

Auto Industry Peers Praise Auburn Hills Chamber Event

The first Auto.Tech.Connect event, held at the Rochester Mills Production Brewery in Auburn Hills on Nov. 15, was a success, said Denise Asker, executive director of the Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce.

"We decided to sponsor the event after we noticed that while the city is an epicenter of automotive talent, there wasn't any kind of event like this – a place where auto people could come together and network," Asker said.

"So when some people at Delphi approached us and said that while the chamber puts on a lot of events, would we consider holding some sort of industry exclusive event because they just wanted to network with their peers."

So Asker and the Auburn Hills chamber organized Auto.Tech.Connect. She said the gathering on Nov. 15 was well-attended with about 35 people showing up. She said she considers that a good turnout for a first-time event.

The location offered two advantages, Asker said. First, the brewery is a new Auburn Hills business that had the chance to show off what they can do to local business people. The business has been in operation for less than a year. Second, attendees got to sample the brewery's wares while networking.

For now, Asker said, the plan is to hold regular networking events where people can get together. There are no plans to hold events where guest speakers can give presentations.

"Now that may change," Asker said. "We are still evolving. But when we suggested adding con-



David Youngman, left, tends the tap room for the Auto.Tech.Connect event.

tent to the gatherings, members said that they have plenty of events like that they can already attend, what they are looking is a place where they can network."

Jeffrey Harrison, business development manager for Customized Manufacturing and Assembly, said he came to the gathering because he saw it as a connection to the greater auto business world. His company does low-volume assembly for OEMs, and they are always on the lookout for new contacts and business.

Tim Granchi is with Gibbs Amphibian, the company that will be making amphibious vehicles in Auburn Hills. When asked why he came to the gathering, he joked, "beer."

But he added that he heard about the brewery and wanted to see it, and, of course, he wants to stay on top of what's happening in Auburn Hills.

Nick Tebeau is an engineer with Leonis. He manages the

company's visions solutions division.

"I think the idea of holding a networking event is great," Tebeau said. "The key to making the event successful is to dial in people with common interests and concerns."

"So, for this event, we don't need to have lawyers or accountants. Having auto people works. I mean I love flowers, but I didn't come here to meet a florist. And there is the beer. It's better than I expected."

Kelly Kirkpatrick, director of development for engineering and computer science at Oakland University, said things are going well at the university. They have an amazing group of students and enrollment is on the rise.

One way the university can serve its student population, Kirkpatrick said, is by connecting with local tech companies to see if any might have an interest in learning what the school is doing and seeing if any of the business-



The Auto.Tech.Connect group met Thursday at the Rochester Mills Production Brewery. Marketing Director David Youngman, center, explains the process in the brew house area, where the brew kettle, mash tun, lauter tun and hot and cold "liquor tank" are located.

es are interested in taking interns from the school.

"We want to keep in touch with local businesses," Kirkpatrick said. "We are also trying to connect with the larger area in and

around Auburn Hills.

"It's part of the mission of the school to connect with the community and an event like Auto.Tech.Connect is the perfect way to do that."

Boomers, Millennials in Workplace Topic of Recent Talent Townhall

Leaders from the Auburn Hills business community shared insights on ways to manage a multigenerational workforce during the Talent Townhall luncheon at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Auburn Hills Nov. 8.

Speakers were Chris Scharrer, executive director of Leadership Oakland, and Dr. Lee Meadows, professor of management at Walsh College, which is one of Michigan's largest graduate business schools.

They provided insights on how to effectively manage "boomers to millennials" in a diverse workforce.

Speaker Chris Sharrer has been the group's executive director for almost eight years. She said Leadership Oakland is a program designed to create and promote leadership, diversity and inclusion in the workforce.

Sharrer, said Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce marketing administrator Rachael Jay, is known for her leadership skills, vision and ability to motivate a diverse workforce.

Dr. Meadows, with more than 30 years of experience in teaching, working and consulting in the field of leadership and management, has published numerous articles on various business and academic subjects.

Talent Townhall was attended by 40 guests. The series is a function of the Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce, and is sponsored by Oakland University, Corp., Baker

College, Snelling Staffing Services, and Oakland Community College.

"Although the boomers and Generation X-ers still have a strong presence in the workforce, the millennial population in the business community is rapidly growing," said Denise Asker, executive director of the Auburn Hills Chamber.

"This past Talent Townhall addressed the generational gap and provided insight on the most effective way to manage differing workplace values and assumptions."

Jay said that the two speeches really demonstrated the major differences in the two generations.

Sharrer focused on how the generations currently in the workforce are managing the younger generation coming up, and how the boomer generation was raised differently and work differently, Jay said.

For example, said Jay, Sharrer is Leadership Oakland executive director and has dealt with job seekers from the millennial generation. They've asked if they can work remotely or through email without having to come into the office.

"It's a new trend and she's seeing a lot more of it," Jay said.

Meadows focused on managing different people in different generations. He said boomers are more comfortable with face-to-face communication. Their first instinct is not email. That's different from the way millennials operate.



Dr. Lee Meadows addresses Talent Townhall at the Crown Plaza Hotel.

Meadows noted how millennials also value their free time and believe in working just 9 to 5, as opposed to boomers who might put in a lot of hours at the expense of their private lives. This generational difference is something that's important for the different generations to understand when working together.

"The thing I want managers to understand is that we are now looking at four generations of people in the workforce," Meadows said. "That's a recipe for chaos, a recipe for miscommunication."

"A young manager in his 30s who has millennials and boomers has to understand how they view work. One generation is not more lazy than the other, but they do have different viewpoints on

work. The better you understand this, the easier it will be for you to lead."

For more about the Talent Townhall series, contact the Chamber at 248-853-7862 or email at info@auburnhillschamber.com.

Blood Donations

A blood drive is being held at the North Oakland YMCA in Auburn Hills, on Friday, Nov. 23, from 1-7 p.m. The YMCA is located at 3378 East Walton Blvd.

For more information on donating visit www.redcross.org.

Another blood drive is being held on Saturday, Nov. 24, in the Bloomfield Blood Donation Center, 4190 Telegraph Road in Bloomfield from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Faurecia Awarded By GM for Quality

Faurecia, the world's sixth-largest automotive supplier, was presented the General Motors Supplier Quality Excellence Award for 2012 on Nov. 15 for its automotive seating plant in Cleveland, Miss. This is a new award program for GM, and the Faurecia Automotive Seating facility is among one of its first to be so honored.

The Supplier Quality Excellence Award recognizes supplier achievements during the period of July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012.

The Cleveland facility produces rear seat frames for a number of GM platforms across its brands, including such popular vehicles as the Buick LaCrosse, Cadillac XTS and the Chevrolet Malibu as well as other vehicles produced by GM.

"We are very proud of our associates in Cleveland and of all that they have achieved for our customer, General Motors," said Faurecia North America President Mike Heneka.

"Through our Faurecia Excellence System and the commitment of the entire Faurecia organization, we are devoted to ensuring top-quality production of innovative components and systems."

"All of us at Faurecia are most grateful for the recognition we have earned from General Motors and are honored to be among the first to receive the GM Supplier Quality Excellence Award."