

Veteran Employment Newsletter

In Support of the Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative (MVAC)

*****FOR LOCAL VETERAN EMPLOYMENT NEWS AND RESOURCES*****

*“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right,
as God gives us to see right, let us strive to finish the work we are in;
To bind up the nation's wounds;
To care for him who has borne the battle,
and for his widow, and his orphan.”*

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Get College Credit for Military Service

Applying your military experience credits could save you as much as \$600 and 5 months on a typical 3-credit college course. In most cases, you will use ACE recommended credits to fulfill your free-elective requirements, but each college determines the number of credits they will accept, and how they will be applied toward your degree. In fact, some schools may even choose not to grant any credit for military experience. That is why it is critical to shop around for the school that meets your specific requirements. The first step to claiming the credits you have earned is to request a transcript from your military service. [Get More information on how to gain college credit for military experience.](#)

Oakland County leads in job growth

Oakland County's job growth since 2010 has outpaced other key counties of similar population around the United States, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson announced.

"Oakland County plays a significant role in Michigan's economic recovery because of our deep dive into the knowledge-based economy," Patterson said. "And from the looks of it, we are a leader in the nation as well."

The May 2014 jobs figures from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics indicate that Oakland County's labor force increased by 5,600 participants to 594,916 and the number of employed residents grew by 2,800. Because of more participation in Oakland County's work force, the May unemployment figure for Oakland County is 6.9 percent, up from 6.5 percent in April.

In an effort to diversify the economy, Patterson launched Oakland County's Emerging Sectors initiative in 2004 to identify the top 10 sectors that will attract and retain sustainable, high-paying jobs to the region in the 21st century. Companies in these Emerging Sectors are involved in such leading-edge fields such as advanced electronics & controls, advanced materials & chemicals, communications & [information technology](#), robotics & automation, and Oakland County's Medical Main Street.

Since its inception, 284 companies have invested \$2.71 billion creating 31,379 jobs and retaining 16,282. For more information about Emerging Sectors, go to www.AdvantageOakland.com.

Michigan Creates \$6.8 Million Fund for Tech Startups

Economically speaking, the news concerning Michigan typically focuses on the purported death of Detroit.

To counter that negative trend, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) is hoping to spearhead some new growth among high-tech startups. The Michigan Pre-Seed Fund 2.0 is actually a continuation of a previous effort. It will provide \$6.8 million. That's \$5.8 million to high-tech startups in the state and another \$1 million to help universities transfer technology to the marketplace.

A previous Pre-Seed Fund invested \$20 million in 90 firms beginning in 2007.

The money to fund Pre-Seed Fund 2.0 comes from the public sector. The initiative is being managed by a private firm called Invest Michigan. Invest Michigan President and CEO Charlie

Moret says his company's goal is to learn lessons from the first version of Michigan's Pre-Seed Fund and make smart investments.

The idea is to invest in private companies that are barely off the ground. Moret told Small Business Trends in a recent interview that the goal is to back those that will eventually pay back the investment. This would make Pre-Seed Fund 2.0 an "evergreen" fund continuing to invest in new startups into the future:

"We can be that kind of catalyst to drive these companies. A big portion of the evaluation process is – are these companies going to be sustainable? We are looking for those with the most viable business plan."

Invest Michigan hopes to find tech startups in some of the following areas: advanced automotive, manufacturing and materials, agricultural technology, alternative energy, homeland security, information technology, and life sciences.

New funding will become available in May first for companies that missed their chance to apply for the previous Pre-Seed Fund. Then the funding will be open to applications from new tech startups by June. Moret says companies applying for potential seed money from the fund will hear their fate within 45 days.

In a statement announcing the fund, MEDC Vice President of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Paula Sorrell said:

"These Pre-Seed Funds are intended to help innovative companies take those last steps to become commercially viable and more attractive to private investors. With the wealth of entrepreneurial talent we have in Michigan, we want to make sure good ideas turn into businesses that help expand and strengthen the state economy."

Why Meijer is sponsoring free pharmacy technician training

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WALKER, MI -- Meijer is underwriting a pharmacy technician training program in Grand Rapids as part of an effort to recruit graduates for its 210 store pharmacies.

The training is through the **West Michigan Center for Arts + Technology**, which offers fully-funded training in growing fields to under- and unemployed adults.

"The need for pharmacy technicians is growing tremendously, and our partnership with WMCAT will enable us to bolster our pharmacy staff so they can build patient relationships to better manage their health care needs," said Karen Mankowski, vice president of pharmacy operations for the Walker-based retailer, in a statement.

Employment of pharmacy technicians, who help licensed pharmacists formulate and dispense prescription medication, is slated to increase 20 percent by 2022, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average pay is about \$30,000, but can go as high as \$43,000, according to the BLS.

While training programs for licensed pharmacy technician can vary, the cost can be between \$850 to \$1,500. The length of training can vary as well.

WMCAT's nine-month program includes two externships working in a retail and hospital setting. The program accepts 12 students a year.

The program cost WMCAT \$13,000 a year per student. Meijer has long been a financial supporter of WMCAT, but this is the first year the retailer has been a major sponsor of the pharmacy technician program.

Meijer has also hired many graduates of the program, although completion of the program doesn't guarantee a job offer.

Kena Lee, who graduated last week from the WMCAT program, said her training included working at a Meijer pharmacy.

"Every experience was a learning experience and I never felt like I was just there," Lee said. "I like the (retail) business, because you always have something to do and I have the feeling that I'm helping someone at the same time."

Technicians' duties can range from filling prescriptions under the supervision of a pharmacist to entering patient records in the computer database.

Former waitress Chanae Gilbert says the WMCAT program made it possible for her to pursue her dream of working in the health care field. After finishing the program four years ago, the Grand Rapids mother of two was offered a job at the Standale Meijer pharmacy.

"I was sick and tired of waiting tables," Gilbert said. "I wanted more. I wanted security and I love helping people. We work hand in hand with their doctors to make sure people get their medications."

Meijer expects its need for pharmacy technician positions to grow because the population of patients is growing older and relying on more prescriptions. The retailer employs about 10 to 15 pharmacy technicians at each store.

The Affordable Care Act could also send more people to pharmacies for services once provided only at a hospital or doctor's office, like flu shots, vaccines and some testing, the company said.

WMCAT is taking applications for the next session, which begins in September. The application process begins by attending an information session at WMCAT offered every Monday at 9 a.m., except holidays. For information, call 616-454-7004.

July business workshops offered by the Oakland County One Stop Shop Business Center

Business owners and entrepreneurs who need assistance are encouraged to attend seminars offered by the Oakland County Business Center. Unless otherwise noted, all programs are held at the Oakland County Executive Office Building Conference Center, 2100 Pontiac Lake Road, west of Telegraph, in Waterford. For pre-registration and location map, visit www.AdvantageOakland.com/businessworkshops or call (248) 858-0783.

CEED Small Business Loan Orientation: July 9, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Location: Farmington Hills City Hall Community Room, 31555 W. 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Many small businesses face obstacles when trying to obtain a business loan. If your business is located in Oakland County and you have a need for alternative financing consider learning more about the CEED Small Business Loan Program (formerly CEED MicroLoan Program). Discover the requirements and process necessary to apply for and obtain a Small Business Loan. (CEED is Center for Empowerment and Economic Development). **Fee: This workshop is free, but pre-registration is required.**

Break the Rules, Close More Sales: July 10, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. A business development workshop for business owners, company Presidents/CEO's & professional service firms and sales people; in two short hours, you'll learn how to establish trust with your prospects, prospect more efficiently, shorten the sales cycle, eliminate stalls and objection, take control of the sales process, and differentiate your company. **Fee: \$40 per person, pre-registration is required.**

Business Research: Feasibility to Expansion: July 16, 9 a.m. to noon. Thinking of starting a business and want to research your business idea? Do you want to identify market trends and opportunities to grow your sales? Are you looking for new customers or to diversify your market base? Business Research shows you ways to find your ideal customers, your competitors, perform competitive analysis and more. The workshop is presented by The Oakland County One Stop Shop Business Center, Oakland County market researchers and an Oakland County Public Library business reference librarian. **Fee: This workshop is free, but pre-registration is required.**

Get a Grip on Your Business | EOS Workshop: July 17, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. If you are the owner, leader or manager of an entrepreneurial organization who wants to see your business consistently run better and grow faster, Mike Kotsis, a professional EOS implementer, can help you and your team simplify, clarify and achieve your vision. You will walk away with a focused action plan using the EOS workbook containing the tools that will help you to gain more traction in your business. Don't let the company run you – Get a Grip on Your Business. **Fee: \$40 per person, pre-registration is required.**

Legal Basics for Small Business: July 29, 9 a.m. to noon. Legal Basics provides new and existing Michigan entrepreneurs with an understanding of the key legal considerations when starting and operating a business in Michigan. The program also addresses how to select the best type of legal structure for your business, how to protect your business interests when dealing with customers, suppliers or independent contractors. It also provides important information and guidelines for establishing short and long term succession plans. **Fee: \$20 per person, pre-registration is preferred, but payable at the door.**

Walk-In-Start-Up Thursdays: Every Thursday 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson wants entrepreneurs to prosper. His Walk In Start Up Thursdays Small Business counseling initiative is for individuals who want to launch a business but don't know where to begin. They will receive confidential, one-on-one advice from an experienced business consultant with no appointment necessary.

Fee: There is no fee. Walk-in sessions are available on a first come, first served basis and each session is limited to 15 minutes.

Upcoming Workshops

August

- 7: Team SBA Financing Roundtable
- 13: Business Research: Feasibility to Expansion (PM)
- 13: CEED Small Business Loan Program Orientation
- 19: Create Your Marketing Plan

September

- 9: Business Research: Feasibility to Expansion (AM)
 - 10: CEED Small Business Loan Program Orientation
 - 17: Women's Business Enterprise (WBE) Certification Orientation
 - 23: Introduction to QuickBooks
 - 30: SCORE Small Business Loan Workshop
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FOX News (Video): [Empowering military women when they return home](#). In this 3:30 minute Fox & Friends video, women veterans who started their own businesses after struggling to find work weigh in. At 3:00, veterans are encouraged to call their local VA about available benefits.

[GI Bill funds flow to for-profit colleges that fail state aid standards](#)

Center for Investigative Reporting

Over the last five years, more than \$600 million in college assistance for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans has been spent on California schools so substandard that they have failed to qualify for state financial aid.

[Coaching Into Care \(CIC\)](#) is a free and confidential VA helpline that is celebrating three years as a national program this June. CIC helps callers discover new ways to talk with a Veteran about their concerns and about treatment options. Our mission is to educate, support and empower family members and friends who are seeking care or services for a Veteran. Our goal is to help them encourage distressed Veterans to access [VA care](#) successfully anywhere in the United States.

CIC began as a pilot program at the Philadelphia VAMC and at the Durham VAMC in January 2010. In June 2011, it expanded to become a national program with the addition of the Los Angeles, CA site, which is located at the West L.A. VAMC. Hours expanded to our current coverage of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST.

CIC has grown to help a total of about 7,000 callers, with about 3,000 this past year alone. Callers may receive assistance over the course of one or several phone calls, sometimes spanning several months.

Anyone concerned about a Veteran may call Coaching Into Care. There are no eligibility requirements, and we work with all populations and eras of service. Occasionally, Veterans will call us directly and they are assisted or referred to appropriate services. When

necessary, CIC call responders warm transfer calls to other call centers, including the [Veteran's Crisis Line](#) and [Caregiver Support Line](#).

Since we launched our quarterly newsletter last April, we have increased our subscribers to over 7,000. Thank you! Each issue highlights the work we're doing on behalf of Veterans and their loved ones and includes Coaching Tips and other resources of value for anyone working with Veterans and their families. Please use the links below to view past issues.

[Spring 2013](#)

[Summer 2013](#)

[Fall 2013](#)

[Winter 2014](#)

[Spring 2014](#)

Local jobs improve tri-county economy

Look around you and you'll notice a lot more business activity in our tri-county area. Parking spots are at a premium and you might have to wait for a table at a local restaurant.

There's a strong economic vibe taking place in Michigan after years of falling sales, layoffs, foreclosures, etc. "Michigan is making a comeback," said Doug Rothwell, president/CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan, in a recent report in Crain's Detroit Business.

We're feeling the boom here in the tri-county area too, although many businesses owners are taking steps cautiously to grow their staffs back to pre-recession numbers.

"Two years ago we had 17 employees and today we have 26," said Mike Parker, owner of Epic Machine in Fenton, which specializes in precision machining and custom tooling since 1979.

Parker has committed huge resources to help grow a unique talent pool, not only for himself but also for other Michigan manufacturers. He opened Epic CNC Training Academy on-site one-and-a-half years ago to train potential employees in the very specialized skills of machine tooling.

"Manufacturing today is nothing like manufacturing was in the past," said Parker. "It's not about standing at an assembly line and putting something together. It's much more hi-tech, with tooling tolerances of the thickness of one hair. It's very precise, and requires a very unique skill set, including

math, reading and comprehension. We want to make sure a student will succeed at Epic CNC Training Academy before we take their tuition.”

Parker is already drawing interest from other out-of-state manufacturers in the unique concept of this training academy. “I run my company very differently from other business owners,” said Parker. “I like everyone here to work 10 hours a day. When things slow down, at least they still will get their 40 hours. We still pay full family health coverage 100 percent. If I take care of them, then they’ll take care of me. I can sleep well at night.”

Another local manufacturer, Creative Foam, was following in the failing footsteps of Michigan’s automotive industry just a few years ago. This company designs and manufactures cellular and non-cellular foams and plastics for customers in the automotive, medical and composite markets.

Back in 2007, they had to make the very difficult decision to lay off 70 workers, out of an employee pool of 312.

Today, with nine manufacturing plants in six different states, Creative Foam has grown along with the automotive industry. They now employ 950 people.

With a vision toward future expansion, Creative Foam purchased the former location of Fenton Cinema, and are now leasing that land to a trucking company. They have also rebuilt their engineering plant in Fenton, renaming it the Dr. Peter T. Swallow Engineering Center, after CEO David Swallow’s father, who founded the company in 1969.

“Our growth today is double-digits ahead of the growth of the auto industry,” said Swallow. “Our innovation of processes has allowed us to build a better product.”

Adding dozens of local jobs in the service sector are a number of restaurants in the area that have recently opened or expanded.

Crust, a baking company, spun off of the success of its parent company, The Laundry in Fenton, opening in 2012 with 33 employees. Today, this busy artisan bake shop has a staff of 40, feeding not only the hungry customers of The Laundry, but also the growing customer base of its own breakfast and lunch menu and baked goods and pastries.

“The community really has embraced the retail portion of the bakery,” said Mike Green, head baker at Crust. “Our retail store has really taken off, in addition to our wholesale business.”

Across town on Owen Road, Boston’s Gourmet Pizza opened last summer by the family of Rocky Dedivanaj, the family that owns Mega Coney Island in Fenton and several other locations. Boston’s has a staff of 72 to cover long daily shifts from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. “Between Boston’s and our Fenton Mega location, we employ about 120,” said Dedivanaj. “About 85 percent of our staff is local, living within 10 miles of the building. That has a strong impact on a lot of other local businesses.”

As a state, in terms of employment, private sector employment in Michigan grew at the sixth-fastest rate in the country between 2011 and 2012. Yet Michigan's unemployment rate since 2009 is still one percent higher than the national average.

"Talent is the new currency in economic development," said Michigan Economic Development Corp. President/CEO Michael Finney.

information.

"Tiger Baseball Tickets" Active members and Veterans of the military are eligible to purchase half-price box office dynamically priced Upper Box Infield and Upper Reserved tickets to all 2014 Monday-Thursday regular season home games excluding July 8, 9 and August 26, 27 and 28. Tickets must be purchased at the Comerica Park Box Office and a valid military ID or Veteran ID must be presented at time of purchase. Service members may purchase a maximum of four (4) tickets per customer. This offer is based on availability.

<http://detroit.tigers.mlb.com/det/community/saluteheroes.jsp>
