

MORE THAN MONEY



Sid MITTRA, Ph.D.

New tax law gives credit for children

Editor's note: This is the second article in a four-part series on the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997.

Here are some more highlights the major provisions of the Tax Act of 1997.

Starting in 1998, taxpayers can claim a tax credit for each "qualifying child." The credit is \$400 per child in 1998 and \$500 per child in 1999 and later years. A "qualifying child" is one who:

- Is the taxpayer's dependent;
- Has not attained the age of 17 as of the close of the calendar year in which the taxpayer's taxable year begins;
- Is the taxpayer's son or daughter (by blood or legally adopted) or a descendant of either;
- Is a U.S. citizen, national, or legal resident.

Income Phaseouts. Under the new law, higher-income taxpayers must reduce the allowable child credit by \$50 for each \$1,000 (or fraction thereof) by which modified adjusted gross income exceeds: \$110,000 for a joint return; \$75,000 for an unmarried individual and \$55,000 for married individuals filing a separate return.

Low-income Families. Low-income families with children may use the credit to offset their income taxes as well as Social Security taxes paid for the year.

Education tax incentives

Many, but not all, students and their families will have some new opportunities to save taxes as a result of the 1997 tax law.

Hope and Lifetime Learning Credits. Starting in 1998, a new Hope Scholarship Credit will be available against federal income taxes for qualified tuition and related expenses paid for a student's first two years of post-secondary education at an eligible educational institution.

Subject to phaseout for higher-

Please see MITTRA, C2

Sid Mittra, Ph.D., CFP, is professor emeritus of finance, at Oakland University, and owner of Mittra & Associates, a Rochester Hills financial consulting firm. This column was critically reviewed by Professor Jerold Grossman of OU. You can e-mail questions or comments to Sid Mittra at smittira@econline.com.

This column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings and other key personnel moves within the Oakland County business community. Send a brief biographical summary - including the towns of residency and employment and a photo, if desired, to: Business Milestones, Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

David Beckstrand was named senior vice president of human resources at Troy-based Kelly Services and will be responsible for the overall human resources function of the company.



David Barthmuss of West

Bloomfield has been appointed manager of sales, marketing and regional product communications at the Chevrolet Motor Division in Warren. He will be responsible for all sales, service and marketing/brand publicity for Chevrolet.

Roberta Black of West Bloomfield received the 1997 Telephone Marketing Excellence Award from the Direct Marketing Association Telephone Marketing Council. Black is president and chief executive officer of Dialogue Marketing in Southfield.

Lucy Bukowski was appointed deputy director of the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills. She will be relocating from Chicago where she worked for the Field Museum of Natural History for 13 years. She was, most recently, director of financial operations.

She will assume the responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the museum at Cranbrook.

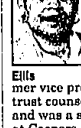
Robert Burgess of Bloomfield Hills has been elected to the board of the Michigan Mutual Insurance Company and the Amerisure Companies. Burgess is president and CEO of the Puente Corporation construction company headquartered in Bloomfield Hills.

Chuck Crespi has joined Metroban as a controller in the main office in Farmington Hills. He will be responsible for the overall quality and performance of the accounting department. He previously worked with First of America.



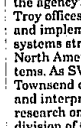
Cronin

Thomas Cronin of Grosse Pointe Farms has been appointed chairman of the Legislative Committee for the Mortgage Bankers Association of America. He is vice chairman of the MCA Financial Corporation in Southfield.



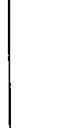
Dow

Adnon Dow of Southfield was appointed vice president, technical services for Sterling Heights-based The Big Net, Inc. Dow oversees product line and services and is responsible for sales goals, quality assurance, profit and loss allocations and personnel Internet training.



Ellis

Mariene Ellis of Bloomfield Hills has joined Howard & Howard in Bloomfield Hills as an attorney specializing in financial services law. She is a former vice president and senior trust counsel of Comerica Bank and was a senior tax associate at Coopers & Lybrand in Detroit.



Epstein

Stephen Epstein, CPA of West Bloomfield was elected president of the Farmington Hills-based Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants for 1997-98. Epstein is a partner at Coopers & Lybrand, LLP, Detroit.



Hutzell

Dan Hutzell of Farmington Hills and Thomas Townsend of Birmingham were elected senior vice presidents of BBDO Detroit. As SVP/chief information officer, Hutzell is responsible for technology resources in the agency's Southfield and Troy offices and is developing and implementing the corporate systems strategy for BBDO's North American computer systems. As SVP Research Director, Townsend designs, implements and interprets consumer research on behalf of the Dodge division of Chrysler Corp., a client of BBDO Detroit.

Most Future 50 businesses in Oakland



Oakland County is a hot spot for promising businesses of the future according to the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce's selections in the fourth annual Future 50 of Greater Detroit.

BY MARGARET O'BRIEN
BUSINESS EDITOR

Oakland County businesses claimed 35 spots in the Future 50, an annual award program recognizing the region's successful emerging firms awards sponsored by the Greater Detroit

Chamber of Commerce.

Ameritech, BDO Seidman, the Greater Detroit Chamber and WWJ Newsradio 950 selected the winners of the fourth annual Future 50 of Greater Detroit. The top companies will be recognized at a luncheon later this month.

"Due to their outstanding perfor-

mance in such key areas as revenue and job growth, these dynamic companies are helping to put Southeast Michigan on the map as the premier location for business and economic development," Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Richard E. Blouse Jr. said.

Companies considered for the Future 50 must have at least five employees and 10 percent growth in full-time employment over the next three years.

They must also have at least \$500,000 in annual revenue, be no more than 15-years-old and be located

in the eight-county Southeast Michigan region, among other criteria.

While the majority of the winners are in the service category (28), wholesale trade (6), manufacturing (6), construction (4) and finance (4) were also represented.

This year, the majority of the Future 50 firms were located in Oakland County with nine in Wayne, four in Macomb and two in Washtenaw. Twenty are members of the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce.

Please see FUTURE 50, C3

Magic carpets Azar's named top U.S. rug retailer of the year

BY KRISTEN JORDAN
STAFF WRITER

The enormous banners that hang beside plush handmade oriental rugs in the windows of Azar's on South Woodward in Birmingham herald the award that brings a broad smile to the face of Azar Alizadeh.

She and her husband, Homoz, won the "Rug Retailer of the Year Award" from America's Mart - a distinction Alizadeh says took her by surprise.

"With all of the entrants, I never thought we'd win," she said. "And when they called my name, we were so surprised."

Azar's oriental rug store bent out more than 70 competitors including Bloomington's, Ethan Allen, ABC Carpets, TJ MAXX and several other national and local carpet retailers for the award. Judging was based on innovative business approach, demonstrated success in sales, customer service, visual display and presentation and overall business credibility.

"Our customers told us we were doing good, but we didn't know we were one of

the best in the United States," Alizadeh said.

Though she may not have known Azar's was the top U.S. retailer, Alizadeh knows rugs.

The Iranian-born, German-raised store owner learned the trade from her father, who had his own oriental rug store in Germany. She studied architecture in Germany and then moved to Canada, where she met her husband. The two married, came to the United States and opened Azar's in 1978. "I opened a small store right next to the Birmingham Theatre, where Executive Custom Shirts and Tailors is, and after a few years, my husband joined me," she said. "We expanded and now we have a much bigger store."

Her new shop, now 5-years-old on South Woodward, won an award from the Masonry Institute in 1996 for excellence in masonry and design. The building features high ceilings and a large window front that allows Alizadeh to display her products for all of downtown Birmingham to see.

Please see RUGS, C2



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. McKEE

Winners: Azar and Homoz Alizadeh show their award.

Ceremony welcomes new Old Woodward

The first street sign officially changing Hunter Blvd. to Woodward Ave. and Woodward Ave. to Old Woodward Ave. in Birmingham was unveiled yesterday in a ceremony on the west side of Woodward/Hunter just north of downtown Birmingham.

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and Birmingham Mayor Mike Woolley, as well as other local officials, merchants and neighborhood representatives were on hand to dedicate the sign.

The event, co-sponsored by the Birmingham Principal Shopping District, came one week before the Woodward

Ave. address/name change becomes effective.

On Sept. 13, Michigan's largest-ever address change goes into effect for shops, offices and residences along Woodward in Berkeley, Birmingham, Royal Oak and parts of Huntington Woods and Bloomfield Township.

The changes are being implemented to remedy address and street-name confusion that has long existed along M-1 in South Oakland County.

The new numbering plan employs a five-digit address system following the progression that begins at the foot of Woodward Ave. in Detroit and travels

north through Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge.

Prior to the change, consumers, commuters and delivery personnel often struggled with a confusing numbering system that included odd and even numbers on the same side of the street and followed no logical progression from mile to mile or even block to block.

Address changes were coordinated and implemented by a task force of representatives from the affected cities. The Woodward Avenue Action Association, Oakland County Planning, the

Please see WOODWARD, C3

Forum planned for gas, phone, electric bill complaints

Plan to attend a town-hall-type consumer forum to discuss your problems or issues regarding telephone, electric, or natural gas services and costs with the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Commissioners will speak eight evening across the state. Oakland County residents will have their forum in Pontiac at 6 p.m. Oct. 14 in the Pontiac city hall council chambers, 450 E. Wide Track Drive.

At previous forums, consumers have raised a number of questions and issues, including:

- How will deregulation and restructuring affect electric utility services and costs?
- Who can provide help when telephone and electric service outages occur frequently throughout the year?
- What are the costs for establishing electric and natural gas service in a new residential or

Please see FORUM, C3

Southfield-based 1/2 Off Card Shop switches gears

Three months after Wind Point Partners and Alpha Capital invested millions in Southfield-based 1/2 Off Card Shop, the discount greeting card and gift store chain unveiled a new business strategy last week with the opening of new stores in Roseville and Muskegon and grand openings of remodeled stores in Ann Arbor, Westland, Kalamazoo and Kentwood.

"The 1/2 Off Card Shop is beginning a dramatic chain-wide transformation

that includes a new pricing strategy, a major remodeling project and expansion of our merchandise and services," said Leonard Zucker, chairman and chief executive officer of the 1/2 Off Card Shop, which has 40 stores in Michigan and Ohio.

The new pricing strategy will extend the chain's everyday party supply discount.

The 10 to 15 percent discount currently offered on all patterned table-

ware such as plates, napkins, cups and tablecovers will be increased to an everyday 25 to 50 percent discount chain-wide.

"People know us for our large selection of quality, half-priced greeting cards," continued Zucker. "In reality, party supplies is the largest component for our business. By offering consumers dramatically lower prices on party supplies, we intend to build our dominance

Please see CARDS, C3

BUSINESS MILESTONES

She will assume the responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the museum at Cranbrook.

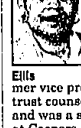
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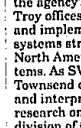
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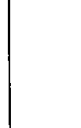
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