

Is Van Dyke the Newest High Technology Corridor?

By Gerald Scott

Is Van Dyke Ave. in Warren and Sterling Heights the proverbial new "high-tech corridor" of the Motor City these days?

In light of recent developments, some experts say yes, that might be true after all.

Although Macomb County's 20th century reputation was that of a blue-collar, automotive manufacturing center, recent trends here in the 21st century point to something much higher tech emerging up and down Van Dyke Avenue:

- The GM Technical Center, the automotive and research anchor of the entire county, much less Van Dyke Ave., was the home to the design and engineering of the Chevrolet Volt plug-in, extended-range vehicle – and the battery lab that supports the Volt and EV research is also located at the Tech Center;

- Chrysler's Sterling Heights Assembly Plant (16 Mile & Van Dyke), is the current home of production of the Chrysler 200 sedan, one of the automaker's hottest vehicles and sometimes called the "Eminem car" because the popular rapper promoted it in that famous 2011 Super Bowl TV ad;

- The Ford Van Dyke Transmission plant is now producing the HF35 hybrid-vehicle transmission, a device that is planned for use in a half-dozen or more of Ford's most advanced EVs and hybrid vehicles, including the Fo-

cus Electric. Ford converted 200,000 square feet of unused industrial space in the plant to support a line that produces the HF35 alongside other mainstream gearboxes;

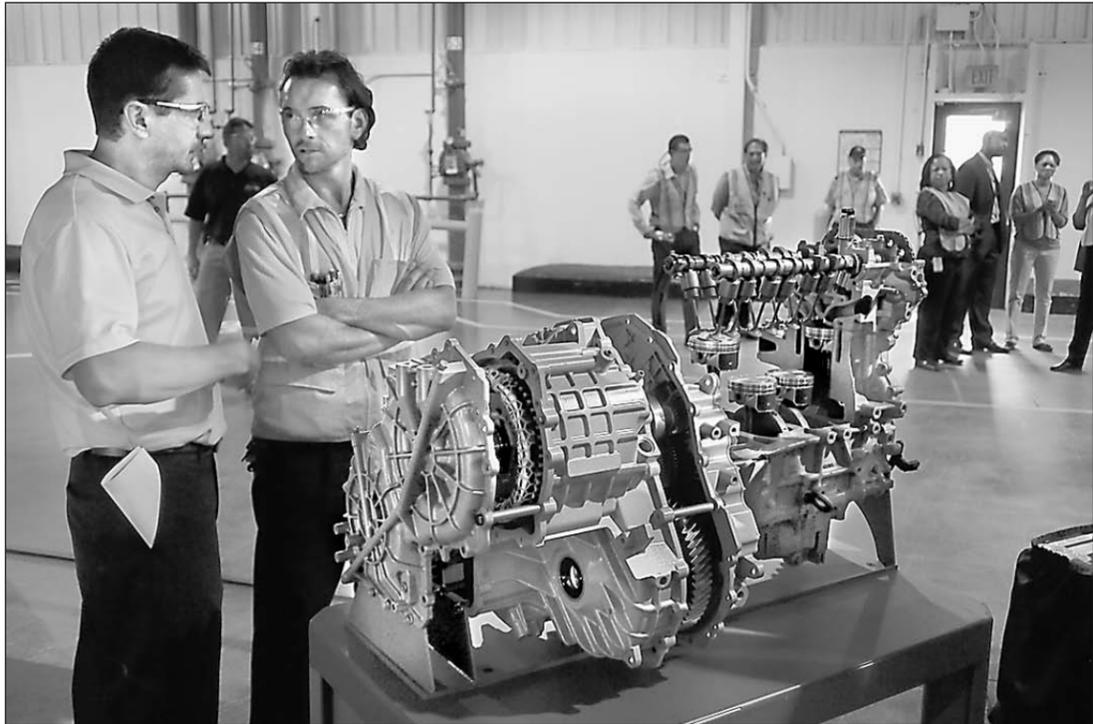
- TACOM's Ground Systems Vehicle Power & Energy Lab (GSPEL), located north of 11 Mile between Van Dyke and Mound at the Detroit Arsenal in Warren, GSPEL gives the Army a research lab said to be unlike any other in the world, giving it the ability to drive fuel economy and range into heavy vehicles while still protecting soldiers.

Taken together, GM, Ford, Chrysler and TACOM have given Van Dyke Ave. a new definition of high tech, although one expert said that while embracing high tech, Macomb County should always remember its roots as an industrial base.

Joe Petrosky, dean of Engineering and Advanced Technology at Macomb Community College said to add MCC's M-Tec training facility, Van Dyke and Martin Road in the Arsenal Industrial District west of Van Dyke, to the prestigious list of high-tech developments cited earlier.

"To me, with that historic blue-collar designation of the corridor, for me it's kind of been the historic manufacturing designation that Macomb has been the heart and soul of manufacturing in Michigan," Petrosky said.

"Whether that's blue collar, whether that's white collar, we



Experts say the Van Dyke manufacturing corridor is lately going high tech.

want to keep that designation.

"We realize the importance of manufacturing, the importance to this local economy, to the state, to the national economy, so I'm very heartened with the adaptation of the technologies that allow us to compete globally, but stay here locally, stay on Van Dyke, stay in Macomb County."

Indeed, Macomb County and the Van Dyke corridor's roots go

back to manufacturing and the Arsenal of Democracy from World War II.

It was 70 years ago this September that President Roosevelt visited the original Chrysler Tank Plant on Van Dyke in an era where he had just coined the phrase "Arsenal of Democracy."

What's more, today's Sterling Heights Assembly Plant was in an earlier era the Chrysler Missile

Plant and it produced the Redstone rocket boosters that put Explorer I, America's first satellite, into outer space in 1958 and three years later it also produced the booster rocket that put America's first astronaut, Alan Shepard, into outer space in 1961. Point being that although Macomb County wears its blue collar reputation well, high technology now follows.

Birthday Bash to Feature Jack Scott, The Coasters

By Gerald Scott

The city of Warren enjoyed its 50th anniversary "birthday" celebration so much back in 2007 that it keeps repeating it over and over again, kind of like that "Groundhog Day" movie.

Warren grew from a township to a city in 1957, so of course in 2007 it marked 50 years. It threw a "birthday bash" in August of that year – concerts, fireworks, family entertainment and the like, an event so popular that the city keeps repeating it now every year.

The 2012 Warren Birthday Bash will run from Thursday, Aug. 23, through Sunday, Aug. 26, and a wide variety of fun, family entertainment is once again planned.

Warren Mayor Jim Fouts discussed the evolution of the now-annual "Birthday Bash" outdoor festival at the new Civic Center on Van Dyke in Warren.

"It was started under the previous administration, not mine, and I think it has just become an annual evolutionary event where it's a time for us to take pride in our city and celebrate everything, including the resurgence and comeback of General Motors and Chrysler," Fouts said.

"We can celebrate this festival and look across the street (at the GM Tech Center) and see General Motors, proud, coming back and this city is coming back, too.

"We just got a millage passed, which I'm very appreciative of from the voters. It's really a good time for Warren and I'm optimistic about the future."

Indeed, with General Motors and Chrysler being the city's top two corporate citizens and corporate taxpayers, the stabilization of these two of the Big Three automakers does seem to bode well for the city."

Besides the Tech Center, GM has its Warren Transmission Plant at 9 Mile and Mound while

Chrysler has the Warren Truck Plant (sometimes called Dodge City) and Warren Stamping plant further south on Mound Road in that automotive corridor.

All of which brings us back to the 2012 Birthday Bash.

"I think we have a lot to celebrate about and I think that's what it's all about – bringing the community together for one big celebration to take pride in our city," Fouts added.

"This is to celebrate and commemorate the Civic Center."

The new Civic Center now gives the Warren downtown area a focal point that it never had in its long past.

Fouts said he's pleased that the Friday night entertainment is longtime local hitmaker Jack Scott, who grew up in Hazel Park. "Now I think who has also become our 'annual entertainer' is Jack Scott, I'm very excited to have him back again," Fouts said.

"I grew up in this area, I grew up in Hazel Park actually and Jack Scott grew up in Hazel Park, too. Jack Scott, in one time period, had more hit singles, for that time period of 41 months than any other entertainer or group with the exception of the Beatles.

"He had more hits than Elvis Presley did in the early 1960s."

Scott is famous for hits such as "Goodbye, Baby, Bye-Bye," "What in the World has Come Over You?" and more.

"I ran into him at Andiamo's and he sat with me and told me Glen Campbell worked for him and was his backup guitarist (in the early 1960s)," Fouts said. "Super nice guy, extremely talented."

Also on the Friday evening following the Jack Scott concert, there will be a big fireworks concert. For the Saturday evening lineup, the Coasters will be performing. They're famous for "Yakety-Yak," "Poison Ivy," "Char-



Warren Mayor Jim Fouts

lie Brown" and "Love Potion No. 9." A laser-light show will follow the Coasters concert.

"I like to get classic groups from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s," Fouts added.

"In addition to all of that, we're going to have exotic animals including camels, kangaroos and a lemur, as well as some snakes and other stuff. We're going to have a petting zoo with tame animals and racing pigs."

Finally, Boy Scout Troop 390 will host a car show on Sunday, Aug. 26 in the Civic Center parking lots, the last big formal event of a busy weekend.

Racing pigs, the Coasters, Jack Scott and fireworks. What's not to like at the Warren Birthday Bash?

Official sponsors of the function include Henry Ford Macomb Hospital, Michigan Lottery, Con-

Car Show Set for Friday

The American House II senior living center on Schoenherr north of 14 Mile Road in Sterling Heights is hosting a classic car show on Friday, Aug. 24, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

centra Urgent Care, Troy Sports Center, Comerica Bank, ITC and Mendelson Kornblum Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation.

Ekstrom Exceeds 70-Jump Goal

Here's an update on GM Metal Model Maker Larry Ekstrom, who safely made 71 jumps – 70 planned jumps – plus one fun jump he said, last week, all to benefit Leader Dogs

Ekstrom is the Metal Model Maker who works at the GM Tech Center in Warren.

He turned 70 years old on Aug. 10, his original jump date for this "70 on 70" adventure – that is to say, 70 skydives on his 70th birthday. He got rained out on his birthday but he successfully jumped last week after all.

Ekstrom is a sport skydiver who has completed over 13,000 parachute jumps since 1967. He did the 70 jumps to benefit Leader Dogs for the Blind, the charity in Rochester Hills.

To donate for this event, see 70for70.org.

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