

Page 3

Looking at round two,
NEI funders assess future



Port authority in turf war;
off-river projects in dispute

Inside

Tom LaSorda's challenge
to health care industry,
Page 7

Crain's List

Largest Detroit employers,
Page 19

This Just In

Detroit Historical Museum
sets reopening gala Nov. 17

The **Detroit Historical Museum** plans to reopen this month, after a six-month closure for updates to the building and long-time exhibits including "Streets of Old Detroit" and "America's Motor City" and the installation of exhibits never seen before.

The **Detroit Historical Society** is hosting a "Reopening Gala," with a strolling dinner, celebrity appearances and entertainment Nov. 17. Tickets are \$150, \$500 and \$1,000. Go to detroithistorical.org and click on "Detroit Historical Museum Re-opening Gala."

The museum will open to the public at no cost Nov. 23-25.

The new galleries will include artifacts and the stories of Detroit's culture in sports, entertainment, design and architecture; its role in the Underground Railroad and in shaping the outcome of World War II; its historic and contemporary innovators from Henry Ford to sunroof pioneer Heinz Prechter, and Veronika Scott, creator of the Element "S" Sleeping Bag Coat for the homeless, and the new Kid Rock Music Lab.

— Sherri Welch

Will hospital deal benefit biz?

Beaumont-HFHS merger effect unclear

BY JAY GREENE
CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

The proposed **Henry Ford Health System-Beaumont Health System** merger could lead to cost savings for the health care organizations if executives move quickly to reduce employee and service duplication, but it's unclear whether those savings would be passed along to employers and consumers.

The merger, announced last week, would create Southeast Michigan's largest system, with eight hospitals, 3,600 beds, 42,000 employees and \$6.4 billion in annual revenue.

Some experts told *Crain's* that savings from the economies of scale and efficiencies created would take pressure off the new system to use its 35 percent to 40 percent market share to negotiate

higher prices with health insurers.

Others think a Henry Ford-Beaumont system would be able to extract 1 percent to 2 percent increases from payers above what they normally would be able to do as independent organizations.

For example, last year Beaumont balked at a 5 percent price increase offer over five years in a contract with **Blue Care Network**.

Beaumont wanted a 9 percent increase but likely settled earlier this year for something in between.

All hospitals in Michigan, including Beaumont, receive annual base pay increases of 2.6 percent from **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan** as part of a master service agreement.

Andy Hetzel, Blue Cross vice president of corporate communications, declined to comment on the proposed merger or impact on

See *Merger*, Page 24

The cooler the better



JEFF JOHNSTON/CDB

How employee-friendly features can improve the bottom line

BY CHAD HALCOM
CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Having the cool-kid rep doesn't just give a company extra cachet with millennials or a narrative for the marketing department — experts say it can pay dividends in turnover, recruitment and even in growing the customer base.

Several standout businesses in *Crain's* Cool Places to Work in Michigan 2012 awards program found that even intangible workplace assets like a weight-loss program, video game lounge or office tailgate party can help attract talent — and win customers.

"The cool label implies you are fun to work with, and people want to be a part of that kind of culture. We talk about this feature sometimes in marketing

See *Cool Places*, Page 21



HONOREES

Focus section highlights 10 Cool Places winners, lists 50, Pages 11-18

VIDEOS

Crain's asked winners for videos telling why they're a cool place to work. Check them out at crainsdetroit.com/cool



KEVIN FOWLER

CEO Kelly Rossman-McKinney says representing opponents of Proposal 3 has been a huge task for Truscott Rossman Group LLC in Lansing.

Ballot campaign strain PR firms go full tilt for message

BY AMY LANE

SPECIAL TO CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

At **Truscott Rossman Group LLC**, frozen peanut M&Ms, 5-Hour Energy and Airborne immune support have been necessities of sorts the past several months.

That's because at the Lansing firm, as with several others handling public relations in Michigan's statewide ballot campaigns, it's been all hands on deck. Putting in mega-hours and jumping into action to respond to media inquiries is elevated to a whole new level during ballot proposal season.

"It's tough sledding," said CEO Kelly Rossman-McKinney, whose firm represents opponents of Proposal 3, the constitutional amend-

ment that would increase Michigan's renewable-energy requirements. "It's not for the faint of heart."

Provisions aside, there's been little time off and long hours for many involved in the drumbeat of dueling press releases, press conferences, social media and messaging that have encompassed many of the proposals in the runup to Tuesday's election.

The proposals as a whole had raised a record-setting \$141 million as of Oct. 26, much of it to spend on advertising, according to tallies tracked by the **Michigan Campaign Finance Network**. Compensation to PR and communications firms is just a piece of the big

See *PR firms*, Page 25



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Focus

COOL PLACES TO WORK IN MICHIGAN

THE COOL POOL

Here are the honorees in *Crain's* Cool Places to Work in Michigan competition:

Employers with 250 or more employees

1. **Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America**, Lansing, this page.
2. **Brown & Brown of Detroit Inc.**, Sterling Heights, **Page 12**.
3. **Warner, Norcross & Judd LLP**, Grand Rapids, **Page 12**.
4. **Altair Engineering Inc.**, Troy, **Page 12**.
5. **ViSalus Inc.**, Troy, **Page 14**.
6. **Sun Communities Inc.**, Southfield
7. **ePrize LLC**, Pleasant Ridge
8. **Walbridge Aldinger Co.**, Detroit
9. **Compuware Corp.**, Detroit
10. **Digitas**, Detroit
11. **Bodman PLC**, Detroit
12. **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan**, Detroit
13. **Valassis Communications Inc.**, Livonia
14. **Detroit Athletic Club**, Detroit
15. **Urban Science**, Detroit
16. **Deloitte LLP**, Detroit

Employers with 15-249 employees

1. **McGraw Wentworth Inc.**, Troy, this page.
2. **Airfoil Public Relations LLC**, Southfield, **Page 15**.
3. **Arrow Strategies LLC**, Bingham Farms, **Page 16**.
4. **MiPro**, Milford, **Page 17**.
5. **Gongos Research Inc.**, Auburn Hills, **Page 16**.
6. **Plex Systems Inc.**, Auburn Hills
7. **Infinity and Ovation Yacht Charters**, St. Clair Shores
8. **Billhighway**, Troy
9. **Reliance One Inc.**, Auburn Hills
10. **Trubiquity**, Troy
11. **Interior Environments**, Southfield
12. **Farbman Group**, Southfield
13. **Northwestern Mutual-The Wilshire Financial Group**, Troy
14. **Kyyba Inc.**, Farmington Hills
15. **Brightwing**, Troy
16. **Marketing Associates LLC**, Detroit
17. **Pulse220**, Southfield
18. **OpTech LLC**, Troy
19. **RTT USA Inc.**, Royal Oak
20. **SERPEO**, Troy
21. **Hungry Howie's Pizza & Subs Inc.**, Madison Heights
22. **Cambridge Consulting Group**, Troy
23. **Preh Inc.**, Novi
24. **WorkForce Software**, Livonia
25. **Great Lakes Capital Fund**, Lansing
26. **Community Housing Network Inc.**, Troy
27. **Computerized Facility Integration LLC**, Southfield
28. **Image One Corp.**, Oak Park
29. **Lambert Edwards & Associates**, Grand Rapids
30. **Creative Breakthroughs Inc.**, Troy
31. **Cenit North America Inc.**, Auburn Hills
32. **Michigan First Credit Union**, Lathrup Village
33. **Michael Morse PC**, Southfield
34. **ForeSee Results Inc.**, Ann Arbor



Sometimes it's pizza. Sometimes it's volunteer opportunities. Sometimes it's flexible schedules, wellness programs or diet contests.

What's clear from *Crain's* Cool Places to Work in Michigan competition, though, is that the most important elements of "cool" have to do with employers being tuned in to what's important to the workforce they want — and providing it.

Best Companies Group of Harrisburg, Pa., managed

the Cool Places program. Applicants filled out an employer questionnaire, and the employees of each applicant company were surveyed. The weighted results of the two yielded 50 winners across two company size categories.

The winners are listed at left in ranked order. Profiles of the top five in each category appear below and on the following pages, along with brief descriptions of key features of the other 40 winners.

Large Companies: 250-plus employees

Accident Fund: Support, flexibility not happenstance

Sharon Phillips has been with **Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America** for 21 years, and knowing she has her manager's support at work and

No. 1

Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America
Lansing

with outside commitments is just part of what she values about the company.

With headquarters in Lansing, Accident

Fund is a workers' compensation insurance company that provides coverage to small and midsize businesses nationwide. The company has about 610 employees.

Phillips, a senior claims examiner, is a mother of three children, which means a lot of last-minute crises. She said her relationship with her manager on time issues is give-and-take.

"I have the flexibility to do what I need to outside of work so I



AL GOLDIS

can be effective and efficient when I'm at work," Phillips said. "If I am working on a Saturday, or I'm working at 9 at night, I have no issue with that ... I want to do what she needs me to do."

Mike Britt, president of Accident Fund, knows that valuing employees' time means they will give more back to the company,

and the company ends up with better results.

"It's always best for a company to have happy employees," Britt said. "When you are talking to someone over the phone, you can hear the smile."

Accident Fund makes the wellness of its employees a part of its business plan. Britt is particular-

Senior claims examiner Sharon Phillips and company President Mike Britt are shown in Lansing-based Accident Fund's fitness center.

ly proud of the company's community service and its educational reimbursement program.

The company helps employees find a direction for further education and reimburses costs in certain areas of study.

"It's easy for companies to talk about this kind of stuff," Britt said. "We spend time on it and deliver on it."

The focus on employee wellness has created a team of happy, close-knit co-workers, even as the business has grown over the past decade. Phillips said she and her co-workers have gone through a lot together, and it's made them all work to make sure Accident Fund stays successful.

"You don't always find company employees that are also friends," Britt said. "Here, we just have a lot of people that are good, close, personal friends."

— Michelle Muñoz

Small Companies: 15-249 employees

McGraw Wentworth: Listening to employees is paramount



President Tom McGraw hangs out in a common area of McGraw Wentworth's office in Troy.

PHOTOS/SEAN DOERR

McGraw Wentworth Inc. offers a varied package of perks and benefits to its nearly 75 employees, and Human Resources Director Cathie Ruffner said it was designed by the employees themselves.

The Troy-based group benefits broker and consultant

sends surveys to find out what employees would value and like to see offered. Ruffner said employees are able to manage their lives outside work because of perks such as dry cleaners and shoe shiners on site. Keeping company wellness initiatives new and exciting is important, as well.

"We listen," Ruffner said. "I have never worked in a place that is so open to providing that to employees."

Principal and President Tom McGraw said high performance is one thing all of the employees have in common, and he wants to show how much they are valued.

"We want to send a signal that we want peo-

ple that are thoughtful, that are engaged, that have opinions — and we listen to them," McGraw said.

The package of perks and benefits includes yoga classes taught by an employee on Tuesdays, massage therapists in the office and on-site B-12 shots, the last an employee suggestion.

"As an employee, what I appreciate is that they are willing to do these things," Ruffner said. "They think of us as humans, not just employees."

Participating in wellness initiatives can result in even more perks for employees. "Wellness bucks" can be accumulated for gym memberships and jeans days.

"We believe that the most important part of our service offering to our clients is the quality of our people," McGraw said. "We believe culture makes a difference in that engagement."

McGraw said he also is proud to offer employees a flexible schedule and option to work from home.

— Michelle Muñoz



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Brown & Brown: When the sun

Christine Catalanotte, human resources coordinator at **Brown & Brown of Detroit**, likes the element of surprise that comes with her work at the commercial business insurer. That surprise comes in the form of Sunshine Days, when the office closes spontaneously and for no

reason other than nice weather.

"The Sunshine Days are great because sometimes it's a beautiful day in the summer and people are looking out, saying, 'Gosh it's so nice, I'd rather be outside than inside,'" said President Gene LoVasco.

Brown & Brown Inc. also specializes in employee benefits, financial services and personal lines, and employs 5,500 in offices in nearly every state. Brown & Brown of Detroit is a subsidiary

No. 2

Brown & Brown of Detroit Inc.
Sterling Heights



JON BROUWER

HR Director Cheryl Couthie (standing) meets with employees in Grand Rapids.

Warner Norcross: Teamwork is focus

At **Warner Norcross & Judd LLP**, there is an emphasis on teamwork. All employees work for the firm, not for individual attorneys. Doug Wagner, managing partner, said this makes for an "all-for-one-and-one-for-all atmosphere."

Cheryl Couthie, director of human resources, said the organization gives to employees, which means there's never a strug-

gle to find extra hands to fulfill a client need.

"People recognize that whenever possible they receive a great deal from the organization," Couthie said. "When you are treated like a professional, you act like a professional."

Warner Norcross, a multi-disciplinary law firm with offices in Clinton Township, Grand Rapids, Holland, Lansing, Muskegon and Southfield, has about 400 employees.

Couthie said she appreciates the flexibility of time off or adjust-

No. 3

Warner Norcross & Judd LLP
Grand Rapids

Altair: Micro-management is out

Craig Mackiewicz's favorite aspect of his work with **Altair Engineering Inc.** is the trust displayed by management for all employees.

No. 4

Altair Engineering Inc.
Troy

"They hire bright, intelligent people," said Mackiewicz, design studio leader at Altair's ThinkLabs division. "There isn't any micro-managing that's going on."

Altair is an international technology company with about 475 employees in the United States, more than 330 in Michigan. About 900 employees work outside the U.S.

The option of a flexible work schedule is the biggest display of trust, Mackiewicz said. Employees are trusted to get their jobs done, and management is cognizant of the fact that work isn't the only facet of their lives.

That level of trust is beneficial not just for employees, but it also

works for the whole company, said Chief Information Officer Martin Nichols. Everyone at the organization can be creative and bring ideas to the table, he said.

"The trust aspect creates a lot of unexpected benefits," Nichols said. "Upper-level management doesn't have all the ideas for the next cool thing we want to do." There is no strict chain of command, so opportunities can come from anyone within the organization.

"It might seem at times unstructured, but it is a very well-functioning machine," said Nichols.

Nichols said Altair emphasizes all-around wellness for its employees as well. A full-time nurse practitioner is available to employees at the in-house clinic. The nurse has been there about a year and a half and has developed wellness programs, such as a "Biggest Loser"-style weight-loss competition, yoga and women's health seminars. The building also features a gym. Other benefits include employee appreci-

Focus: Cool Places to Work in Michigan

Large Companies: 250-plus employees

shines, surprises are among the benefits

that employs 76.

LoVasco says providing a place where people not only get a paycheck but also get personal fulfillment leads to happier employees and better outcomes for clients.

“We know we have a job to do, but at the same time, we want to make it an enjoyable place to work,” LoVasco said.

In addition to Sunshine Days, the company provides employees with morale boosters that include

tailgates, ice cream socials and trick-or-treat days on-site.

An annual health fair, a walking club, flu shots and a gym membership reimbursement are included with employment, as well.

LoVasco calls the benefits and perks a triad that covers mental, spiritual and physical well-being.

Because Catalanotte enjoys her job with Brown & Brown, she said she is able to bring to work a high level of enthusiasm and a team-

work attitude. She believes management wants to create a culture of balance for employees.

“If we have a good environment here, I just think it flows through that they are going to do a good job taking care of our clients, too,” LoVasco said. “If you work at a place where there is a lot of tension or your boss is harping on you, that is going to come through to your clients.”

— Michelle Muñoz



HR Coordinator Christine Catalanotte and President Gene LoVasco say if you want to make clients happy, start by making your employees happy.

GLENN TRIEST

ed hours so employees can accommodate other things in their lives. She said it makes for employees who are engaged and invested in the firm’s success.

That engagement with the firm has resulted in high retention. Wagner said the voluntary turnover rate at the firm is less than 5 percent.

“We have a situation here where we really do insist on mutual respect,” Wagner said. “It is very important to have our people feel valued and feel like they have a voice.”

The organization also provides events for employees and their families and annual community service events. Food around the office, such as free fruit, bagels and granola, is another perk.

Wellness programs are offered, including yoga, Pilates and circuit training classes. A health coach comes to the office to discuss wellness initiatives.

Wagner said the big focus is for the firm’s employees to feel their careers are being nurtured and developed. He said one of his first moves when he became a managing partner about seven years ago was to create the position of manager of career development.

Employees are given mentors and training programs, and success is measured “by milestones, not by billed hours.”

— Michelle Muñoz



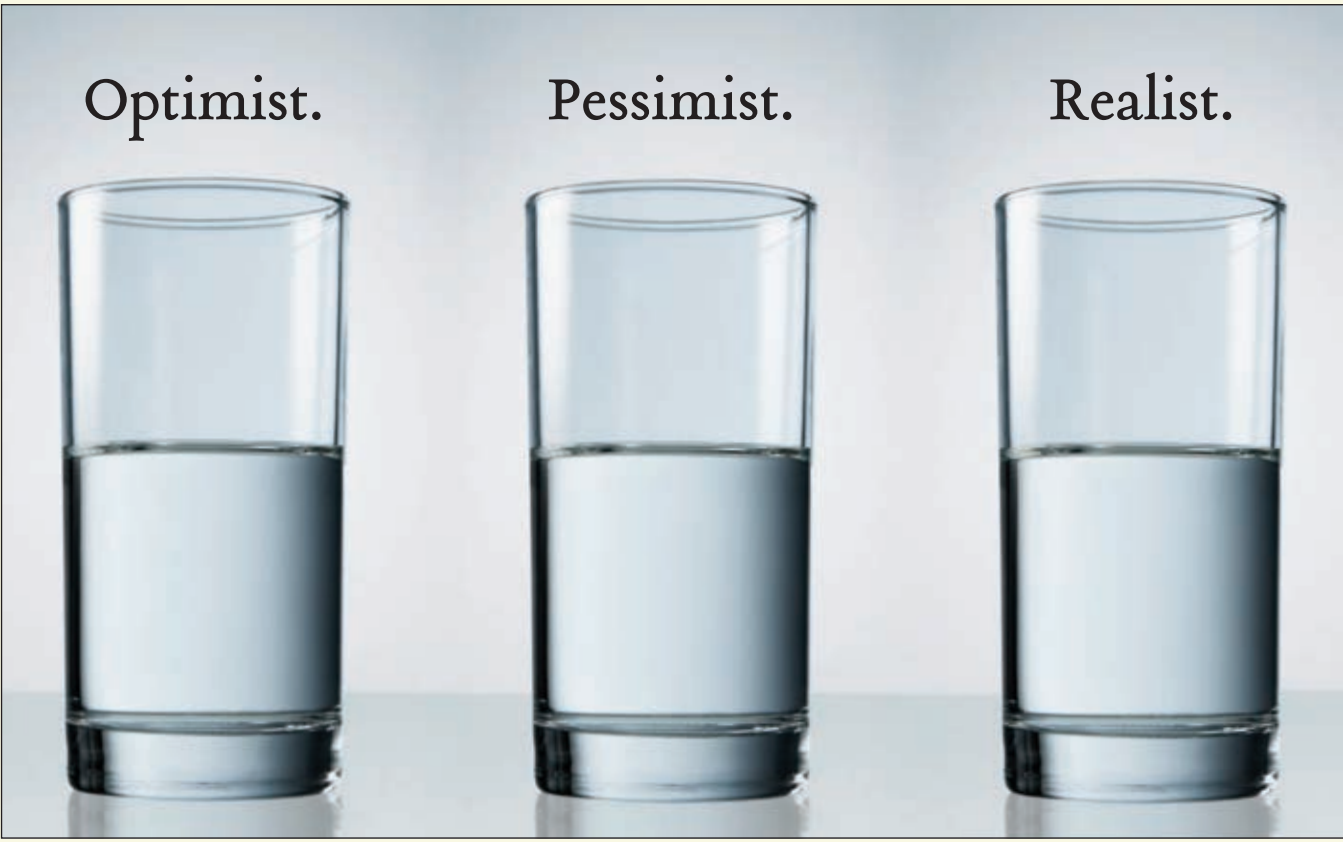
GLENN TRIEST

Craig Mackiewicz (left) and Martin Nichols work at Altair in Troy.

ation parties, family outings and a pingpong tournament.

Altair’s global nature allows for exposure to many aspects of the company and interaction with people around the world. Due to that exposure, Nichols said employees get opportunities for advancement and are able to move into other areas of the business.

— Michelle Muñoz



Reporters tend to narrowly focus on two groups of investors: those who see the glass half full, and those who see it half empty. But investing is never that simple. Global markets comprise endlessly repeating cycles of ups and downs over any extended period, during which there is opportunity for money to be made, as well as preserved. An essential element of success is appropriate asset allocation. Financial advisors are very good at preaching it, but few have the resources and attention span to practice it.

An exception is Greenleaf Trust. With billions in assets and the distinction of being one of Michigan’s first trust-only banks, we have the extensive human and financial capital to competently manage the complexities of wealth from one generation to the next. It’s far from easy, but because of our broad, long-term perspective and unique, client-centric team approach, the proverbial glass is neither half full nor half empty: it’s 100% opportunity.



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Focus: Cool Places to Work in Michigan

Large Companies: 250-plus employees

Employees take part in ViSalus' Reach In experiential learning program, one component of which is described as creating "an understanding of how customers, promoters and corporate employees fit together."



COURTESY OF VISALUS INC.

ViSalus: A healthy dose of swagger

Ryan Blair wants ViSalus Inc. employees to feel like individuals. And Justin Call, vice president of service and support, says his CEO is succeeding.

No. 5
ViSalus Inc.
Troy

"Our company has swagger," said Call, citing ViSalus' recent participation in a vast flash mob. "It's a cool company. It's for the young

“Office walls kill collaboration, and collaboration is the core of creativity.”

Ryan Blair, ViSalus Inc.

at heart.”
The flash mob was a simultaneous dance held in April in hundreds of cities to promote the com-

pany's Body by Vi weight-loss challenge. In Hollywood, the mob dance was led by actor Alfonso Ribeiro (Carlton from "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air").

The weight management and energy drink direct-sales company employs about 400 people in the U.S. More than 330 are based in Michigan.

The dress code, which encourages jeans and tennis shoes, is part of the company's swagger, as is the work environment. Blair said the company has invested nearly \$10 million into the headquarters in Troy.

"Our office atmosphere is business casual with a lot of denim, young energy and creative spaces to foster freedom of expression," Blair said in an email. "We don't have offices for that very reason. Office walls kill collaboration, and collaboration is the core of creativity."

Part of the office build-out was installing motorized desks in the call center that can move up and down so employees can stand while they work. Call said he and other employees like working in an office that has a different and modern look.

Company meetings are different, too. Call said all events are high energy and fun with a theme or cause. Some meetings even feature a live DJ.

ViSalus sells 90-day fitness challenge kits, and Call said employees are constantly putting on their own 90-day challenges. Employees who take part can win prizes, and ViSalus nutrition products are always stocked in the kitchen. Other perks include health benefits, workout facilities and 401(k) matching.

Blair said the company, whose majority ownership is held by Blythe Inc., wants all employees to feel happy to be there and encouraged to bring their creativity to the table.

"Employees who love what they do are simply more inspired and productive, both professionally and personally," Blair said. "ViSalus leads by example. We cannot promote life, health and prosperity if we ourselves don't fulfill those values."

—Michelle Muñoz



Blair



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Focus: Cool Places to Work in Michigan

Large Companies: 250-plus employees

Here's a look at the cool factors of the remaining ranked large companies:

6. Sun Communities Inc., Southfield, manufactured home and RV community developer: Free fitness center, free frozen yogurt and healthy snacks, weight-loss challenges, team-building activities.

7. ePrize LLC, Pleasant Ridge, digital marketing agency: Employees can take half days off on Fridays in the summer and get paid half days to do volunteer work. Outdoor deck with a TV; rec room with video games, foosball and other entertainment.

8. Walbridge Aldinger Co., Detroit: Flexible schedule; comprehensive benefits; private room for prayer, relaxation or rest.

9. Compuware Corp., Detroit: On-site child care center, wellness center with fitness equipment, medical clinic. Compuware's urban garden, Lafayette Greens, is a few blocks away.

10. Digitas, Detroit, digital marketing agency: Spontaneous paid holidays, like making the July 4 holiday this year a five-day weekend; unlimited sick days; free snacks and pop.

11. Bodman PLC, Detroit: Staff appreciation day with manicures, massages, gifts and food; birthday treats; theme lunches and other perks.

12. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Detroit: Free parking and People Mover pass for its 6,000 downtown Detroit employees; monetary incentives for employees who live in or move to Detroit.

13. Valassis Communications Inc., Livonia, media and marketing services company: On-site yoga, aerobics, chair massages, salon, flex-time scheduling, wellness programs, free coffee and popcorn.

14. Detroit Athletic Club, Detroit: Employee appreciation days, annual holiday party, annual Cedar Point trip, holiday turkey, cash bonuses.

15. Urban Science, Detroit, automotive retail consulting company: Latest technology for employee use; wellness activities; a day off to do charitable work, parties, lunches, potlucks.

16. Deloitte LLP, Detroit: Annual "Impact Day" of service, monthly days on which employees who donate to charity may wear jeans; involved in Special Olympics and Paralympics.

Small Companies: 15-249 employees



COURTESY OF AIRFOIL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Atmo Room, as in atmosphere, is a meeting and working space at Airfoil.

Airfoil: Nurturing success

Airfoil Public Relations places great emphasis on nurturing and advancing the careers of the more than 50 employees working in both its offices.

No. 2
Airfoil Public Relations Inc.
Southfield

Katie Trautmann, senior account executive, started at Airfoil right after graduating from college about four years ago. She said she feels as if her suc-

cess is as important to the firm as it is to her.

"You never feel like you're going to fall and no one is going to catch you," Trautmann said.

The public relations firm is focused on clients in the automotive and technology industries. Airfoil has offices in Southfield and Sunnyvale, Calif. About 40 of its employees are in Michigan.



Trautmann

Employees are given \$600 reimbursements to buy the latest technology, which goes hand in hand with nurturing each person's professional development. Being familiar with new technology helps employees to connect with clients and understand the industry, Trautmann said. Employees also are given reimbursement toward health and wellness, and for student loans or transportation needs.

"It's very important that we be knowledgeable about technology trends and immerse ourselves in technology as much as we can," said Lisa Vallee-Smith, co-chief executive officer and co-founder alongside Janet Tyler.

From the moment they are hired, employees are set on a course to be successful, Vallee-Smith said. First, during employee on-boarding, each employee is assigned a mentor. The second phase is skills training, in which every employee takes part. The skills involved change every year. Professional development is the third phase and involves learning management skills through webinars, speakers and letting employees take the lead on accounts.

Vallee-Smith said employees recognize that the company grows from within, which demonstrates the confidence management has in them.

Trautmann said the support from the company to grow professionally

makes her want to give her clients the best work she can and support her peers in their work, as well.

"Because of our culture and our environment, when people have grown here, like Katie has, they see the importance of nurturing and growing the junior staff," said Jennifer Cattini, human resources manager.

— Michelle Muñoz

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Focus: Cool Places

Small Companies:

Arrow Strategies: Aim is to maintain 'that work-life balance overall'



KENNY CORBIN
Human Resources Director Correen Smith works out at Arrow Strategies LLC.

For Sarah Rubino, working at **Arrow Strategies LLC** means getting the time to do things she's always wanted. She even calls the office her "fun away from home."

A game room, on-site massage therapy, unlimited paid time off and a workout facility are among the perks of working at

No. 3

Arrow Strategies LLC
Bingham Farms

Arrow, a staffing services provider specializing in information technology, engineering, accounting and finance, and professional consulting.

Rubino, human resources coordinator, is a mother of two children and said she never had time to work out before starting at Arrow six years ago.

"We need that work-life balance overall," Rubino said. "We need that time to relax and have fun and

enjoy ourselves, and use that stress relief."

Arrow Strategies has about 50 employees, including 35 in Michigan. Headquarters are in Bingham Farms, with offices in Grand Rapids, Chicago and Dallas, as well as Hartford, Conn.; Century City, Calif.; and Des Moines, Iowa.

Jeff Styers, Arrow Strategies president and COO, said that until nine months ago, no employee had left voluntarily during the compa-

ny's decade in business. Of the four who since that time have quit, two have come back.

"We expect a lot from our employees," Styers said. "So to balance that out, it's important we have some over-the-top incentives that are kind of out of the box."

Styers said keeping incentives and benefits new and exciting is built into Arrow's business plan. Every office has been designed to provide a comfortable and home-like atmosphere, he said.

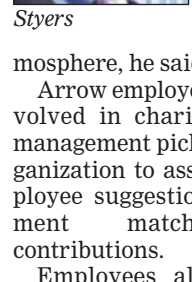
Arrow employees are heavily involved in charity. Each month, management picks a charitable organization to assist, based on employee suggestions, and management matches employee contributions.

Employees also volunteer at soup kitchens throughout the year. Rubino said the charitable activities have bonded group members and made them friends instead of just co-workers.

—Michelle Muñoz



Rubino



Styers



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Gongos: Values

The culture at **Gongos Research Inc.** is built around humanism, intelligence, passion and pride.

Those values, called HIPPO, guide how employees are hired and how the company operates every day, said Christen Carmean, director of human resources.

"Our philosophy is that we can teach the job, but we can't teach you to fit into our culture," Carmean said.

Gongos is a consumer research company based in Auburn Hills. It has about 100 employees.

CEO Camille Nicita said employees are evaluated according to those core values and rewarded at the annual Golden HIPPO awards.

Culture-driven benefits for employees include a casual dress code and four on-site blood drives throughout the year. Company-wide events throughout the year include an Easter egg hunt, family picnics and an ugly sweater contest during the winter holidays.

A recently added benefit is the ability to work from home one day a week. Carmean said the flexibility means that her loyalty to the organization is "off the charts." Carmean can easily get time off when she needs it because she has the trust of her employers.

No. 5

Gongos Research Inc.
Auburn Hills

¹ To qualify for this offer, Prospect must maintain a minimum balance of \$5,000 at their current bank, submit required documentation and Flagstar Bank must decline to match or beat current bank's pricing. This offer is not applicable if Prospect declines servicing savings offer above. To qualify for the \$100 offer, Prospect must submit required documentation and Flagstar Bank must decline to match or beat current bank's pricing. The offer is not applicable if Prospect declines servicing savings offer above.

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to Work in Michigan

15-249 employees

MiPro: Keeping off-site workers engaged

Jennifer Berry, system support specialist at **MiPro Consulting LLC**, said she never dreads Mondays. The combination of a laid-back office environment and the exciting work make her eager to start the week.

No. 4
MiPro Consulting LLC
Milford

"It's nice being able to come to work and just be comfortable," Berry said. "We all work very, very hard, but we have fun when we are here."

MiPro is a consulting company focused on **Oracle** PeopleSoft technology. Many of its almost 30 employees work off-site for clients. Its clients include **Kelly Services Inc.** in Troy, **Domino's Pizza Inc.** in Ann Arbor, **Chrysler's** Detroit offices and



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan in Detroit. Jeff Micallef, co-founder, managing partner and executive vice president, said everyone at MiPro is fully engaged and excited about what they do, which contributes to making it a great place to work.

"We're a very passionate group of folks," he said. "Many of us have been doing what we do for a very long time, but we're still very excited about it."

MiPro keeps its off-site employees rallied with constant communication: Weekly phone calls, monthly newsletters and quarterly videos from the management team keep everyone up to date.

Under MiPro's open-door policy, employees are empowered to make their own decisions but can ask anyone for help at any time. Berry said she felt comfortable calling someone at 6 a.m. with a question.

Micallef said it is important for

off-site employees to be able to be honest with clients.

"As an employee, you need to feel that if you deliver that news and the customer gets upset, the hammer isn't going to come down on you," Micallef said.

All the facets of the company combine to make Berry love her job, she said. And she says it isn't just her.

"No one is wishing their week away," she said.

— Michelle Muñoz



COURTESY OF MIPRO CONSULTING LLC
MiPro employees take in a Detroit Tigers game at Comerica Park.

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front and center



COURTESY OF GONGOS RESEARCH INC.
Games at a Gongos summer barbecue included a water balloon toss.



Carmean



Nicita

"I'm trusted to get my job done," Carmean said. "I can be a really great employee, a really great mom and really great wife."

Nicita not only encourages a work-life balance for employees, she insists on it. The company shuts down for the week between Christmas and New Year's Day. There is also a one-month paid sabbatical for 10-year employees, dur-

See Gongos, Page 18

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Focus: Cool Places to Work in Michigan

Small Companies: 15-249 employees

Here's a look at the cool factors of the remaining ranked small companies:

6. Plex Systems Inc., Auburn Hills, technology developer: No office dress code, children and pets welcome when an employee needs to bring them, flexibility for returning to work after having a child.

7. Infinity and Ovation Yacht Charters, St. Clair Shores: Palace of Auburn Hills suite available to employees a few times a year with limousine service. Employees are also taken on surprise trips to bulk food stores to go shopping, on the boss.

8. Billhighway, Troy, financial management company: Cookies on birthdays, personalized business cards, outings to Detroit Tigers games.

9. Reliance One Inc., Auburn Hills, staffing company: Annual all-inclusive five-day Cancun vacation for employees, gym with 24/7 access, pizza Fridays to benefit charities.

10. Trubiquity, Troy, software company: Flexible hours, good benefits, international work opportuni-

ties, parties, picnics, gifts to show appreciation.

11. Interior Environments, Southfield, furniture retailer: Flexible work environment, extra paid time off during holidays, year-end celebration.

12. Farbm Group, Southfield, real estate company: Flexible work schedules, paid time off for volunteer activities, high-quality health care benefits, educational programs.

13. Northwestern Mutual-The Wilshire

Financial Group, Troy: Holiday party with gifts, birthdays as paid vacation, annual golf outing, early closing on Fridays.

14. Kyba Inc., Farmington Hills, engineering, IT staffing and software development: Holiday party, health and wellness program, birthday cakes, flexible schedules.

15. Brightwing, Troy, staffing company: Paid classes and conferences, flexible schedule, paid time off for volunteer activities, happy hours, holiday parties, other get-togethers.

16. Marketing Associates LLC, Detroit: Incentives for employees' charitable activities, town hall-style employee meetings on the status of the company.

17. Pulse220, Southfield, marketing agency: Thanksgiving dinner event for employees, flexible scheduling, company-provided pedometers for monthly walking challenge with prizes.

18. OpTech, LLC, Troy, IT and engineering services provider: Bonuses, rewards and gifts on special occasions, like a spa day for Mother's Day and golf for Father's Day; team-building events like putting contests on the in-house green.

19. RTT USA Inc., Royal Oak, 3-D production company: Regular paid outings for employees, sponsors hockey and golf leagues, helps pay for gym memberships, hosts several parties.

20. SERPEO, Troy, payroll, benefits and human resource provider: **Strategic Employer Resources Professional Employee Organization** provides monthly educational breakfast, employee performance recognition, closes early near holidays.

21. Hungry Howie's Pizza & Subs Inc., Madison Heights: Pizza lunches every Friday, flex time, free concert and sporting event tickets.

22. Cambridge Consulting Group, Troy: Massages, lunches and other

incentives during busy season, early departure the day before a holiday, families allowed on company outings.

23. Preh Inc., Novi, automotive systems manufacturer: Free benefits including health, dental and disability; monthly pizza lunches and special events.

*Paid time off for
volunteer
activities.*

Farbm Group

24. WorkForce Software, Livonia: Casual environment, free snacks, flexible scheduling, holiday and summer events with families included.

25. Great Lakes Capital Fund, Lansing, nonprofit community development finance company: Pays for business and personal cellphone usage, reimburses basic AAA membership.

26. Community Housing Network Inc., Troy, housing program and service company: Welcomes employee pets, closes office if schools close for a snow day.

27. Computerized Facility Integration LLC, Southfield, IT services company: Ability to work remotely, flexible schedule, Fun Squad that plans monthly team-building activities, off-site annual employee dinner.

28. Image One Corp., Oak Park, printer maintenance and equipment provider: Educational opportunities, flex-time schedules, paid birthday holidays, one paid day off a year for volunteer activities.

29. Lambert Edwards & Associates, Grand Rapids, public relations firm: Outings, holiday parties, activities like basketball and bag toss games.

30. Creative Breakthroughs Inc., Troy, IT company: Free lunches, picnics, birthday acknowledgements, wellness programs.

31. Cenit North America Inc., Auburn Hills, Germany-based consulting and software specialist: Michigan employees get chance to work internationally, network with the CEO and CFO at lunches, participate in outings.

32. Michigan First Credit Union, Lathrup Village: Tuition reimbursement, more than 40 hours a year of continued training, recreation rooms, nap room, lactation rooms.

33. Michael Morse PC, Southfield, law firm: Regular outings, holiday party, valet parking, lunches every week.

34. ForeSee Results Inc., Ann Arbor, customer experience analytics company: Casual dress code, stocked kitchens, annual health and fitness week with activities to encourage healthy habits.

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Gongos: Focus on values

■ From Page 17

ing which Nicita says they are cut off from communicating with the office.

"Our employees can totally disconnect," Nicita said.

Carmean said the company has been able to uphold its core values through rapid growth, and even in times of great loss. Founder John Gongos died in July just eight days after being diagnosed with stage

four metastatic melanoma.

"It was devastating for us, but I think when you go through times of tragedy it brought us all even closer," Carmean said. "We support each other."

The employees are satisfied and tend to stay at the company, Nicita said. That satisfaction turns into great customer service.

— Michelle Muñoz

Cool Places: The benefits of perks

■ From Page 1

presentations, and make clients and prospects aware of it. And it does seem to make impressions," said Principal and Managing Director Becky McLaughlan of Troy-based **McGraw Wentworth**, a benefits consultant firm that ranked the coolest of all small to midsize businesses with 15 to 249 employees.



McLaughlan

"In our business, we give a lot of seminars, and people on the feedback forms will tell us things like 'You all seem like a fun group of people.' That warms people up to us, because our marketing cycle takes a while, and it's not often a quick turnaround in adding a new customer."

McLaughlan said McGraw Wentworth has been strategic about its culture only in the last handful of years, but the return in workplace development has built steadily over time.

Employee retention was 97 percent in the past year and 95 percent over the past five years among its 72 employees, and year-to-date sales growth is 40 percent ahead of company performance targets, she said.

Intangible workplace assets can be even more valuable as the economy grows, improving the job market and the number of opportunities for a company's top performers to look elsewhere, said Susan Springer, director of workplace assessments at Harrisburg, Pa.-based **Best Companies**

"Particularly since companies often make similar offers on ... other benefits, culture is an area that really creates a difference."

Susan Springer,
Best Companies Group

Group, which conducted the Cool Places competition for *Crain's*.

Springer said Best Companies is conducting about 40 studies a year that evaluate the relative appeal of various companies' workplace environments and morale.

"Culture is a huge piece in attracting talent now, and something C-suite executives really look at," she said. "Particularly since companies often make similar offers on the share of a premium they pay on health care, disability and other benefits, culture is an area that really creates a difference."

"You may think taking away something intangible that's of little consequence to tighten the belt might not be a big deal to employees, but sometimes there's a big sense of the change in value."

Overall coolness isn't necessarily a function of the age or hipness of the workforce, industry segment or even reputation.

Springer said any business

can seem cool to a workforce it respects, trains and strives to keep.

Coolest of all large companies with 250 or more employers was Lansing-based **Accident Fund Insurance Co. of America**, where human resources manager Susan Gisholt said it "absolutely pays" to have a good workplace environment that preserves talent and institutional knowledge among its 610 employees.

"It makes a difference as far as recruiting and getting the best talent," she said. "The industry is bottom line-driven, but there's a clear connection there between having a good workplace and getting the most valuable people."

Farmington Hills-based **Kyyba Inc.**, a staffing, software development and engineering firm, has averaged a turnover rate of just one employee per year among its 24 employees that isn't performance-related, Human Resources Manager Vandana Patil said.

Even simple measures such as trying to obtain membership fee discounts at gyms and health clubs for employees, or assembling a company bowling team, have helped the retention rate.

"Being cool means we are all satisfied with where we work, and as the company grows we also grow as people with it," Patil said. "People often refer their friends and family and business contacts, and staffing employees who go on to get hired by the clients will still refer to us, based on their time here."

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Location of auction:
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Monroe, Michigan 48161

Dated: October 30, 2012

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