

# Driving Diversity Forward

## Corp! Recognizes Michigan's Champions of Multiculturalism

BY JOSEPH CABADAS

**D**iversity is nothing new to Michigan businesses, especially in the Detroit region and in the multicultural work forces of automotive factories. In 1914, for example, 71 percent of Ford Motor Co.'s employees were foreign-born from 22 different nationalities. The man who led America's "Arsenal of Democracy" production efforts during World War II — the late General Motors President and former Ford executive William S. Knudsen (whose Danish birth name was Signius Wilhelm Poul Knudsen) — once humorously said that he learned to shout "hurry up" in 15 different languages to workers on the line.

Part of the nation's heritage — the American dream — celebrates the success of individuals of various backgrounds who had the freedom and liberty to pursue their goals. *Corp!* magazine, a longtime supporter of diversity

and multiculturalism in business, is recognizing 39 businesses and organizations for their efforts to promote diversity in positive ways. Many of these firms face pressures to cut costs, but their diversity efforts are seen as a key component of their strategies for success.

The Diversity Award winners are in the following (diverse) categories: Diversity Business Leader, for those who are role models or top officers of a minority-owned business; Diversity Focused Company, which defines and monitors diversity success and demonstrates how diversity efforts add value to a company; and Diversity Champions, a nonprofit organization that creates or promotes special programs, education or other initiatives. The winners will be honored at the Salute to Diversity event Aug. 31 at the MGM Grand Detroit.

A sampling of the responses from

award winners includes these thoughts: "Diversity makes every worker and business more creative," says Steve Tobocman, director of Global Detroit, an initiative to revitalize southeast Michigan's economy. "Evidence shows that diverse inputs inspire creative and robust outputs. The global economy requires that businesses be able to embrace different cultures, technologies, ideas, energy, etc. A diverse work force prepares a business to compete."

Grand Rapids Community College is committed to hiring a work force that reflects the diverse student population it serves, says Christina Arnold, director of the college's Bob and Aleicia Woodrick Diversity Learning Center. "We monitor our work force statistics and compare our data to our student population as well as our Kent County population. The programming and processes we have in place strengthen

our commitment and value of diversity and truly help to attract the best and brightest individuals to want to work at GRCC.”

Research shows that diverse teams are more effective and therefore more profitable to an organization, according to Philip J. Kessler, chairman of the law firm Butzel Long. “Problem-solving ability and accuracy increases by maximizing the diverse perspectives of its members,” he says. “When people feel as if their ideas are valued and included, we cannot help but be successful. As the nation continues to grow and change, it has been predicted that most people in the U.S. will be people of color. Our organizations must be ready to capitalize on these new demographics to build both our workplaces (talent) and client relationships (market).”

At Comerica Bank, the vision statement is: “Diversity is embracing an inclusive culture that recognizes, respects and is sensitive to the differences of our community.” It is important to understand, appreciate and respect the differences of diverse groups, notes Janice Tessier, Comerica vice president, manager of diversity initiatives. “Diversity can be defined not only based upon race, ethnicity and gender, but also based upon sexual orientation, generational groups, physical abilities, thinking styles and geographic locations, to name a few criteria,” she says. “I strongly believe that diversity and inclusion go hand in hand. An inclusive environment that recognizes and respects diverse people and points of view can lead to greater success for an organization, and on an individual basis contribute to our personal development.”

The Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America is an advocate for its members, many who are veterans with spinal cord injuries or related disorders. Many people with such injuries want to work but have a hard time finding employment, says Michael Harris, MPVA executive director, adding, “Companies that hire people with disabilities are viewed positively by the community at

large because they are seen acting in a socially responsible manner. Customers with disabilities have huge spending power. By employing people with disabilities, companies can learn about that target market.”

At Henry Ford Health System, diversity is not just the right thing to do; it is a key component of the hospital’s strategic plan, according to President and CEO Nancy M. Schlichting. “Our customers are diverse — minorities are the majority in six out of the eight largest metropolitan areas of the U.S.,” Schlichting says. “The combined African-American, Hispanic-American and Asian-American buying power is more than \$750 billion. Women are the primary investors in more than half of U.S. households. Our growth and success depends on the quality of our employees. Company diversity initiatives are a selling point for job seekers.”

A successful company must establish and maintain an environment where diverse backgrounds are accepted, respected and embraced as a core value, says commercial manager John W. Bul of automotive supplier Webasto Roof Systems. “The realization our ethics, morals and beliefs are not truly our own; they are actually a collection of all of our experiences seen through our eyes, and influenced by our parents, families, teachers, friends, acquaintances, employers. Literally hundreds of others have assisted us — wanted or not,” he says. “The diversity of influence has defined our character. If we continue to embrace and celebrate our diversity, our opportunities are multiplied.”

The world of work has changed drastically, and continues to do so, says Therese M. Peace, president and CEO of the consulting firm T.M. Peace & Associates. From newly appointed executives and senior executives, to those sitting on the boards of directors, leadership wills the direction of any corporate environment. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the leaders to include diversity as a business practice and strategy, Peace says. “A company’s eco-

nomics success depends on innovation and flexibility, which can be achieved through diversity and inclusion,” she says. “Diversity is important because there is a direct correlation to individual learning and openness, acceptance of others within society and the business results of organizations with a diverse work force.”

Another driving force for diversity programs is the stepped-up enforcement of regulations by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs and the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission under the Obama administration.

### Diversity Leaders

**Candace S. Matthews, Amway Corp.** chief marketing officer, leads the Ada Township-based company’s global marketing team focusing on beauty, wellness and home care products as well as supporting the global Amway brand, looking at consumer and market insights, and running corporate citizenship programs and corporate communications. Matthews joined Amway in December 2007 and is credited with updating the company’s brand, sales force and global message. *Black Enterprise Magazine* picked her as its 2009 Corporate Executive of the Year. Prior to joining Amway, she was president of Soft-Sheen Carson in the Consumer Products Division of L’Oreal USA and was vice president, new product and package innovation, and managing director, non-cola brands, with the Coca-Cola Co. She also held senior marketing positions at the CIBA Vision Corp.; Bausch & Lomb, Oral Care Division; Procter & Gamble, Cosmetics & Fragrance Division; and General Mills. Matthews is a member of the Executive Leadership Council and a past member of the board of trustees at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh. She serves on the boards of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business Advisory Council, Cosmetic Executive Women and Figure Skating in Harlem. A native of New Brighton, Pa., Matthews earned a bach-

*continued on page 30*

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elor of science degree in metallurgical engineering and administrative and management science from Carnegie-Mellon University and an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Amway started in 1959 with a business model of selling cleaning products door-to-door. Today, Amway's product lines are supported by a broad team that includes 400 scientists and 100 engineers. It owns and operates 6,311 acres of organic farmland in the United States, Mexico and Brazil. [www.amway.com](http://www.amway.com)

**AQABA Technologies** of Sterling Heights is a multinational Web strategies and technology company that was founded by President and CEO **Ramsey Sweis**. AQABA's motto is "Having No Boundary as Boundary." It provides analysis, industry facts and advice to its clients by using proprietary consumer data, executive surveys and industry forecasts. Sweis served as a board member to World Wide Wireless Communications, making contacts with different ministries and government officials in Argentina, Jordan, Peru, India and the Arab Emirates. His work in Argentina allowed him to work directly with Yahoo! where he developed his expertise in Web search marketing. Currently he is a board member of Madonna University and Automation Alley. AQABA provides website design and is Google Analytics certified, a Google AdWords agency and a Yahoo! Ambassador whose services provide strategic analysis and insight to give businesses a competitive advantage in the complex and rapidly changing Internet economy. [www.aqabatech.com](http://www.aqabatech.com)

Founded in 1987, **ASG Renaissance** of Dearborn is a woman- and Hispanic-owned international professional services firm aiding small businesses to *Fortune* 500 companies in the automotive, alternative energy, higher education, defense, health care, construction, government and nonprofit sectors. Employing 225 people — 45 percent of them women and 29 percent minorities — ASG provides marketing communications, human capital recruiting, per-

formance management and diversity services. The firm has received numerous honors and awards. "Our biggest diversity milestone is that we've maintained a diverse work force throughout our 23-year history," says CEO **Lizabeth Ardisana**. "We are involved with numerous minority associations, such as the Michigan Minority Business Development Council, Hispanic Business Alliance and the Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, because they allow us to share best practices and implement diversity programs, both internally at ASG and for our clients." ASG Renaissance creates work forces that mirror the populations and customers of its clients. "Our recruitment, retention and training strategies seek the best and brightest individuals while ensuring a diverse work force," Ardisana says. "This may mean taking extra steps to adequately promote open job requisitions to a diverse candidate pool by specifically targeting websites, user groups, organizations and associations that are affiliated with differing races, ethnic origins, genders, age groups, etc. In addition, formal training or individual mentoring and counseling promotes the benefits of diversity and assists employees in developing the proper skills and abilities to be successful in a diverse work environment." [www.asgren.com](http://www.asgren.com)

**Lawrence G. Almeda** is a shareholder at **Brinks Hofer Gilson & Lione**, one of the largest intellectual property law firms in the United States and which was founded in 1917 as a two-man patent law firm. In 2007 Almeda was appointed to the State Advisory Committee for the United States Commission on Civil Rights for a two-year term and was reappointed last year, becoming committee chair. He is also secretary for the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission and an alternate governor of the Central Region of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association. Previously Almeda was secretary for the Governor's Advisory



ASG Renaissance CEO Lizabeth Ardisana.

Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs and president of the Michigan Asian Pacific American Bar Association. Almeda is chair of the Nanotechnology Group at Brinks Hofer Gilson & Lione. He focuses on patent opinions and prosecution in the medical, chemical, nanotechnology and mechanical arts. He is an expert on medical devices, nanomaterials, micro and nanodevices, petroleum and chemical processes, polymers, fuel cells, hybrid engines and polycarbonate glazing systems. He counsels clients on patent infringement and validity evaluations. *Michigan Super Lawyers* magazine honored him in 2009 and 2010. Today Brinks has about 170 attorneys, supported by a full complement of scientific advisers, patent agents and paralegals. Headquartered in Chicago's NBC Tower, the firm has offices in Ann Arbor, Indianapolis, Research Triangle Park, N.C., Salt Lake City and Washington D.C. [www.usebrinks.com](http://www.usebrinks.com)

**Brogan & Partners Convergence Marketing** is a 26-year-old full-service marketing firm specializing in the health care, education and retail markets. Headquartered in Birmingham, it also has offices in Raleigh, N.C., Naples, Fla., and Washington, D.C. "Diversity has been a major part of

Brogan & Partners' marketing work dating back to 1984, when we created campaigns targeted to communities of color for the Michigan Department of Community Health," says **Deidre Lambert-Bounds**, managing partner. "We have encouraged African-American, Asian and Hispanic women to get tested for breast cancer; talked to African-American teens in Detroit about the negative effects of violence; convinced Arab-American youth that Internet gambling was a dead end; and even educated gay men on the dangers of unprotected sex during the throes of the AIDS epidemic." The firm's dedication to diversity goes beyond client work. It has partnered with local schools to introduce African-American high schoolers to business settings. It also hires people from a multitude of ethnicities, ages, geographies and backgrounds. Its staff has included African-Americans, Asians, Russians, Indians, American Indians, French and Hmongs. "Diversity is important to me because I grew up in Detroit and had limited daily contact with people of other races, ethnicities and cultures," Lambert-Bounds notes. "It wasn't until I joined the work force that I began to realize the importance of understanding and embracing our differences and received the real depth of how sharing our differences can put us more in touch with how much more alike we really are." [www.brogan.com](http://www.brogan.com)

**Comerica Bank** is headquartered in Dallas and has three major business segments: the business bank, the retail bank and wealth and institutional management. Comerica has 16 diversity-outreach initiative teams across its three major segments — Michigan, Texas and its western market (including California and Arizona) — that focus on building relationships with diverse customers, including African-American, Arab and Chaldean-American, Asian Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) markets. "Our employee resource network groups, such as the

Comerica African American Network, Comerica Asian Indian Association, Women's Forum and LGBT Alliance, have been highly successful in developing educational programs and events for all Comerica colleagues and in creating an inclusive environment for all of our colleagues," says **Janice Tessier**, Comerica vice president, manager of diversity initiatives. "They provide intelligence about market segments, thereby contributing to our colleagues' understanding of the diverse constituencies so we can reach out to them in a meaningful way." Setting Comerica's strategic direction is its Executive Diversity Council, which is headed by CEO and Chairman Ralph W. Babb Jr. and is composed of senior executives, including Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Linda Forte. Diversity is a core value and a key business driver for the financial institution, which also has five local diversity roundtables for its major geographic regions. Comerica has been named to *DiversityInc's* 2010 "Top 50 Companies for Diversity" list and on *Black Enterprise Magazine's* 2010 "40 Best Companies for Diversity" list. [www.comerica.com](http://www.comerica.com)

**Dickinson Wright PLLC** of Detroit is a full-service law firm with more than 260 attorneys practicing in more than 40 specialty areas. Its primary offices are in Michigan, Nashville, Phoenix, Toronto and Washington, D.C. The firm provides comprehensive legal services to clients ranging from *Fortune* 500 corporations to small businesses, new ventures, individuals, governmental units, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions. Recognized as a leading law firm for diversity initiatives, Dickinson Wright reconstituted its Diversity Committee this past year to include the firm's chairman, a member of the management group and several equity members. A diversity committee member was appointed to each of the firm's standing committees to ensure a focus on inclusion at every level. Beyond internal goals, the firm also backs initiatives to support diversi-

ty in the legal profession and the general community. For example, the firm and its attorneys — including the Dickinson Wright Women's Network — fund a variety of national scholarship and academic programs to recruit minority students and women into the legal profession. "Diversity in our firm means following a set of policies, practices and programs that are designed to demonstrate measurable progress toward a genuinely open, transparent, fair and inclusive workplace," says the award winner, **W. Anthony Jenkins**, chief diversity officer. "It is important in terms of our self-identity as a law firm and how we wish to be recognized by other organizations: Diversity and inclusion are among our core values as an institution. Also, we believe diversity and inclusion is consistent with the fundamental principles upon which this nation was founded and strengthens respect for the rule of law."

[www.dickinsonwright.com](http://www.dickinsonwright.com)

Founded by **Dr. Cynthia Shelby-Lane, M.D.**, the **Elan Anti-Aging & Longevity Center of Michigan** incorporates traditional and alternative medicine treatments for a complementary approach to health care and healing. The former director of emergency medicine at Hutzel Hospital, Shelby-Lane treats multiple health complaints based on her extensive experience in emergency and traditional medicine. Her areas of expertise are cardiovascular disease prevention, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, detoxification, adrenal and thyroid disorders, weight management, memory and brain health, autoimmune disorders and fibromyalgia. Known as "the ageless doctor," she is a graduate of the University of Michigan Medical School and Second City Comedy School in Chicago. She trained as a surgeon at the University of Texas in Houston. She practiced emergency medicine for more than 23 years and is an oral board examiner for the American Academy of Anti Aging Medicine. Her master's thesis is titled "Laughter is Good Medicine" and is based on the latest

university studies, programs at cancer hospitals and cancer organizations and interviews with top comedians and humorists. <http://shelbylanemd.com>

**Global Detroit** is part of the New Economy Initiative for Southeast Michigan (NEI) to revitalize southeast Michigan's economy by pursuing strategies that strengthen Detroit's connections to the world and make the region more attractive and welcoming to immigrants. The NEI was launched in 2008 as an eight-year philanthropic initiative. Ten national and local foundations committed a total of \$100 million to NEI: Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation, Ford Foundation, Hudson-Webber Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, McGregor Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and Skillman Foundation. "Diversity is ensuring that all voices and people are respected and have access," notes **Steve Tobocman**, Global Detroit director. "This is critically important to southeast Michigan as the world and the global economy become more interrelated and diverse. Global Detroit embraced this concept because ensuring that our community is diverse, welcoming to all and globally connected is critical to creating jobs and prosperity for all of us." Within the past year, Global Detroit met with more than 50 individual international communities in southeast Michigan and the non-profit service organizations that service these ethnic groups. <http://neweconomyinitiative.cfsem.org>

**Jamie C. Hsu**, professor of management and engineering at **Lawrence Technological University**, is a *Corp!* Diversity Leader honoree. He is a consultant on automotive strategies and management, entrepreneurship, cultural diversity, leadership and career development, organizational effectiveness, technology management and global collaboration. He teaches doctor and master of business administration students on strategic management and

global leadership. Hsu also advises various diversity organizations on how to bridge cultural differences. He is the former executive director of General Motors' Global Technology Management Department where he was in charge of global technology collaborations among GM North America, GM China, GM Daewoo, Suzuki, Subaru, FIAT and Isuzu. Among his other activities, he is on the steering committee of the Greenfield Education Coalition and Focus: Hope for African-Americans; vice chair of the advisory board for the Council for Asian Pacific Americans; executive sponsor/founder of the GM Asian Pacific Employee Diversity Group; chair of the Society of Automotive Engineers Emerging Technologies Advisory Board; adviser to the Detroit Chinese Engineers Association and the Detroit Chinese Chamber of Commerce; adviser to the Asian Pacific Island American-Vote organization; and a board member of the Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce. Lawrence Tech of Southfield offers more than 100 undergraduate, master's and doctoral degree programs in colleges of Architecture and Design, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering and Management. Founded in 1932, the 4,500-student private university pioneered evening classes and today has a growing number of weekend and online programs. LTU offers programs with partner universities in Canada, Mexico, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. [www.ltu.edu](http://www.ltu.edu)

Founded in 1995, **Logic Solutions Inc.** of Ann Arbor is a private, minority-owned corporation with offices in Phoenix; Irvine, Calif.; Hong Kong; and Shanghai, Beijing and Nanjing, China. It provides technology solutions and services including custom Web applications and mobile development for businesses across the United States. Logic Solutions also helps U.S.-based companies expand their Asian presence with staffing, business development, IT support, application development and more. The company's staff includes employees with Asian Pacific (Chinese,

Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Indian) and Middle Eastern backgrounds, and minorities hold a majority of executive positions. "Our diverse staff results from both direct hiring and business acquisitions," says **Jimmy Hsiao**, CEO. "After completing two acquisitions and opening an office in Irvine, Calif., we expect to grow by 20 percent this coming year. This growth will lead to more hiring and thus more opportunity for equal employment." Both Hsiao and Chief Financial Officer Grace Lee serve on the board of directors for the Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce. Hsiao also volunteers on the Cultural Ambassadors Program through Ann Arbor SPARK, where he helps to facilitate communication between Ann Arbor and Asian business communities. "Many of our employees, both minorities and otherwise, are strong stewards of their community in a wide array of volunteer roles," he notes. "These community-building activities serve to create strong local relationships that have led to strong business relationships for us." Logic Solutions' hiring philosophy is to seek the best talents, no matter of race, creed or gender, believing that the best talent can be found only when all prejudices are set aside. [www.logicsolutions.com](http://www.logicsolutions.com)

"Customers don't need us, we need them," has been the founding philosophy of **Meijer** since 1934. Based in Grand Rapids, the retailer operates 190 supercenters throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky. **Karen Morris**, senior vice president of human resources, is a *Corp!* 2010 Diversity Leader honoree. She has participated in the Business Leaders Linked to Encourage New Directions (BLEND), which is a social network to help young minority professionals join the broader business community. "Roadblocks are often your perception, your reaction to a situation," she told *The Grand Rapids Press* for a 2008 story. "Your perspective helps you move forward or it can stifle you." Before joining Meijer, she was vice

president of human resources at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide and human resources director at General Mills. [www.meijer.com](http://www.meijer.com)

The **National Federation of Filipino American Associations** -



Willie D. Dechavez, NaFFAA state chairperson.

**Michigan Chapter** (NaFFAA), Sterling Heights, values the importance of preserving Filipino cultural traditions, history and heritage while at the same time encouraging participation in all aspects of American life. “To me, diversity is embracing and respecting without mental reservation the cultures of other peoples and integrating them into your own culture,” says **Willie D. Dechavez**, NaFFAA state chairperson. “It is important to society because accepting diversity as an integral part of the community could result in a peaceful, orderly and harmonious relationship among the people in that community. I decided to embrace the diversity concept shortly after I migrated here in Michigan. I embraced the concept because I believe in the assertion that there is strength in diversity and that this diversity force makes the United States of America a great nation.” [www.naffaa.org](http://www.naffaa.org)

**Oakwood Healthcare System,**

headquartered in Dearborn, has four hospitals and dozens of medical clinics across the Metro Detroit Area. It has received many awards and recognitions for its use of medical technology, including honors for heart care and pediatrics. One of Oakwood’s programs is Clinical Language Services for patients with limited English proficiency, which provides communication of medical care information such as diagnosis, treatment plans, medication, follow-up instructions, surgeries, pre- and post-op procedures, surgical consents and discharge instructions. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation recently awarded Oakwood its Language Quality Improvement Collaborative grant, making the hospital one of nine health care organizations to receive such recognition. “This collaborative grant allows us to improve our quality measures and tactics aimed at collecting language data, especially at the admitting/registration front desk,” says



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**Mohamad “Moe” Rustom**, RN, BSN, director of Clinical Language Services and winner of the 2010 Diversity Business Leader Award. “The qualified information collected from this study has enhanced patient experiences and services and added to the quality of clinical care, from prevention services to diagnosis, treatment and discharge.” Oakwood’s mission is supported by a core philosophy of five values: Compassion, Respect, Excellence, Diversity and Ownership (CREDO). “CREDO is an apt acronym for our credo, ‘Patients Come First,’” Rustom adds. [www.oakwood.org](http://www.oakwood.org)

TONY SIMLER



*Mohamad Rustom, director of Clinical Language Services at Oakwood Healthcare System.*

Headquartered in Romulus, **Oneida Solutions Group** is an American Indian-owned company that provides relocation and installation services throughout the U.S. and more than 100 other countries. OSG partners with many of the leading service providers in household, office and industrial moving; furniture installations; project management; residential and commercial real estate; and complete mortgage services. Founder and President **John A. Green** — a *Corp!* 2010 Diversity Leader winner — told the magazine in a 2009 story that building a solid, high-quality company is its own reward. “With a growing company, my team and I have managed to maintain excellent quality to our accounts and vendors,” he said, adding that he works to

maintain a high reputation for integrity with his employees and accounts. [www.oneidasolutions.com](http://www.oneidasolutions.com)

**William Langford** is vice president of field marketing for **Pepsi Bottling Group**, for which he leads marketing efforts in Michigan, Minneapolis, western Pennsylvania, eastern Kentucky and West Virginia. A native Detroit and Cass Technical High School graduate, Langford graduated from Michigan State University with a bachelor of science degree in food systems economics and management. He is a member of the Detroit alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., the advisory board of the Salvation Army and the Arts League of Michigan community advisory board. Prior to joining Pepsi Bottling Group, Langford spent seven years with PepsiCo, where he was director of urban market development and a zone sales leader for Frito Lay. “An inclusive workplace provides broader perspectives and ideas which lead to optimal and innovative solutions,” Langford says. “The U.S. will continue to experience the greatest amount of population growth with minority groups; if organizations don’t create inclusive workplaces they will lose the war for talent. An inclusive workplace is good for all employees because the company has the opportunity to create an environment where all employees feel valued, and that is definitely the right thing to do.” Extremely



*William Langford, vice president of field marketing for Pepsi Bottling Group.*



*Tara Michener, founder of Tara Michener Industries LLC.*

effective at planning and implementing detailed programs that focus on increasing sales and market share, Langford has built many successful collaborative relationships with sports teams and diverse community organizations to increase product awareness and sales. He is highly effective at recruiting at major colleges and universities and led a recruiting effort at historically black colleges and universities. Pepsi Bottling Group is the world’s largest manufacturer, seller and distributor of Pepsi-Cola beverages, with annual sales of more than \$13 billion. The operating unit is headquartered in Westchester County, New York, and employs approximately 70,000 people. [www.pbg.com](http://www.pbg.com)

Author **Tara Michener**, founder of **Tara Michener Industries LLC** of Livonia, assists others in their professional success. She wrote the “Who I Am” series of books and accessories for children that promote self-esteem, diversity and literacy. Her services include diversity consulting, speaking and training for schools, corporations and groups. Programs can be customized to include council building, inclusion planning, events and more. She also provides brand consulting for companies and individuals for traditional marketing campaigns and using social media platforms, workshops, power calls, brand by demand, etc. [www.taramichener.com](http://www.taramichener.com)

As vice president of human resources and general affairs at **Yazaki North America**, **Lynn Weaver** is responsible for attracting, retaining and developing talented employees as well as handling internal communications, environmental health and safety issues and public relations. She joined Yazaki in 2001 and is one of the highest-ranking women executives in the corporation. She has led initiatives focused on work environment recognition, resource planning and staffing and employee development. Weaver is on the Wayne State University Board of Visitors (Office of International Programs) and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. She is a member of the Inforum Center for Leadership Advisory Council, NAACP, the Urban League, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and Links Inc. Before coming to Yazaki, Weaver was director of human resources at Federal Mogul and also at Xerox Corp. She also once held a board position with the Garth Fagan Dance Co. (choreographer of “The Lion King”). She earned a B.S. and MBA from Michigan State University. Yazaki is one of the largest vehicle electronics suppliers in the world. With its North American headquarters in Canton, it manufactures power and data networks including wire harnesses, power distribution components, connectors, instrumentation and advanced electronics. [www.yazaki-na.com](http://www.yazaki-na.com)

### Diversity-Focused Companies

One of the 10 largest law firms in Michigan, **Bodman LLP** was founded in Detroit in 1927 and has its principal office at Ford Field plus three other Michigan offices (Troy, Ann Arbor and Cheboygan) and an affiliate office in Dallas. Bodman’s clients include individuals and businesses in a variety of industries, with emphasis on financial services, automotive, real estate and construction, high tech, manufacturing, health care and other sectors. Bodman’s recent programs to enhance inclusiveness and promote community service include “Featured Faces.” Developed



*Bodman’s James Heimbuch, Damali Sahu and Andrew Curoe (left to right) help prepare treat bags for children attending Matrix Human Services’ Halloween celebration on Detroit’s east side. Curoe, a Bodman partner, is chairman of the board of directors for Matrix.*

by its diversity committee, Featured Faces is a series of personality profiles of attorneys and staff posted on the firm’s intranet that don’t disclose the identity of the subject until the end. Following the profile are candid photos of the person, including pets, family or hobbies. “Our interactive diversity training reminds readers that each one of us is more than meets the eye, and promotes connectivity as commonalities are revealed,” says Ralph E. McDowell, chairman. “Led by an outside consultant, the training helped participants appreciate the discomfort of being an outsider in a group.” Other programs include the gender differences workshop, which allowed participants to recognize gender-based differences in behavior and perceptions; the diversity competencies workshop, which helped participants identify their strengths and weaknesses in working in a diverse community; diversity university, which featured a visit to the Holocaust Museum; and Matrix Community Services Volunteer Day, where Bodman volunteers collected candy, filled 1,000 Halloween treat bags and decorated an activity center on the east side of Detroit for the 100-year-old social services agency. [www.bodmanllp.com](http://www.bodmanllp.com)

**Bush Seyferth & Paige** is a national woman-owned law firm that defends *Fortune* 500 clients in high-profile

product liability, complex commercial and employment litigation, as well as class-action matters throughout the country. “Our philosophy is simple: We win complex cases, both at trial and on appeal,” says Cheryl A. Bush, majority owner and managing partner of the Troy-based law firm and who is also a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. “Our tireless commitment delivers exceptional litigation results generally associated with larger national firms, while still providing the personal attention and cost efficiency of a smaller firm.” Last year was pivotal for the firm, as its largest client in the automotive industry went bankrupt. Bush diversified the firm’s client base by joining the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms (NAMWOLF) and the Women’s Business Enterprise National Conference. “It is a priority for us to recognize and promote diversity within our firm,” Bush says. “We look forward to developing a rich network of relationships with our fellow members.” Being a NAMWOLF member has given the law firm access to approximately 145 companies nationwide, and it has gained three new clients, including Accenture and Dell, while building relationships with countless others. BSP also gained a referral network of 78 law firms across the country. Assisting Bush is partner Erinn D. DePorre, co-chair of



Bush Seyferth & Paige majority owner and managing partner Cheryl A. Bush.

NAMWOLF's Government Advocacy Committee, who promotes the inclusion of women- and minority-owned businesses. DePorre was also involved with the Defense Research Institute's Diversity for Success committees. [www.bsplaw.com](http://www.bsplaw.com)

Established in 1854, **Butzel Long** has 190 attorneys and offices in Detroit, Bloomfield Hills, Lansing and Ann Arbor. Outside of Michigan, the firm has locations in New York City and Washington, D.C., plus allied offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Mexico City and Monterrey, Mexico. Butzel Long is also a member of the Washington, D.C., law firm of Butzel Long Tighe Patton and represents regional to international industries. Its Diversity & Retention Committee recently implemented a plan to target business processes that not only affect diversity but also make a positive difference to the firm's bottom line. As a part of these strategic goals, the firm became a founding sponsor of the Michigan Diversity Council (MIDC) in 2009. "The MIDC is a unique resource for organizations that both value and seek to effectively manage diversity," notes Philip J. Kessler, chairman. "Daimler Financial Services, Michigan First Credit Union, University of Michigan, Wayne State University, Chrysler Group LLC, The Rehmann Group and the law firm of Butzel Long all support its efforts." The

MIDC's role is to partner with organizations and community members to keep diversity and inclusion strategies at the forefront of corporate decision-making during the economic downturn to prevent these efforts from diminishing due to cost-cutting measures. Perhaps the most visible example of the firm's commitment to diversity was its role as co-counsel for the University of Michigan in its defense of its affirmative action policies in lawsuits that were eventually argued in the U.S. Supreme Court. In connection with that, the firm helped to underwrite a touring exhibit developed by the University of Michigan entitled "Cases About Diversity" that traveled throughout Michigan and helped present an overview of the issues related to affirmative action in the context of higher education. [www.butzel.com](http://www.butzel.com)

**Henry Ford Health System** (HFHS) is one of the nation's leading comprehensive, integrated, not-for-profit health care systems. It provides acute, specialty, primary and preventive care services backed by excellence in research and education. "Our No. 1 milestone is the 2010 Performance Goal requiring all our leaders to partner with human resources to promote a culture that supports diversity and development," says President and CEO Nancy M. Schlichting of the Detroit-based hospital group. "Ten percent of each leader's performance is measured by their active participation in diversity recruitment and training. This initiative helped to increase awareness, cultural competency and collaboration of leaders." The hospital's second milestone was launching a new diversity and inclusion training curriculum for HFHS University that provides learning opportunities using a blended approach. Employees can engage in both instructor-led diversity courses and online program options. This initiative promotes engagement, inclusion and general awareness and sensitivity. A third milestone was achieving the No. 1 ranking on *DiversityInc's* "Top Health Care Systems for Diversity" list. This honor

highlighted Henry Ford's efforts in CEO commitment, work force diversity, supplier diversity and community. "Diversity has many meanings and definitions, but at Henry Ford, we see it as a way to value the unique talents of our employees," Schlichting adds. "Our commitment to diversity revolves around creating a culture of inclusion, where all employees have an opportunity for advancement, are treated with respect and dignity and can contribute their diversity of thought, work style, background and experiences." [www.henryford.com](http://www.henryford.com)

**HTC Global Services** of Troy is a privately owned, minority-certified company providing information technology outsourcing services all over the world. The company has delivery centers in Troy plus Chennai and Hyderabad, India, and Malaysia. These centers are equipped with state-of-the-art IT infrastructure and connectivity. "We have grown due to our open culture in attracting the best talent to the workplace," says Madhava Reddy, president and CEO. "We believe that every associate has a part to play in the growth of the company. It takes five fingers to make a hand; they are not of the same length and shape, but you can achieve a lot more with five fingers together than with one finger. The best and brightest are not born so, but the society we live in from home to work-



Madhava Reddy, president and CEO of HTC Global Services Inc.

place imparts that knowledge and training.” Being an equal opportunity employer, HTC Global Services takes pride in attracting talent from the local communities and colleges. By offering an opportunity to someone who would be ignored by the big companies, the company enhances employee dedication and motivates people to become the best in due course. “This is a value that we can cherish the rest of our lives for having given a soul an opportunity to prosper and share the wealth,” Reddy adds. [www.htcinc.com](http://www.htcinc.com)

**Tee Tee’s Place Child Care Centers** of Ann Arbor provides before- and after-school care educational programs for students in kindergarten through eighth grade in the comfort of their own school building so they can complete all academic assignments, build healthy relationships with schoolmates and engage in physical activities. “We’ve reached our five-year milestone and will be opening our 10th center

this fall,” says Teresa Woods, CEO and chairman. “We’ll also be presenting our second annual Jennifer Bennett Scholarship to sponsor students to attend camp and college tours. Our giving-back programs help families that otherwise would have to leave children home alone.” As part of Tee Tee’s employee hiring, retention and training processes, it intentionally seeks out people of different backgrounds. The company strives to hire people who look like and come from similar backgrounds as its students so the students feel more at ease with Tee Tee’s staff. “We look at the demographics of the colleges and universities when we go recruiting,” Woods says. “We also use nontraditional practices, such as searching through the Michigan job bank for employees and referral process. It is not different than seeking the best and brightest; diversity does, however, take longer to achieve.”

[www.teeteesplacecenters.com](http://www.teeteesplacecenters.com)

**T.M. Peace & Associates Inc.** of Plymouth is a leadership and organization development consulting practice. “Our expertise is in assisting leaders to understand the demands of their leadership position and the impact they have on an organization and its work force,” says Therese M. Peace, president and CEO. “Through action-based learning, we work with you to develop personalized strategies that strengthen the connection between ambition and knowledge — i.e., desire and know-how.” The firm helps organizations understand that diversity efforts impact the bottom line beyond a “check-the-box requirement.” Diversity enhances creativity and innovation and increases the ability to resolve more complex business issues. T.M. Peace & Associates has consultants with diverse backgrounds and experience, placing the company in a better position to understand its clients’ needs and implement practical business solutions. “We

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*Therese M. Peace, president and CEO of T.M. Peace & Associates Inc.*

believe greater diversity comes in the skills, experience, perspective, personal characteristics, behaviors and thought processes an individual contributes," Peace adds. "It is not about the differences, it is about the outcome achieved because of the differences. Properly leveraged and cultivated diversity enriches the learning experience, promotes integrity and respect and contributes to the bottom line." [www.tmpeace.com](http://www.tmpeace.com)

**TRI-TEC LLC** was established in April 1999 as a partnership among three Tier One minority suppliers — Scion Steel, Devon Contracting and Gala and Associates — to provide assembly and conveyor systems for the automotive industry. Headquartered in Beverly Hills, TRI-TEC's annual sales to Ford and General Motors exceed \$100 million. TRI-TEC installed flexible manufacturing assembly lines at Ford's Kansas City Assembly, Norfolk Assembly and Dearborn Truck plants; completed the renovation and construction at Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant; and relocated GM's Validation Operations. [www.tritec.com](http://www.tritec.com)

Founded more than 75 years ago, **Warner Norcross & Judd LLP** of Grand Rapids has six offices throughout Michigan with a combined 220 attorneys. Among its accomplishments, Warner is ranked among the Top 200 by

*The National Law Journal*; has 62 partners listed in the 2010 edition of *The Best Lawyers in America*; and has the highest number of lawyers in Michigan who are experts in employee benefits, environmental law, international trade and finance law, nonprofit/charities law, trusts and estates. During the past 10 years, the firm committed to becoming a more diverse and inclusive organization. "Our growing diversity brought us a broader range of perspectives and experiences that made us better able to serve our clients," notes CEO and partner Douglas E. Wagner. "Our emphasis on respect, inclusion and teamwork allows individuals in the firm to have more fulfilling careers and is essential to maintaining an engaged work force that is dedicated to working together to meet the needs of our clients." The law firm defines diversity broadly, recognizing that each individual brings differences in heritage, culture, experience and perspective, allowing the firm to better serve the needs of its clients in a global economy. "Each person who works for the firm is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity," Wagner says. [www.wnj.com](http://www.wnj.com)

**Webasto Roof Systems Inc.** of Rochester Hills is a leading global Tier

One supplier of automotive convertible, roof and body components, as well as heating, cooling and ventilation systems for passenger cars and commercial vehicles. "Our diverse work force has been instrumental in our ability to quickly respond to changes in economic conditions," says John W. Bul, CMRP commercial manager, Michigan Operations. "This has allowed us to enter into emerging markets with remarkable success and sustain our existing market through innovation." Webasto's ABC Plan — A = Action (do it), B = Balance (consider effect on all) and C = Creativity (drive new standards) — is built upon its diverse talent pool. The Webasto corporate culture (The Webasto Way) fosters a positive work environment emphasizing fairness and concern for people, which supports teamwork and open communication. "All colleagues have a right to be treated with respect in the workplace, free from discrimination or favoritism," Bul adds. "Webasto is committed to providing equal employment opportunities for all qualified colleagues. Our diversity is further enhanced by our relationship with our minority (and all) suppliers, vendors, service providers and customers." Company employees



*Colleague Appreciation Day at Webasto Roof Systems Inc.*

dedicate their time and energy to society, participating in causes such as Habitat for Humanity. Webasto has a “Jean Day” every Friday, during which employees can wear jeans in exchange for a \$5 donation to charity. Its R.E.A.P. Program (Recognizing Excellence and Accomplishments in People) provides a format to submit ideas and suggestions without limitation or exclusion. All submissions are reviewed by a cross-functional R.E.A.P. Team for feasibility and value, with the focus always on the human element. R.E.A.P. Team members also serve as mentors to facilitate the implementation process, remove constraints and calculate cost savings if applicable. [www.webasto.com](http://www.webasto.com)


**Diversity-Focused Organizations**  
**The Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living** is an advocate for improving the quality of life of individuals with disabilities. Since 1976 the center has promoted programs, classes

and events to help a critical, disadvantaged population — including people with significant health problems such as cardiovascular disorder, diabetes, cancer survivorship or any condition that causes substantial limitations of major life activities — raise their skills, expand social connections and find jobs. The center’s Career Services program offers an array of job-search workshops and individual assistance programs that help hundreds of unemployed individuals who have unique disabilities. The program is open to all job seekers in the community, with or without a disability, and attracts a large number of skilled, talented and educated individuals in their quest to present themselves as the best possible candidate for a job, notes Gary Heitman, talent connector. The Ann Arbor CIL staff helps individuals work through issues that most other staffing and career service agencies are too afraid to talk about, such as how to get around lingering



Gary Heitman, a talent connector at the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living.

effects of chemotherapy, chronic side effects of diabetes and how they impact a job, social challenges associated with Asperger’s and so forth. Individuals



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After 17 years at Brogan & Partners and serving as managing partner, Deidre is now joining sister agency Ignite Social Media as COO and head of the midwest office. She brings her commitment to diversity marketing to this new marketing discipline. Along with her skill in reaching African-American, Latino, and Arab-American audiences as she did for Brogan clients such as the Michigan Department of Community Health, the California-based Molina Healthcare, and University of Michigan.

Deidre’s colleagues at both Brogan and Ignite Social Media congratulate her on this achievement and on all the achievements to come.



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Lisa Mangigian, a talent connector at the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living.

with visible disabilities comprise less than half of the job seekers in the talent pool; there are many people who have a hidden impairment, such as depression, diabetes or a heart conditions. “Our goal is to help job seekers show employers that they are just as good as, if not better than, a nondisabled peer,” adds Lisa Mangigian, talent connector. “We recommend our high-caliber pool of job seekers for positions because they are the right candidates for those jobs.” The center also offers formal training to employers and businesses on disability awareness issues, etiquette and the Americans with Disability Act, which helps businesses to reach out to and include people with disabilities as profitable customers, employees and constituents. Through the trainings, members of the business community learn new insight, appreciation and understanding of the experiences of individuals with disabilities and begin to see that involving people with disabilities in their daily business activity is no big deal. [www.annarborcil.org](http://www.annarborcil.org)

The **Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce** was established in 2000 as a not-for-profit membership association dedicated to the economic advancement of Asian-Pacific American (APA) businesses and professionals. Headquartered in

Rochester Hills, the chamber believes that most successful businesses are built through relationships and mutual mentorship and support. APACC represents Asian-Pacific American businesses that have origins in either Asian, Pacific Islander or subcontinent Asian ancestry, which includes people from Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Japan, China, Taiwan, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Korea, the Philippines, U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Guam, Samoa, Macao, Hong Kong, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal. In June 2010, APACC and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Taiwan, R.O.C., hosted a two-day forum and exhibition that included a 50-member electric vehicle delegation from Taiwan led by Dr. Jung-Chiou Huang, vice minister of economic affairs. Called TAIFE (Taiwan Automotive International Forum & Exhibition), the forum was a way for Michigan’s automotive companies to cultivate relationships with key Taiwanese firms. Taiwan is one of the leading suppliers of technologically advanced products in the global market and also manufactures automotive parts, motorcycles, bicycles, machinery, mold and die works and industrial equipment. [www.apacc.net](http://www.apacc.net)

Established in 1923, the **Community House of Birmingham** is an independent nonprofit organization that offers approximately 800 classes and free community forums each year for people of all ages, interest and backgrounds. It is home to a number of sponsored groups and outreach programs, notes Shelley Roberts, president and CEO. The Race Relations & Diversity Task Force and The Community House promote programs — including the Diversity Champions Breakfast — that encourage community awareness, understanding and better relationships. The breakfast recognizes community members who improve race relations and develop a climate that promotes

inclusivity and diversity. During the past 10 years, the event has honored 400 individuals. The Community House also recognizes one of its staff members as a Diversity Champion. Community members, school superintendents, city managers and other important policy makers attend these well-publicized programs about diversity and inclusion. “For years, The Community House was the only reason for me to ever come to Birmingham,” says Debbie Macon, former board member of The Community House. “I became a founding member of the Race Relations & Diversity Task Force in 1987.” The Community House has also raised significant funds for the task force from the Kellogg Foundation and the Chrysler Foundation among others. Currently, Community House annually requests and receives funding from the Comerica Charitable Foundation, which goes directly to the task force for use in its programming. The Community House Banquet and Catering Department works with different groups to ensure they are comfortable. Respecting the needs of different cultures, the facility welcomes outside catering companies to provide for Indian, Middle Eastern and kosher events. [www.communityhouse.com](http://www.communityhouse.com)

The mission of **Easter Seals of Michigan Inc.** of Auburn Hills is to provide solutions that change the lives of children and adults with disabilities or other special needs and their families. At the core of Easter Seals is a common passion for caring, shared by more than 350 full- and part-time employees and more than 1,000 volunteers. This year, Easter Seals has started an Anti-stigma Community Inclusion Program that assists individuals with mental illness in making and developing genuine friendships with members of their community. “Our peer-support specialists work with individuals to help them identify their interests, capacities, preferences and needs related to recreational, support and social activities,” says Brent Wirth, president and CEO. “We also employ our clients

as peer advocates and support specialists. This practice assists in further strengthening our mission to create solutions that change the lives of individuals.” In collaboration with community partners, Easter Seals - Michigan offers Community Autism Resource and Education Sessions (C.A.R.E.S.) to educate parents and caregivers of children with autism. These free seminars discuss a range of topics related to autism-spectrum disorders, such as treatment options, educational advocacy, communication and sensory issues, and resources available in the community. The organization also expanded its Centro Latino program this past year, offering Oakland County residents and families a full continuum of culturally competent mental health services in Spanish. These services include infant mental health; outpatient counseling for children, adults and families; crisis intervention; individual, group and family counseling; home-based family counseling; and school-based counseling. Easter Seals staff members also often participate in speaking engagements at schools and events to educate the community about the organization’s services. [www.essmichigan.org](http://www.essmichigan.org)

The **Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce** provides networking, education, business advocacy, diversity and community programming to help businesses connect, grow and succeed. Its membership includes approximately 2,800 businesses. In January, GRACC launched the “West Michigan Minority- and Woman-Owned Business Directory” — listing 415 businesses in the region, all at least 51 percent minority- or woman-owned — as a free service. The directory is available online to any business member so it can diversify its supplier bases. In March, the chamber collaborated with the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University to present a three-day workshop on diversity, inclusion and cultural competency called “Roadmap to Cultural Competency.” The training included information on best practices on how to



*Jeanne Englehart (left), president and CEO of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, and Sonya Hughes, the organization's vice president, diversity initiatives & programs.*

move an entire organization from having the presence of individuals with diverse backgrounds to acknowledging, respecting and practicing the appreciation of those differences and providing fair opportunities to all staff, notes Jeanne Englehart, president and CEO. GRAC launched a program called Institute for Healing Racism 12 years ago, and in June helped the Springfield (Mo.) Chamber of Commerce launch its own program. In June, the GRAC held its fourth annual Minority Summer Intern Reception, attracting more than 150 guests including 40 college-aged minority interns. The reception assists employers in their recruitment and retention efforts by providing a warm welcome to all minority interns and connecting them with each other, professionals of color and business leaders from the West Michigan community. [www.grandrapids.org](http://www.grandrapids.org)

Founded in 1914, Grand Rapids Community College is dedicated to student achievement. It has six campuses on the lakeshore, with satellite sites in Grandville, Rockford and Byron Center, to bring its expert faculty to diverse communities. Its **Bob and Aleicia Woodrick Diversity Learning Center** (Diversity Center) supports the

college’s efforts by institutionalizing diversity and inclusion. “Equity and inclusion remains a process that suits an educational entity perfectly,” notes Christina Arnold, diversity center director. “Research and compassion demand a response to the historical and current effects of systemic racism in American society and other civil and social disparities.” The 16th season of the center’s Diversity Lecture Series featured feminist and social activist Angela Davis and Morris Dees, co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, among its five speakers, who reached more than 5,000 students and community and college members. The Diversity Center has a multitude of community partnerships and collaborations that generate cultural exchange and mutual learning experiences for students, businesses and educators both in and out of the state of Michigan. “The Bob and Aleicia Woodrick Diversity Learning Center has the tools to address cultural misunderstanding and disparities through educating toward greater and deeper understanding of others, their cultures and requirements,” Arnold says. “Businesses benefit from an informed employee base able to consider multiple perspectives

and address conflict with conscious, intentional process.” [www.grcc.edu](http://www.grcc.edu)

**Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America** (MPVA) has served Michigan for 48 years by making a difference in the lives of veterans, their families and the public. Based in Novi, the organization reaches out on behalf of its members (veterans with spinal cord injury or disorders), associate members and all people with disabilities to provide the highest possible quality of life in Michigan. MPVA’s diversity milestones included sponsoring Tara Michener, local author of the book series “Who I Am,” which focuses on diversity and self-esteem. Michener launched the first “The Dimensions of Diversity Alliance” on Feb. 25, which brought many Michigan-based professionals to the MPVA chapter headquarters to discuss how they could partner together to better their communities by creating positive perceptions and awareness regarding diversity issues. MPVA also

hosted a meeting in May where attendees learned more about Michigan’s Prisoner Reentry Program. The meetings were just a springboard for the Dimensions of Diversity Alliance, says Michael Harris, MPVA executive director, noting, “As human beings, we all have the same basic needs — to be accepted and cared for.” The alliance promotes dialogue to promote inclusion and togetherness throughout Michigan. The DDA offers a platform for groups and individuals to share professional resources, unify goals and form a strong enough interest on the subject of diversity and inclusion to change the world. Nearly one out of every five Americans has a disability, and 70 percent of that population segment is unemployed. The vast majority of them would like to work but can’t find employment. Because MPVA members have a spinal cord injury and/or disease that make them dependent on the use of a wheelchair for mobility, diversity in the

workplace is something the organization embraces. [www.michiganpva.org](http://www.michiganpva.org)

The **Mid-Michigan Hispanic Business Association** (MMHBA), based in Saginaw, is a nonprofit organization that was formed in 1984 to represent Hispanic businesspeople. Throughout the year, the MMHBA sponsors or co-sponsors business-to-business and social events where new entrepreneurs, established business owners and community members can share ideas and discuss ways to collaboratively strengthen the community. The MMHBA is also concerned about the education for future generations of businesspeople. To this end, members have supported local efforts to better the quality of education for all students. [www.mmhba.org](http://www.mmhba.org)

With a daytime population nearing 175,000 and nearly 27 million square feet of office space, the **City of Southfield** is home to more than 9,000 businesses and more than 100 *Fortune*

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500 companies. It has a rich array of cultural, racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds, including large Armenian, African-American, Jewish, Chaldean and Russian populations. Southfield was the first city in the state of Michigan to hold a Martin Luther King peace walk or march. The first Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Walk took place on Jan. 20, 1986, commemorating the first national observance of King's birthday. The walk continues to grow in size and scope each year, with yearlong educational and community outreach activities. [www.cityofsouthfield.com](http://www.cityofsouthfield.com)

**SER Metro Detroit, Jobs for Progress Inc.** is a multiservice community-based corporation that provides training and employment programs, activities and associated services for residents and employers of Metropolitan Detroit. SER, which stands for Service, Employment and Redevelopment, promotes upward mobility and economic self-sufficiency

for metropolitan Detroit residents through a comprehensive service delivery system in the areas of literacy, education, employment, community development and economic opportunity. [www.sermetro.org](http://www.sermetro.org)

Formed in 2007 by Ann Arbor-based business owners Debra Power (Power Marketing and Research) and Carrie Hensel (Inner Circle Media), the **Women's Exchange of Washtenaw** (WXW) hosts unique events where women business leaders talk through their issues, share experiences and ideas and form lasting connections. Its first event was a half-day conference in May 2008 that featured a panel of women business leaders from around the region followed by interactive breakout sessions. More than 200 attendees came from southeastern Michigan and northern Ohio to discuss topics such as managing growth, relationship building and visioning for their businesses. The success of the initial conference

inspired the WXW leadership team to continue to host monthly events throughout 2008 and 2009. Currently, WXW events fall into three categories: the annual WXW Forum, called Now We're Talking, plus exchange sessions and informal networking. "The future vision for WXW is to reach out to other cities in Michigan to co-host events," Power says. "In the next year, we plan to package the processes we are perfecting so other cities can replicate the success of WXW. We hope to become the premier resource for women business leaders seeking innovative methods to grow their companies." Diversity is a celebration of the broad range of ages, talents and types of businesses represented in the WXW organization, Hensel says, adding, "Creating an inclusive environment means that you foster creativity and mentoring among everyone in an organization."

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