

## Editorial

# Businesses investing in local economy

Michigan's economy is in a sad state.

There's no denying it.

Rage against the inequity, but the state's 100-year ride on the automotive industry's river of economic largess has hit the rapids and there is no clear water for the foreseeable future.

But, thankfully, not every area of the state is riding in that particular canoe.

With the automotive industry highly centralized in southeast Michigan, the other areas of the state have had to make do on their own.

That forced independence is paying off for Gratiot, Isabella and Clare counties.

While companies such as General Motors and Delphi teeter on the precipice of bankruptcy, business investment in mid-Michigan is booming.

Alma is poised to receive a "huge Energy Research Park" that will eventually employ up to 1,500 people, most of which would be highly-skilled and thus highly paid jobs.

Several national chains are investing what will eventually become hundreds of millions of dollars in Isabella County's Union Township in the Union Commons development. A Super Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Kohl's and Menard's are just some of the stores committed to the project.

1 Mt. Pleasant is benefitting from Central Michigan Universi-

ty's mission to become a nationally prominent research center with the Center for Applied Research and Technology, which continues to attract so much attention officials are scheduled to begin construction this summer on a new multi-million expansion that will double the size of CART. Two companies, Dendritic NanoTechnologies and MultiGEN, are set to occupy the expansion as soon as it is completed, and several other companies have expressed hard interest.

Small business finds the climate to its liking as well, illustrated by the scores of smaller restaurants and retail businesses that are springing up around the area. Culver's and Bellacino's restaurants and Aaron's sales and lease stores are just a few examples.

Clare County could soon see a new manufacturing presence according to economic development officials. While officials would not discuss the specifics or divulge company names, a deal could be announced this summer.

Combine that with three strong universities - Alma College, CMU and Mid-Michigan Community College - Soaring Eagle Casino, which continues to provide a strong attraction for tourism and employs thousands of local people, and a diverse industrial base and you have the recipe for a robust economy.

Middle Michigan Development Corporation President George Dunn once said that perception can save or ruin an economy. Tell someone long enough that the state is a mess and pretty soon not only do they believe it, but they stop spending money in hopes of weathering the storm.

But spending money, or investing as it's also known, is the force that drives economies to expand and grow to the benefit of all.

Judging by the willingness of business professionals to invest in the central Michigan area, the perception is that mid-Michigan has a vital, thriving economy.

It's time to put the canoes back in the river.