

## Seasonal hiring cuts jobless rate

Seasonal hiring caused unemployment rates in 11 of Michigan's 12 major labor market areas to drop in March, according to the Michigan Employment Security Commission.

Richard Simmons Jr., director of MESCC, said that declines in unemployment among Michigan's major labor markets followed the statewide trend in March.

The seasonally unadjusted March jobless rate dropped by half a percentage point to 8.4 percent from 8.9 percent in February. The number of unemployed workers fell by 17,000 to 376,000, and the number of workers with jobs rose by 50,000 to 4,088,000.

Seasonal hiring gains in such industries as retail trade, services and construction caused unemployment rates to decline in all areas from February to March, except for the Upper Peninsula (U.P.), Simmons explained.

The Flint area showed the largest in jobless rate — from 10.8 percent in February to 9.6 percent in March. Simmons said increases in Flint's services, construction and wholesale and retail trade industries more than offset losses in the motor vehicle and fabricated metals sectors.

At 4.4 percent, the Ann Arbor area had the lowest March unemployment rate among all of the areas.

The Upper Peninsula's unemployment rate remained stable from February to March at 14.1 percent and was the highest among the labor markets.

## State housing sales dip Interest rates stable; pace steady

Housing sales in Michigan for the first quarter this year were 3.8 percent below a year earlier, according to the Michigan Association of Realtors.

The slight dip in sales reflects a leveling off of the fast-paced buying of a year ago resulting from the low interest rates in almost 10 years.

"The 1986 increase was dramatic," said Elizabeth (Libby) Wright, MAR president. "A year ago, we showed a 20-percent increase statewide over 1985."

"This year, with interest rates remaining fairly stable during the first quarter, the industry is back to a more steady pace, having met the demands of those homebuyers who were holding out for lower rates."

WRIGHT ALSO NOTED THAT THE DE-

cline in sales reflects a problem real estate agents throughout the state are experiencing: a shorter supply of homes available for sale. Real estate boards participating in the survey all noted a diminishing supply of new listings.

"Our members report homes are selling faster than they can be replaced with new listings," said Wright. This demand for housing in turn contributes to an increase in the average sale price, as more buyers are competing for fewer homes.

The association reports the average sale price went up 8 percent over the same period last year.

The average price of a home was the most expensive in the Livingston County area, \$78,115, up 84 percent.

THE BATTLE CREEK area offered

the lowest price, \$40,813, representing a price decline of nearly 10 percent. The Battle Creek area also reported the highest increase in sales, up 35 percent over the previous year.

The Flint-Saginaw area experienced the steepest decline in sales, 28 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

"These figures reflect the economic activity in the areas," Wright noted. "Battle Creek's stable employment base is evident in the strong increase. On the other hand, the concern and uncertainty in the Flint-Saginaw area regarding automotive jobs has turned up in the sales decrease."

Overall, there were 15,887 homes sold so far this year in the 15 regions surveyed by the association.

## 6 engineering grants awarded

Six Michigan engineering schools received a total of \$46,810 in cash grants this week from the Society of Manufacturing Engineers' Education Foundation. The funds are for programs in manufacturing engineering.

Foundation president Philip R. Marsilius, president of The Product Machine Co. of Bridgeport, Conn., said the six Michigan schools and their awards are:

- Lawrence Institute of Technology, Southfield — \$3,500 for curriculum development.
- University of Detroit — \$1,350 cash grant for faculty development program; also Autodesk software.
- University of Michigan-Dearborn — \$1,250 library award for purchase of videotapes and publications.

- GMI Engineering & Management Institute, Flint — \$10,575 capital equipment grant, \$4,000 for student development and \$1,250 for curriculum development.

- Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo — \$10,100 capital equipment grant, \$6,000 student development grant, \$1,495 curriculum development grant, and Autodesk software package.

- Lake Superior State, Sault Ste. Marie — \$4,000 curriculum development grant, \$3,000 capital equipment grant and PMX software.

The SME Foundation grants are designed to spur new developments in manufacturing technology and productivity and to further manufacturing engineering as an educational discipline.

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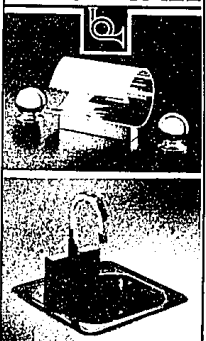
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