

# GM workers see 'Life After Fiero'

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

Many of their students were 45 years old with 18 years on the job. They had been earning \$35,000 and more a year. And they thought they were doing a good job with General Motors' new "team" concept of making Pontiac Fieros.

"They were devastated by the news," said Brenda Vesprini of Oak-

land Community College's Business and Professional Institute (BPI). "This was an atypical plant. They had done what they were challenged to do."

The news, last March, was that GM would close its last assembly plant in the city of Pontiac in September, and the 820 hourly workers will be out of work later this summer.

"The college did some heroic

things for the workers, meeting its responsibility to the community," OCC Chancellor R. Stephen Nicholson told the board of trustees Monday.

WHAT OCC DID, teaming up with Oakland University, was to set up a 10-session program to guide the workers to "Life After Fiero," said Vesprini. It was paid for by a joint GM-UAW venture serving displaced workers.

The program was a series of counseling sessions covering benefits, evaluating one's own abilities, job market trends, writing resumes, interviewing for jobs and retraining.

"We hired a full-time temporary coordinator and nine part-time career specialists," she said. The counselors wore casual clothing to put the workers at ease.

"We decided to involve the team captains so they could sell their own workers on it," Vesprini said, refer-

ring to the Japanese-style supervision system GM used in the Fiero plant.

ONLY THE FIRST session of two hours was mandatory for the workers. Altogether, 700 attended it at the end of April.

It was an explanation of benefits and an overview of what was ahead, introduced by plant manager Tim Lee and personnel director Cheri Alexander.

The next three sessions, all in one day, covered the Michigan Occupational Information System (MOIS), evaluating natural interests and abilities and job market trends. It was attended by 525. Another 231, many close to retirement, formally refused — "signed off," she said.

"Some had never thought about developing a resume," she said.

Next the workers met one-on-one with counselors to interpret their career interest scores and figure out

the next step. Each wound up with an "employability development plan," Vesprini said. By the end of June, 260 workers had had such sessions.

This week workers began sessions in job applications, resume writing, how to look for work and finding where to get retraining. These, too, are one-on-one sessions. OCC's work will be done by Aug. 5, she said.

Vesprini said written comments have been largely positive. "I liked the feedback from the class. This class showed there is life after Fiero," one worker wrote.

OCC trustee David Hackett added, "I'm glad this was in plain language. So often educators talk in jargon and turn people off."

IN OTHER curriculum developments, the board of trustees approved a contract with Electronic Data Systems Corp., which will provide short courses for OCC in corporate graphics systems.

# Landfill site plan advances

Even as it moves toward building an incinerator, Oakland County is seeking another landfill site for trash.

The county board's finance committee last week freed up \$120,000 toward acquisition of a landfill and approved hiring the firm of Rogers, Golden and Halpern Inc. of Philadelphia to select a site.

Total budget for the site, over two years, is expected to be \$450,000.

The action was proposed by the Municipal Solid Waste Board on behalf of member cities and townships.

The agreement calls for the firm to report not only on soil and water supply conditions but on bridge capacity, wetlands, endangered species habitat, woods, scenic areas and archeological sites.

# Volunteers are needed

Big Brothers/Big Sisters, 20755 Greenfield, Southfield, is seeking adult volunteers for one-on-one relationships with children from single-parent homes. Individuals willing to provide understanding and guidance on a long-term basis, a few hours a week, are encouraged to pursue this placement. Call 569-0600 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Michigan Cancer Foundation, 110 E. Warren, Detroit, needs volunteer information specialists for the telephone and referral system. Volunteers who have experienced a diagnosis of breast cancer are also needed to provide peer support for newly diagnosed patients. Call Cathy Cameron, 833-0710, Ext. 245, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays.

Children's Hospital of Michigan,

3901 Beaubien, Detroit, needs patient care volunteers, 15 and older. Persons will assist staff in caring for children and with play activities. Four-hour weekly commitments between 7 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. Volunteer clerical positions for photocopying, filing and answering phones are also available. Application, interview and training are required. Call volunteer services, 745-5326 from 8 a.m.-4:40 p.m., weekdays.

For information on other opportunities or if your organization needs volunteers, call The Center for Volunteerism, United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, 226-9428 weekdays, or write 1212 Griswold, Detroit 48226-1899.

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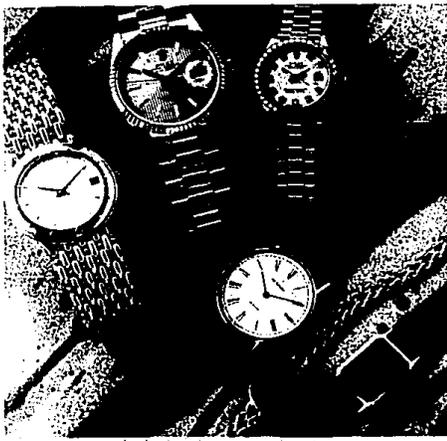
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