

'So God Made a Farmer' Ad Nets \$1M to Feed the Hungry

When the Ram Truck Super Bowl commercial titled, "Farmer," ran, the Ram Truck brand pledged to make a donation to the National FFA Organization for every view of its two-minute "Farmer" Super Bowl video on the brand's

website, with the intent of generating \$1 million.

It took less than a week to reach the 10 million view milestone equating to the \$1 million donation. As of Feb. 14, the "Farmer" video has been viewed

more than 18 million times at ramtrucks.com/keepplowing and youtube.com/ramtrucks and millions of more times on other Web sites.

The "Farmer" video was inspired by the stirring "So God Made a

Farmer" tribute delivered by legendary radio broadcaster Paul Harvey and used as a national anthem in grassroots videos created by farm families.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Ram's "Farmer"

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Sheila Manyam



Steve Mattar

Experts Tell AH Business Owners Details On What to Watch for with Obamacare

by Jim Stickford

Ready or not, Obamacare is coming and it's really much better if businesses are ready.

That was the message speakers gave at the recent Auburn Hills Chamber of Commerce Health Care Reform event held at the Auburn Hills OCC campus on Feb. 13.

Denise Asker, the chamber's executive director, said the chamber put on the event, with the help of Corporate Benefits Solutions and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, because that was the members' biggest concern.

"In the fourth quarter of last year, we polled our members

about what were their biggest human resources concerns," Asker said. "Obamacare came back as their top concern, followed by finding the right person for the right job and retention of workers, how to keep them once they're hired and how to keep their training up to date."

So Asker worked with Corporate Benefit Solutions of Troy and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to put on a presentation titled, "Health Care Reform: What Employers Need to Know."

The first speaker was Steve Mattar of Corporate Benefit Solutions and a member of the Michigan Association of Health Under-

writers. His company has belonged to the Auburn Hills chamber since 2006.

Mattar said the first thing people should understand is that things are changing weekly, but no matter what happens, the upcoming health laws won't change the fundamental questions employers will have about sponsored coverage. Those questions are what kind of coverage does the employer want to offer, how much will they want to contribute and will they have to offer coverage at all. Very small businesses won't have to offer insurance.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Prestige 'Top Gun' Program Matches Veterans with High-Tech Careers

by Irena Granaas

All too often, men and women returning home from military service face unemployment or have to settle for minimum-wage jobs.

But a recent study ranked Macomb County as one of the top 10 areas of the nation for veterans to live and work, and programs like the one described in this article can only add to the area's desirability.

It's a program that offers returning veterans training in high-paying automotive careers. It was initiated by Mt. Clemens-based Prestige Engineering, an engineering and design staffing agency serving a broad range of industries and founded in 1998 by Bill Fritts.

Prestige saw a need to fill a growing number of engineering positions. The company worked closely with area colleges and

workforce development agencies to create an apprenticeship program to train veterans as design engineers.

It is the first and only program of its kind in the United States.

"The apprenticeship was really a joint corporate initiative that the president (of the company), Bill Fritts, and myself had started, to combat off-shoring in 2007," said Tom Nichols, executive vice president of Prestige and a veteran himself.

"We figured since no one is training any young people in drafting anymore, there's no one to do the work even if we could get it back.

"So, to compete, the first thing we had to do was to start training entry-level designers again, which nobody was doing," he said.

Nichols understands firsthand what veterans are facing. He



Former Army mechanic Ihor Stetkewycz, left, reviews a Jeep engineering bill of material issue with human intelligence collector - and former Army ranger - Troy Smith and their manager Victoria Michalak.

earned a bachelor's degree in the U.S. Air Force, but when he left in 1988, he went from having responsibility for a \$30 million dollar airplane and its pilot, to hardly being able to get a job, and his

son went through similar struggles when he left the military in 2011 and sought civilian employment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Walk for Warmth Aids Utility Bills

The 23rd Walk for Warmth will be held on Saturday, Feb. 23, at 8:30 a.m. at Great Lakes Crossing in Auburn Hills.

The Walk for Warmth is sponsored by Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency (OLHSA) and co-sponsored by the Auburn Hills-based credit union Genisys.

People who benefit from Walk for Warmth are residents of Oakland and Livingston Counties. They access the Emergency Utility Assistance program - which is funded by contributions from Walk for Warmth - when faced with a utility shutoff notice.

There will be live entertainment and shopping discounts at various outlet stores to act as a draw for the walkers.

The goal is to raise \$180,000. To donate, sponsor or register to walk, visit the OLHSA Web site at www.olhsa.org/walkforwarmth.

N.A. Sales Drive GM Profits; Hourly Employees to Receive \$6,750 Bonus

by Jim Stickford

GM achieved its "third consecutive year of strong earnings" when it made \$4.9 billion in net income for 2012.

The company reported that revenue for 2012 was \$152.3 billion, up from \$150.3 in 2011. Net income attributable to common stockholders was down \$4.9 billion in 2012 versus \$7.9 billion in 2011, attributed "primarily to unfavorable special items."

"We recorded another solid year in 2012 as we grew the business, delivered a third straight year of profitability and took significant actions to put the company on a solid path for future growth," said Dan Akerson, chairman and CEO.

"This year, our priorities will be executing flawless new vehicle launches, controlling costs and delivering more vehicles to our customers at outstanding value."

GM North America (GMNA) reported Earnings Before Interest and Taxes (EBIT)-adjusted of \$1.4 billion in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared with \$1.5 billion in 2011. Full-year EBIT-adjusted was \$7.0 billion in 2012 compared with \$7.2 billion in 2011. Based on GMNA's 2012 financial performance, the company will pay profit sharing of \$6,750 to approximately 49,000 eligible GM U.S. hourly employees.

Like Ford, GM reported big losses in Europe. The company stated that GM Europe reported EBIT-adjusted loss of \$699 million in the fourth quarter of 2012, compared with \$600 million in 2011. The full-year EBIT-adjusted loss was \$1.8 billion in 2012, compared with \$700 million in 2011.

GM International Operations, which includes the Chinese market, reported EBIT-adjusted of \$500 million in the fourth quarter of 2012 compared with \$400 million

in 2011. Full-year EBIT-adjusted income was \$2.2 billion in 2012 compared with \$1.9 billion in 2011.

GM South America reported EBIT-adjusted of \$100 million in the fourth quarter of 2012, compared with \$200 million in 2011. Full-year EBIT-adjusted was \$300 million in 2012 compared with EBIT-adjusted of \$100 million in 2011.

GM Financial reported earnings before taxes (EBT) of \$100 million in the fourth quarter of 2012, compared with \$200 million in 2011. Full-year EBT was \$700 million, compared with \$600 million in 2011.

GM's U.S. defined benefit pension plans earned asset returns of 11.6 percent in 2012 and ended the year 84 percent funded.

The underfunded position stood at \$13.3 billion, slightly improved from the prior year. As previously announced, GM settled approximately \$28 billion of its U.S. salaried pension liability

through a combination of lump sum offers and annuitizations.

GM Chief Financial Officer Dan Ammann told reporters that while 2012 was a good, it really sets the foundation for a strong 2013. He said GM expects slightly better results in Europe for 2013, though he said it's probable that vehicle sales will be down year-over-year. GM isn't changing its prediction that the company will break even by mid-decade through reduced capacity and cutting costs.

Mike Wall, director of automotive analysis for IHS Automotive in Grand Rapids, said that he's worked closely with financial institutions that look at GM and he said that the numbers were pretty much what was expected.

Maybe they were a little under because the company's performance might have been overhyped a little, Wall said. GM's numbers showed that North America is driving the company's profits.

That's the good news. But GM, and all other OEMs who count on North America, have to be vigilant, said Wall, because the market is tight and competitive.

"Europe is Europe," Wall said. "It's a mess and it isn't going to change any time soon. The best you can expect is to slow down the bleeding."

"The Germans seem to be holding their own. Renault, a French company, is getting help from its partner Nissan, and their Russian operations are also helping. But Europe is a tough market and will continue to be for the next couple of years."

Wall said that 2013 should also be better for GM. The company will have some key launches this year. Their new pickup trucks will go into full production and the new Impala will be launched as well.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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