher writes a proposal for the funds and submits that to the foundation. A committee

then reviews the grant applications each quarter and the foundation board votes on grants for the coming three months.

Requests for grants have been in core and non-core teaching areas. Grants have been for science, math, history and reading programs as well as music, arts and vocational industrial arts.

Stained glass window inserts in the elementary school library and a chrome-plating machine for the high school metal shop department are recent purchases made possible with grants from the foundation.

Approval is based in part, on the requested grant's ability to enhance the lives of the greatest number of students and the intent is to "spread the wealth" among the three schools.

"The schools have benefited so much from this fund. I can hardly imagine what we would do without it." said Smith, noting that three quarters of all purchases by the schools' libraries have also come from foundation grants.

The foundation has also been the source of college scholarships awarded to Hancock High School seniors. Last year, eight students received awards ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 toward their college or health care professional education, all foundation monies.

Vaara and Smith recognized other large donations to the schools. In 1999, Richard Her-manson, a former student of Hancock Public Schools, donated \$500,000 in money and equipment toward the computer labs in Houghton and Hancock schools. And in 1987, an anonymous donor gave \$20,000 to be used by the three Hancock public school libraries.

Although these large donations have been greatly appreciated, Vaara and Smith are quick to recognize the importance and value of the many smaller donations the foundation receives.

"The huge amounts of individual donations we receive all add up," said Vaara.

Smith agreed that the many, individual donations of \$10 or \$20 to the foundation every year in memory of a cherished teacher or classmate are all valuable.

The foundation is considering memorializing Nelson in its campaign to renovate the seating in the middle school auditorium, the site, of many special occasions such as graduation, concerts and plays. Individual chairs are being re-padded and replaced with a plaque memorializing or honoring the individual the donor specifies.

Of the 220 chairs in the center section, 160 have already been sold. The foundation is planning to purchase a row of chairs and refurbish them in memory of Nelson and his sister.

If any former classmate or friend would like to contribute any photos or remembrances of Nelson to the Hancock Public Schools, they may contact Vaara at his office at 417 Quincy St., or call the school at 487-5925.

The Commercial Record

August 25, 2005

Local resident starts up Ferris scholarship fund

BIG RAPIDS - Non-traditional students attending Ferris State University may apply for scholarship assistance thanks to the generosity of Ferris alumnus Terry Stewart and his wife, Cynthia, of Saugatuck. The couple has established the Terry L. and Cynthia R.

Stewart Scholarship Endowment Fund that will assist non-traditional students who are pursuing higher education.

Stewart returned to college as a non-traditional student and received the support and encouragement he needed to complete his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degree. In return, he chose to help future generations of non-traditional students as they follow a similar path he once traveled.

The knowledge and skills Stewart developed during his time at Ferris provided the basis he needed to achieve personal success, including establishing his own company and contributing significantly to his community and his profession.

"I was married and had two children when I went to Ferris. Our scholarship gives preference to non-traditional students, because I know how hard it can be to go back to school," said Stewart on why he and his wife decided to establish the endowment.

Candidates for the scholarship must be enrolled as a full-time student in a program offered by Ferris State University at any of its campuses, must have successfully completed a minimum of two full semesters with a 2.0 grade point average or better and be a non-traditional student as defined by one or more of the following circumstances: are over age 23; are returning to school from the workforce; are members of a military service; are raising a family; are single parents; or are married with or without children.

For more information or to make a gift to the Terry L. and Cynthia R. Stewart Scholarship Endowment, contact Debra Jacks, director of

Planned Giving, at (231) 591-3817 or jacksd@ferris.edu. Details about establishing scholarships or endowments may be obtained from the Advancement Office at (231) 591-3825.

Pioneer

September 14, 2005

Ferris funds at issue

Deal includes money increases for Grand Valley, Saginaw, & Oakland.

LANSING (AP) - State funding for Grand Valley State, Saginaw Valley State and Oakland universities would increase by at least 7 percent in the budget year that begins in a few weeks, according to a spending breakdown obtained Monday by The Associated Press.

The \$1.73 billion higher education budget to fund the state's 15 public universities for 2005-06 was among the spending items hashed out late last week by Republican legislative leaders and Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm's administration.

According to an analysis of the higher education spending agreement by the nonpartisan Senate Fiscal Agency, the top three funding increases for universities range from 7.1 percent for Saginaw Valley State in University Center to 7.5 percent for Grand Valley State in Allendale.

Oakland University in Rochester would receive 7.2 percent more under the agreement. Locally, for Ferris State University, the numbers are less promising.

"The figures outlined in the state's proposed higher education funding agreement are preliminary and still in flux, but what we have seen thus far reflects a budget reduction for Ferris State University," President David L. Eisler said. "We are pleased; however, there are plans to adopt the House Funding Formula which we strongly support."

Next year's higher education budget is intended to give each university at least \$3,650 per student, said Sen. Mike Goschka, a Brant Republican and head of the Senate Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee.

Despite the large increase for Grand Valley State, Goschka pointed out that the school would receive only \$3,302 per student, the lowest amount among the public universities. Oakland and Saginaw Valley would receive \$3,713 per student, slightly more than the \$3,650 minimum.

"Parity has not yet been achieved, but we moved in that direction," Goschka said.

The University of Michigan and Michigan State University each would see their state funding increase by 0.4 percent under the new agreement and Wayne State University would receive 0.2 percent more. Despite the smaller increases, all three universities would get at least \$8,139 per student.

The spending agreement would provide about \$79 million more for higher education than this year's budget, an increase of 5 percent. It covers funding for university

operations and scholarships, including the Michigan Merit Award for students who perform well on state standardized tests.

Mike Boulus of the Presidents Council, which represents the 15 state universities, said the budget agreement is the best universities could have hoped for in another tight budget year.

"There are some (universities) that are grouching and some that are pleased. Overall, the budget basically is flat," Boulus said.

Giving a few of the growing mid-sized public universities a larger percentage increase while providing smaller percentage increases to the more well-known research institutions was a compromise between a proposal Granholm laid out earlier this year and those approved by the House and Senate.

The House and Senate, both controlled by Republicans, approved plans that would have given a bigger boost to schools that have traditionally received fewer state dollars, including Grand Valley State and Oakland. But they also would have cut funding for Wayne State and Northern Michigan universities by at least 5 percent.

Granholm sharply criticized the Republican-approved plans. Members of her administration said the plans were politically motivated and would have taken away funding from universities in areas represented by Democrats and given boosts to those in areas represented by Republicans.

Greg Bird, state budget office spokesman, called the budget agreement a solid compromise. The governor was able to avoid large cuts for Northern Michigan and Wayne State, he said.

"All the parties involved were able to get something they felt was critical," Bird said.

The House was able to win approval for its university funding formula based on enrollment, research activities and the number of degrees granted. But the formula will not go into effect until July 1, 2006, and details about how it will be used to distribute state funding in the current and upcoming budget years were unclear Monday.

Pioneer

September 14, 2005

College of Business welcomes students

BIG RAPIDS - Faculty and staff of the College of Business of Ferris State University will welcome students back Thursday evening with a special celebration.

The inaugural Celebration Fest is open to all COB students, faculty and staff; participants are asked to bring their Bulldog ID. During the event, those present will be treated to a picnic and live music from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Celebration Fest was named after the statue "Celebration" located near the College of Business, explained Amy Buse, recruiting and retention coordinator for the COB.

The event is patterned after similar events run by other schools on campus, but the COB decided to add music to the mix.

"The music is provided by the Music Industry Management students," Buse said.

Also, the COB Leadership Advisory Board donated money for prizes and treats. The largest prize is a \$500 scholarship; others include clothing and gift certificates.

"It gives the students the opportunity to meet with professional business organizations on campus for our college," said Knickcole Hall, COB student delegate.

Added Buse, "We're combining the picnic and our Professional Business Organization Day into one event."

Pioneer

September 15, 2005

Fraternity raises money for American Cancer Society

BIG RAPIDS - The brothers of the Theta Theta Chapter of the Sigma Pi fraternity will be up and down over the next three days - but their spirits won't be.

The fraternity, composed of students at Ferris State University, is conducting a three day teeter-totter-athon to raise money for the American Cancer Society. Beginning at noon Tuesday and continuing through noon Thursday, Sigma Pi members will be on a teeter-totter in the quad on the Big Rapids campus.

"Some of the brothers had family members who had been affected by cancer," said Sigma Pi Vice President Adam Dibble. "One brother's mother actually passed away ... we wanted to do something out of the ordinary to draw attention and raise money."

The group's goal is \$3,000, to be presented to the American Cancer Society Saturday afternoon during the Relay for Life event at Mitchell Creek.

Borrowing the teeter-totter idea from another chapter at Western Michigan University who used it for another purpose, the local members began to plan. Each person of the 35-member chapter will take two two-hour shifts on the teeter-totter.

"That way, everyone will still make classes and meetings," Dibble said. "Seventy-two hours is a lot to cover."

The university is lending support to the teeter-totter effort, with Vice President for Student Affairs Daniel Burcham participating for the first five minutes.

"He's contributed in the past and he was more than willing," Dibble said. "He's helped us out a lot."

Sigma Pi members are optimistic they will reach their goal.

"Right now, we've got \$600 and it hasn't even started yet," Dibble said Tuesday morning. "I just want to thank the faculty and staff of Ferris for being very welcoming and supportive. ... I want the community to notice the Greek community giving back - and not just our chapter."

Flint Journal

September 15, 2005

Giving pharmacist dispenses good cheer

CLIO - If Bernie Borden had his way, he wouldn't be the subject of this column.

But people like Borden are too important to overlook. In an age where people kick, yell and scream to draw attention to themselves, Borden stands out simply by being himself. Perhaps the only person in Clio friendlier than Bernie is Betty, his wife of 54 years.

The longtime owner and operator of Borden's Pharmacy (now retired, sort of) is an icon of the community

The city's softball diamond is named for Bernie, and you can't enter Clio from the west without passing over the Bernie Borden Memorial overpass at M-57 over I-75.

From sponsoring Little League and softball teams to the revitalization of a local park, Bernie is a man the people of Clio know they can depend on.

"There is just something about Bernie that always makes you feel better after being around him," said Tom Skinner, a local television and radio broadcaster who grew up in Clio.

"I still remember my mother talking about the first time she met him. We had just moved to Clio, and she went into the pharmacy to fill out a prescription.

"The next time she came, he remembered her name. Hi, Mrs. Skinner, how are you doing today?" That he would take the time to remember her name made quite an impression." Remembering a person's name may not seem like much. But it's amazing how those simple things can make a tremendous impact and, more importantly, inspire others.

"I think people like Bernie because he always has something nice to say," Betty Borden said. "He is very kind and understanding, and what I have enjoyed about him most is that he has a great sense of humor."

Bernie, 76, may have missed his calling. Instead of becoming a pharmacist, he could have become a comedian. Here are a few of his one-liners:

- On having a bridge overpass and softball field named for him: "I'm more proud of having the softball field named after me. ANYBODY can have a bridge named after them."
- On how he ended up marrying Betty: "I used to work for Betty's dad at his grocery store. It didn't work out too well, though. He fired me. But that's OK, I got even. ... I married his daughter."

- An avid softball player, Bernie plays for a 75-and-over team sponsored by a Detroit area funeral home: "The team slogan is 'If you die on the field, you get a 10 percent discount on your funeral.'"
- On studying pharmacy at what was then called Ferris Institute of Technology: "It took me so long to graduate that by the time I did, it was Ferris, State University."

Of course, Bernie failed to mention that he left school to join the Navy before returning to finish his degree. But that is one of the beautiful things about Bernie - he never takes himself too seriously.

From 1966 until his retirement in January, Bernie provided his neighbors and customers a friendly smile and service - even if it meant getting up in the middle of the night to fill a prescription.

Even though he retired, you can still find him most days helping out in the pharmacy at 415 W Vienna Road. While everyone looks up to Bernie, he credits his success to Betty, 74, his inspiration and the love of his life.

"I owe everything to her," Bernie said. "There is no way I would've been able to enjoy the life I have had without her. She takes real good care of me."

For their 53rd wedding anniversary last year, Bernie sent Betty 53 roses.

"They were the brightest, most robust roses I've ever seen," said Skinner, who had dropped by to pick up Bernie to attend a basketball game. "When I found out that it was their anniversary, I told Bernie that I felt bad about taking him out to a basketball game."

"Why do you think I got her 53 roses?" Bernie asked.

Midland Daily News

September 15, 2005

Former Midlander creator behind characters

Playing video games is not Robb Waters' favorite pastime. Yet Waters has made a career of creating characters that populate some of the electronic game industry's most successful products.

"I mostly do character design," said the former Midlander, who currently resides in Boston, Mass. "The designer gives me a specification for a character, whether it be a monster or a hero. He would give me general criteria for the character - for example, whether it's big and AMC bulky, or thin and wiry - and I take it from there."

Waters has been in the electronic game industry for 12 years and for the past five years has been employed by a company in Quincy, Mass., called Irrational Games Inc. He holds a bachelor's degree in illustration from Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids.

When he was younger, his career goal was to be a comic book illustrator. "I grew up loving comics and superheroes," he said, "but it's a hard industry to get into. At first, Irrational Games' products were for (personal computers) exclusively, but now we're branching out into console games."

Other companies Waters worked for are Looking Glass Technologies in Lexington, Mass. (five years) and Crystal Dynamics Inc. in Menlo Park, Calif. During his one-year stint with Crystal Dynamics, he worked on a PlayStation game called Akuji the Heartless. For Looking Glass he worked on System Shock, Flight Unlimited and Thief. "Eventually, I got burned out doing video games and went back to working on paintings and comics," he said.

In his spare time, Waters likes to do paintings of original and established characters, and he's working on a series of toy portraits that he plans to show in galleries. He usually paints in oil.

Waters is the son of Midlanders Paul and Bonnie Waters. He graduated from Midland High School in 1988. His education there and at Northeast Intermediate School helped him develop as an artist. Teachers Bill Adair and Carol Lewin were especially influential, he said.

Timing is important in the electronic game industry. Waters said Irrational Games' Freedom Force series came out at a good time - 2002 - and it has sold well. He has conceptualized and designed all the characters in that series.

"It's my baby," he said. "The cool thing about Freedom Force is it pays homage to the 1960s era of comics, when comics were campy. One of my favorite Freedom Force characters is a tragic hero named Man-Bot - a man trapped in a robotic suit."

Man-Bot is Ted Taylor; a millionaire playboy who comes into contact with Energy X. Taylor's energy builds up within him and explodes, destroying everything around him. His scientist brother offers to help Ted contain his energy with a special metal suit. The player controls four heroes at a time and uses them to combat super-villains and thwart their schemes. Why, with such exciting characters and story lines, doesn't Waters enjoy playing video games himself?

"I don't have the patience for puzzle-solving," he said. "I could shoot-em-up for 10 minutes, but that's about all I have the patience for."

Irrational Games, Inc. was founded in 1997 to bring RPG and strategy games to the PC and next-generation console markets. The company made a name for itself with its work on System Shock 2. In addition to its studio in Massachusetts, Irrational Games has a studio in Canberra, Australia.

The Freedom Force series and other games created by Irrational Games can be found online and in any stores that sell video games, Waters said.

Sturgis Journal

September 16, 2005

Dorm Décor; Styles evolve, but basics haven't changed

Most students are back at college now, but what do they pack for their experience in the ivy covered halls of higher education?

Maybe a better question is what aren't they taking? They're leaving mom and dad at home, but that's about it.

Computers and cell phones have become standard-issue packing. And of course they have the necessities like clothes and bedding. But beyond that, students like creature comforts, and lots of them. And for the most part, guys and girls pack differently.

This fall, Whitney Kane, a Sturgis graduate, is a freshman at Spring Arbor University. She took a couch, a stereo, posters and a lamp. Her roommate will bring a mini-fridge, TV with DVD and VCR, and a floor lamp.

Planning things out with a roommate is pretty normal.

Gwen Byler of Bronson is back at Bethel College in Mishawaka, Ind., for her third year of college. Being longtime friends with her roommates, all she had to do beyond the usual, was to get a bed spread to match the other girls in her apartment. Byler's mom said the girls also decorated with tulle and silk flowers to make their small dwelling homier.

Ashley Milliman of Sturgis is a junior at Spring Arbor. She took a futon, recliner and love seat.

"We like to have a lot of places to sit," she said.

They also have "an early '90s DC Talk poster. Signed. Framed," she said. Milliman found a paper lantern to soften the harsh fluorescent lighting in their room and, she said with a smile, "matching bathroom accessories."

Her younger brother, Adam Milliman, is a freshman at Bethel College. He kept his accessories to food and entertainment.

"Adam took an Xbox, poker box, movies, a fridge, microwave and candy. Lots of candy," Ashley said.

And according to their mom, it's a lot less stuff than his sister hauls out the door. Food and entertainment also seem important to Ryan Charles, a Bronson grad and sophomore at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. His friends said Charles took "a blender to make smoothies, video games, a guitar and a sitar."

Some guys are more domestic, like Erik Kwiatek of Bronson. He's finished with his two-year program at Ferris State University, but last year he was a resident assistant.

Grand Rapids Business Journal

September 19, 2005

Die Tech: Think 'Virtual' Tool & Die

WYOMING - First, there are a few things that Die Tech Services isn't. It isn't a temp agency. Even though its core competency is temporary employment, it is no more a temp agency than, say, a construction management firm. Nor is Die Tech an actual tool and die shop. And it isn't out to take other people's jobs.

Die Tech could be described as a full service tool and die shop without the shop. The 3-year-old contracting firm quite possibly represents the next generation of tool and die.

"A lot of guys want to be in one spot; they want to wake up Monday morning and know where they're going," said founder and President James Warner. "That's nice, but everything is changing. We've realized that it's up and down, especially in West Michigan. It's up right now, but ...

Perhaps more than any other manufacturing segment, tool and die has accustomed itself to layoffs. It is, quite literally, a business of feasts and famines.

"When a shop calls someone in to hire them, the first thing you hear is, 'How long are you going to need me?'" Warner said. "Then I'm surprised when guys get laid off and sit and wait for them to call back - no health insurance, no income. We put them to work."

In his 22 years as a journeyman die maker, Warner has been laid off five times. His last employer, Autodie international, laid him off three times, including the "big one" in 2002, after a decade on the job.

In the year leading up to that fateful exit, Autodie had begun contracting out its journeymen across the country. Warner found himself working across the Midwest and the South, from Detroit to Kentucky and Tennessee. Other employees were sent all the way to Mexico. Autodie had figured out that when it's slow in West Michigan, it might be booming in Georgia. And, through much of the South - where the new domestics have settled - there is virtually no tool and die experience.

When the sweeping, post 9/11 layoffs came in 2002, Warner and fellow pink-slipper Casey Darby, Die Tech vice president, decided to try their hand at the contracting field. A month after they incorporated, the duo landed work at a die shop in Toledo, Ohio.

They spent 10 months there and began rotating their out-of-work colleagues through the project.

"At first, it's really different when you take off to go out of town," Warner said. "Some guys really like it. One guy doesn't like to work in the summer - he has a boat on the lake - and during wintertime Warner tries to bring the workers home once a month, rotating a pair each week. In the second year, the founders worked less in the shops

and more in the office, recruiting and hiring journeymen and bringing in, new customers. The company recently moved from a Plainfield Avenue office to a new location in Wyoming.

Gordon Fletcher, a 21-year journeyman and Autodie alum, has been with Die Tech since the beginning.

"I don't think it's for everybody," he said of the travel. "But I like that it's a different atmosphere every time; it's not the same old grind and the same old people. I'm learning something new every day, and I'm going to cities I never thought I'd go to in my life."

This week, Fletcher is finishing up a project in Grand Rapids, where he has been on site for about a month. Before that, he was in Greenville, S.C., for a three-month stint.

Today, Die Tech has a stable of over 30 journeymen for its contracting business, all with at least 10 years experience, and has added placement and training services. It has relocated dozens of West Michigan journeymen to fill permanent needs in other parts of the Midwest and South.

"Right off the bat, there has always been demand," Warner said. "They want people to move south - there is a shortage of skilled labor there. The South is so far behind. They're trying to figure out ways to train die makers because they don't have an educational base."

Warner visited a community college in Alabama this past spring at the behest of Hyundai engineers. The school and automaker wanted help establishing a training program, so Warner directed them to Grand Rapids Community College. The Alabama College eventually recruited an instructor from elsewhere in Michigan to launch an apprenticeship program.

In addition to displaced journeymen, Die Tech is training new and potential journeymen for placement in West Michigan and elsewhere. This fall the firm launched its own program through GRCC. Warner is considering building a training area in the back of the office.

Warner said the firm is also working with companies on training. Some customers don't have Class A experience, for example, so Die Tech will send journeymen with those skill sets to perform the work and teach the skills.

Other customers are contracting solely for the purpose of program launches, sending Die Tech to the site and keeping die makers in the shop.

"When a customer calls us up, we ask them specifically what they are looking for," Warner said. "And we fill that need. This is a very hard skill. Guys have 10 years of

experience - journeyman die makers. You can't just take someone off the street and let them run with it."

He said he would like to figure out ways to connect West Michigan to Die Tech's other markets.

"Mercedes, Honda, all these guys are down there fighting for die makers, and a lot of it is getting built overseas," he said. "People ask where Grand Rapids is. And I have to ask them where they get their dies built. I've got an attachment I send out with the names of a bunch of die shops, to give them the opportunity to send out bids.

"Had some customers here from Korea. (I) told them they'd be surprised - there is so much talent here, but no one realizes it. I keep saying they should go to West Michigan."

Grand Rapids Business Journal

September 19, 2005

Starting All Over

Two machinists, both employed and seeking advancement through education, were obviously nervous - terrified, really - on the first day of classes at Grand Rapids Community College. One said to the other, "I'm so glad you're in this class, because I thought I'd be the only guy my age in here."

Overhearing the exchange was Don Green, dean of Ferris State University in Grand Rapids, which shares-the Applied Technology Center with GRCC. He was so struck by the comment that he said to the machinists, "I want you to know, I've done a fair amount of research on adult students in college, and-they're typically the best students in the class."

Older students bring a strong experiential base, Green explained, which enables them to take experience and apply it to theory and principles - a powerful combination.

"Even though it is hard for older students to come back into the classroom, they have the opportunity to be very successful," he said.

While the above scenario involved two individuals who had jobs, many adult students returning to college are not employed and are in the classrooms, to better prepare themselves for future employment. It is difficult to say that a layoff is worse for one segment over another. Whether employees are middle management, bus drivers or die makers, they're all losing their jobs. But an individual with a college, specialized training or certification clearly is better prepared to enter the job market than an unskilled worker - especially those accustomed to a high wage.

In 2004 there were 15 Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notifications (WARNs) issued in West Michigan, and this year there have been nine more. A WARN is a notice from the employer to the state that activates a response team from Michigan Works! Michigan Works! services include unemployment compensation, job bank services and other services for veterans and the disabled.

"Most people start with looking for a job," said Maureen Downer, program manager for Michigan Works! for Kent and Allegan counties. "If they can get a paycheck, life will be rosy and they don't need us a whole lot.

"When they're not successful, they start looking at training. This is when they might look to switch careers."

Through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Trade Act, Michigan Works! can provide financial assistance for retraining. Both options require the training to lead directly to employment, such as a certificate program at Grand Rapids Community College or Davenport University. The WIA offers one year of school, up to \$5,000. The

Trade Act, for workers affected by NAFTA, provides two years of schools up to \$6,500 annually, with more funds available if needed.

The WIA and Trade Act do highlight the importance of location. A \$6,500 stipend - would easily cover the full cost of a resident's associate's degree from GRCC. But there is no community college available in Allegan County. Other options, such as Davenport, University of Phoenix or even GRCC's non-resident enrollment, will mean out-of-pocket costs.

Michigan Works! also can provide on-the-job training support, whereby the state reimburses an employer for the cost of training, up to \$4 an hour.

In the WIA program last year in Kent and Allegan counties, 12) workers opted for on-the-job training and 250 for classroom training. Less than half of the 814 workers enrolled sought training at all. In the Trade Act program, 467 of the 529 enrolled took classes, and 16 were in the on-the-job training program.

For workers enrolled in a tuition assistance program through an employer, the funds can be used to finish a four-year degree, Downer said. Many Bosch employees, for example, took advantage of this option.

Only in such a scenario can the funds be applied toward a four-year degree, Downer said.

"Our interest is not in sending people to school," she said. "School is a tool to getting people a job. It's nice to get an education, but it's not the be-all and end-all. "And they're going to want and need a job. Most folks are not going to be able to stay out of the work force for four years."

As noted, there are several barriers separating unskilled displaced workers from a four-year degree, but perhaps the greatest barrier is psychological.

"When someone has been laid off, if you go to them and say, 'I've got a four-year degree for you,' that's a daunting task," Green said.

In Grand Rapids, FSU has ladder programs available for displaced and unsatisfied workers seeking entry into another field. They have the opportunity to pursue a one year skill certificate, then an associate's degree, and later a bachelor's degree, as time and interest permit.

FSU President David Eisler has proposed this model to the Michigan Department of Labor to aid the displaced workers from Electrolux, Tower Automotive and Straits Steel & Wire in Greenville.

"We want to take a person that wants to move into a new field and give them enough education where they can have an entry-level position," Eisler said. "Train

them to be a phlebotomist - that puts them in the health-care industry. Or design a credential for automotive, construction, childhood development.

"They'll discover if that is the right environment they want to work in. Then they can move on to a better job."

He has hopes of developing a similar program for Hurricane Katrina refugees.

Pioneer

September 21, 2005

Join Ferris to 'Cover the Seal in Coins'

BIG RAPIDS - The Ferris State University Student Alumni Gold Club will be sponsoring an event entitled "Cover the Seal in Coins" on Thursday from 6 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The goal of this event is to cover the Ferris seal with coins and proceeds will benefit the United Way campaign for Hurricane Katrina Relief.

TV 9&10 also will be broadcasting its morning show from 6 to 8 a.m. at the Quad highlighting the event and the community is invited to rise early and join the SAGC as the students kick off their fund-raiser.

Pioneer

September 22, 2005

Ferris student welding society donates to hurricane relief effort

Ferris donates: The Ferris State University student chapter of the American Welding Society made two donations totaling \$300 to the United Way benefiting hurricane Katrina relief efforts. The funds were generated by donations from its student members; with the student chapter matching all student donations. Included are Ferris Vice President for Student Affairs Daniel Burcham, Ferris AWS Advisor Jeff Carney, AWS Secretary Ray Angus, AWS Treasurer Jacob Shorey, Mecosta Osceola United Way Executive Director Betty Seelye, AWS Publicity Chairman Jason Rebarchik, AWS President Ben Newcomb and AWS Vice President Will Chemin.

Pioneer

September 22, 2005

College Night set for Monday

BIG RAPIDS- The Mecosta-Osceola Intermediate School District Counselors Association, in cooperation with Ferris State University, will host the annual College Night program at the Big Rapids Holiday Inn Monday evening from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

This free event will allow students and their parents to meet representatives from 40 different colleges and universities, as well as some military branches. These college representatives will be happy to answer questions about costs, academic programs, support services, environment, size and location. Other professionals will be available to answer questions about financial aid, ACT or SAT and university athletics.

Students interested in attending who need further details should contact their high school guidance office, Ferris State University toll free at 1-800-4FERRIS or visit the College Night Web site at www.ferris.edu/admissions/collegenight absentee ballot for the Tuesday Big Rapids Public Schools bond issue election.

Pioneer

September 23, 2005

Ferris 'covers seal in coins'

Fund-raiser: The Ferris State University Student Alumni Gold Club kicked off its "Cover the Seal in Coins" fund raiser bright and early on Thursday, gathering at the university seal in the Campus Quad- outside the Rankin Student Center. Donating change are Assistant Director of Alumni Relations and SAGC Advisor Mary Kay Maclver, Kahla Smith, Samantha Krause, -and, Megan Dusnik, of SAGC, Matt Eickhoff, of Student Leadership and Activities, Director of Alumni Relations Jeremy Mishler and SAGC Vice President Bret Muter.

Proceeds from the event will be tallied by Karl Linebaugh and his Chemical Bank staff and will benefit the university's Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. Also donating time to the fund-raiser was Bulldog Radio; whose staff donated entertainment and promotional services.