

Companies honored for innovation, sensitivity

BY DOUG FUNK
STAFF WRITER

One company was cited for developing a policy where employees could take concerns and problems outside of the traditional chain of command. Another was singled out for allowing flexible work schedules.

Still another company was recognized for maintaining quality employee benefits and perks for its employees during an unprofitable spell. Yet another hired temps from its competitors when it had work available and the competition didn't.

Six, all told, were selected as winners of the first Today's Workplace of Tomorrow Awards sponsored by the Women's Economic Club.

Winners with local roots include:

- Allstate Insurance-Michigan Region, Southfield.

Gorman's Business Interiors, office interior design, Southfield.

Harley, Ellington, Pierce, Yee and Associates, architectural and engineering services, Southfield.

Plante & Moran, accounting and management consulting, Southfield.

"The winners of this award are truly setting the new standard for the workplace of the year 2000," said Terry Merritt, president of the Women's Economic Club. "It's exciting to see such a high culture of innovation, creativity and sensitivity in our own backyard."

"We hope this award will inspire other organizations to look at new and different ways of making the workplace more productive and enjoyable, beneficial both for organization and individual," Merritt added.

Judges looked at several issues including sensitivity to family

and alternative family structures, employees' health and well-being, environmental impact of business activities and diversity of workforce. Judges actually made on-site investigations.

Winners shared characteristics. Leaders spoke to the connection between employee well-being and financial success. CEOs and other key executives had vision, then made things happen. Teamwork was stressed and fun was considered essential.

Following is a brief summary of local winners as provided by the Women's Economic Club:

- Allstate Insurance** — autonomy of regional offices to tailor programs to fit the workplace; open communication of corporate staffing changes and employee skills training to increase job market competitiveness.
- Faculty enabling employees to freely take concerns and problems outside normal chain of com-

mand; offers employees free car safety seats for kids; designates room for nursing mothers.

"One of Allstate's goals is to continue to meet and exceed the expectations of our employees," said Janet Moore, spokeswoman. "By listening to requirements regardless of position, it enables us to create an atmosphere where employees are full participants in all processes."

Gorman's Business Interiors — experienced an amazing turnaround by investing in its people during an unprofitable period; strong employee empowerment and emphasis on rewarding customer-driven service.

"They want their employees to feel like winners, so they treat their people like winners," said Audrey Wise, spokeswoman for Gorman's. "That gets translated into treating customers like winners."

- Harley, Ellington, Pierce, Yee**

— extensive employee training/development including a liberal education reimbursement policy, lending of leadership and personal growth study materials and daily employee praise and reprint self-evaluation.

Flexible work schedules; quarterly open forum and after-hours meetings for all employees; employee "borrowing" to share resources with other architectural firms.

"We really focus on the individual and the individual's ability to excel," said Barbara Bless, spokeswoman. "If you're happy with what you're doing, then you make your client happy and it just continues on."

- Plante & Moran** — candid company self-examination; proactive cultivation of a company culture that motivates and rewards employees; attention to workforce diversity and family needs such as child care and flexi-

ble work hours developed through a parenting tightrope action committee.

"It all starts from the philosophy of the managing partners and founding partner," said Kristin Brender, spokeswoman. "They always look at it that the whole person comes to work for Plante & Moran. You have to have a proper balance between family and career."

Two other award winners were **Brogan & Partners** of Detroit, advertising, and the **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)** of Detroit, a non-profit information gathering/policy agency.

Family Works of Troy, a child and elder care assistance referral agency funded as a service by the **Troy Chamber of Commerce**, and **Deloitte & Touche**, Michigan Practice, accounting and management consultants in Detroit, received honorable mentions.

DATEBOOK

Datebook features upcoming events around the suburban business community. To list an event, write: Datebook, Building & Business, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279.

THURSDAY, APRIL 21

MICROSOFT TOUR
Microsoft Corp. hosts a free demonstration of its latest system software including its new "Chicago" technology. 7-9 p.m. at the Southfield Civic Center, 26000 Evergreen at 104th Mile.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22

MARKETING BASICS
Excel, a business networking and support organization for women open a speakers' office seminar "Marketing Basics for Non-Marketing Professionals" 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Northwest YWCA, 25640 Grand River, Ferndale. Topics include objectives, environmental analysis, competition, positioning and public relations. Cost is \$75. Advance registration required at 396-3576.

LEGAL SEMINARS
The Oakland County Legal Secretaries Association hosts two seminars "Violence Against Women" 8:30-11:45 a.m. and a live jury trial on the Michigan Stalker Law 1:30-4:30 p.m. at the Marriott Hotel in Troy. Cost is \$25 apiece. For reservations, contact Lauri Schorr at 651-4114.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
The National Lawyers Guild, Detroit Chapter, presents a seminar on employee rights 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills. Topics include wrongful discharge, age discrimination, handicap issues and whistleblowing consequences. Cost is \$75 in advance and \$90 at the door. For reservations, call 963-0843.

MONDAY, APRIL 25

COMMUNICATORS CONVENTION
International Business Communicators District 7, which includes Michigan, hosts a one-day conference "Changing the Way Business Communicates with Employees" 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Lovett Hall at Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn. Cost is \$99 for members, \$130 for non-members. For reservations, call (800) 783-6338.

TUESDAY, APRIL 26

AUTO OUTLOOK
PamWebster sponsors a free seminar on the stock outlook of the Big Three auto companies 1-3 p.m. or 7-9 p.m. at the Laurel Manor Conference Center, 39000 Schoolcraft, Livonia. For reservations, call Catherine Carlyle at (800) 852-6228.

RETIREMENT PLANNING
Schoolcraft College presents a two-part seminar "Retirement Planning for the '90s" 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Livonia Marriott, 17100 N. Laurel

Park Drive this date and May 3. Topics include reviewing your estate and retirement income and investment alternatives. Cost is \$35. To register, call continuing education services at 462-4448.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
The American Society of Employers hosts a two-day seminar "Writing an Affirmative Action Plan" 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. this date and April 28 at its offices, 23815 Northwestern Highway, Southfield. Speaker: Jerome Jackson, ASE consultant. Cost is \$295 for members, \$350 for non-members. Advance registration requested at 353-4500.

TAX IMPLICATIONS
Bob Sheppard, vice president of Roney & Co., conducts a free seminar "The New Tax Laws and Their Impact on Your Investments" 7:15 p.m. at Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester Hills. Other financial experts will participate. A complimentary tour of the estate will be offered at 6:30 p.m. For reservations, call Sheppard at 373-5780.

ACCOUNTING HELP
The Michigan Practice of Deloitte & Touche sponsors a seminar "Accounting and Finance for Non-Accountants" 9 a.m. to noon at the Livonia Marriott, 1-275 at Six Mile. Topics include financial statement analysis, break-even analysis and working capital. Cost, which includes a light breakfast buffet, is \$45. To register, call Stephanie Christel at 769-6200.

SEVERE SPEAKS
Martha R. Seeger, a consultant and former governor of the Federal Reserve talks about "Taking Stock: From Wall Street to Your Street" 8-9:30 a.m. during a breakfast meeting at Grand Federal Bank headquarters, 2600 W. Big Beaver, Troy. Sponsor: Troy Chamber of Commerce. Cost is \$5 for members and guests, \$10 for non-members. Advance reservations requested at 641-8151.

THURSDAY, APRIL 28

JA BANQUET
Junior Achievement of Southeastern Michigan hosts its annual business Hall of Fame banquet 6 p.m. at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Dearborn. Honorees include John W. Barfield, founder and chairman, the Barfield Co.; Walker L. Custer, chairman, Detroit Edison; the late Eugene Power, founder, University Microfilms; and the late Alfred P. Sloan Jr., president, General Motors. Cost is \$150, \$1,500 for a table of 10. For reservations, contact Andrea Maddox-Johnson at 255-3900.

CLARIFICATION
The photo of a model that accompanied the Building & Business story about Walnut Brook subdivision in the April 7 edition was built by Casdel Homes of Auburn Hills, not Bove Construction as the article implied.

HEALTH UNDERWRITERS
ATAC company offers a presentation on how specialized insurance coverages will fit in the marketplace with health care reform during a breakfast meeting hosted by the Metro Detroit Association of Health Underwriters 8-10 a.m. at the Plaza Hotel, 16400 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield. Cost is \$5 in advance, \$7 at the door for members, \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door for non-members. For reservations, call Lon at 356-8585.

MANAGED ACCOUNTS
Pacifiwebster offers a free seminar on its portfolio management program 7-9 p.m. at its Livonia office, 38701 W. Seven Mile, Suite 455. For reservations, call Catherine Carlyle at 464-3440.

MEXICAN CONNECTION
Michigan State University and the Asia Pacific Institute co-sponsor a forum "How to Profit from the Mexican Marketplace: Opportunities and Risks" 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the MSU Management Education Center in Troy. Cost is \$195. To register, call (800) 556-5705.

STRIVE
Strive, a networking and support group for women and a local chapter of the National Association for Female Executives, meets 6 p.m. at the Troy Public Library, Big Beaver Road at 1-75. Speaker: Irma Elder, owner of Troy Ford and Jaguar/Saab. First time guests free, visitors \$5. Reservations aren't required. For information, call 253-6800.

TUESDAY, MAY 3

WOMEN INVESTORS
Abbet A. Saxton, certified manager with Merrill Lynch, presents a free seminar "Investing for Women Only" 6:30-9 p.m. this date or May 6 at the Brent Igoe Bloomfield Hills office, 1577 N. Woodward. For reservations, call Gayle at 645-7447.

REAL ESTATE
The Downriver Real Estate Investors Association hosts a seminar on leverage purchasing strategies, rehabilitation grants, renting to Section 8 tenants and HUD homes 7 p.m. at the Southeast Homeplace, Northline east of I-75. Speaker: Gary Shelton, president of Americare. Fee is \$10 for non-members. For information, call Wayne Koehler at 277-4168.

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