

Michigan Sugar is county's biggest employer

By Brenda Battel Tribune Staff Writer

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HURON COUNTY — Michigan Sugar Co. is Huron County's biggest employer, with 550 employees.

The Huron County Economic Development Corp. (HCEDC) compiled data last month that shows the top 10 industrial employers and the top 10 service/retail employers.

"Michigan Sugar is very proud to be a leading employer in Huron County and across Michigan's Thumb and Saginaw Valley," said Ray Vandriessche, director of community and government relations for Michigan Sugar. "We value our strong relationships with the communities we call home across the region. Every day, hundreds of employees and farm families work hard to keep the cooperative going strong — and when Michigan Sugar is successful, we're able to boost the economy in local communities."

Michigan Sugar in Sebewaing contributes to the total production of 1.25 billion pounds of Pioneer beet sugar annually.

In the Thumb and Saginaw Valley, Michigan Sugar employs 890 people year-round and 1,460 people seasonally, Vandriessche said.

Tower Automotive is second with 482 employees, followed by Huron Casting Inc. with 452 employees.

"Manufacturing took a dip during the recession, but that's come back," said Carl Osentoski, executive director of the HCEDC.

The top two service/retail employers are Scheurer Hospital with 420 employees and Huron Medical Center with 401 employees.

The fourth industrial revolution has reached the county, according to Osentoski.

The biggest jobs trend in the county for the last five to 10 years is more technology jobs in both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, Osentoski said.

“It’s a dramatic change,” he said.

Global positioning in tractors and robotics in manufacturing are reasons why software-related jobs are increasing, he said.

“We expect that pace to pick up as technology improves,” Osentoski said.

Looking at the county’s top employers indicates what opportunities are available, said Alan Bean, community planner at the Spicer Group in Saginaw.

Bean is working with the Huron County Planning Commission and Huron County Board of Commissioners to draft a revised master plan for the county.

The master plan will include this latest job data.

In order to develop goals for future land-use planning, officials need to look at current trends, said Jeff Smith, director of the Huron county Building and Zoning Office.

The municipality that has the most manufacturing employers in the county is Pigeon, with 11 of the county’s 43 locations, according to HCEDC data.

Bad Axe has eight; Harbor Beach has six; and Ubley has five.

Sebewaing has four; Elkton and Caseville have three each; Bay Port has two; and Port Austin and Port Hope have one each.

The full list of the top 10 employers and their number of workers, according to the HCEDC, are as follows:

Top Ten Industrial Employers

1. Michigan Sugar: 550
2. Tower Automotive: 482
3. Huron Casting Inc.: 452
4. Valley Enterprises: 261

5. Gemini Plastics: 251
6. Thumb Tool & Engineering: 226
7. Blue Diamond Steel Casting LLC: 223
8. Gemini Precision Machining Inc.: 155
9. Dow AgroSciences: 140
10. Regency Plastics: 136

Top Ten Service/Retail Employers

1. Scheurer Hospital: 420
2. Huron Medical Center: 401
3. Wal-Mart: 255
4. Huron County Medical Care Facility: 227
5. Harbor Beach Community Hospital: 159
6. Huron County Building: 156
7. Northstar Bank: 110
8. McDonald's Food & Family Center: 105
9. Huron Behavioral Health: 99
10. Huron County Road Commission: 96