

SAE Convergence Hosts Job Fair for Engineers

By Jim Stickford
Staff Reporter

Talk about a good-news, bad-news situation. A job fair was held at the recent SAE Convergence convention at Cobo Center in Detroit on Oct. 19 and 20.

While a job fair in Detroit aren't news, what was interesting was the relative lack of applicants when compared to a year or two ago, is.

Chrysler was one of the companies that had a table at the fair. Greg Franson, human resources business partner for systems and components, said the company has been hiring since August of 2009.

Sandy Jordan, placement manager for engine talent acquisition at Chrysler, said they do much of their recruiting online these days and get about 1,000 postings for jobs.

"Not everyone who answers a post is qualified," Jordan said. "These days about 95 percent of jobs we're posting require at least a bachelor's degree."

Franson said the big change he's noticed in the past couple of months is attitude. The perception about Chrysler's product line is better. He cited the Jeep Grand Cherokee as an example of recent success.

Jordan said she expected more engineers to attend the fair. She said there are still

engineers out there looking for work, but a lot of firms are hiring right now.

William Fleming, chief engineer of powertrain controls for Navistar out of Chicago, the market for engineers is hot right now.

"We're recruiting in the Chicago area right now," Fleming said. "Since we're trying to increase the number of engineers, we're pulling from all over the country, including Detroit, which has become a prime recruiting market."

Fleming said it can be hard to get people to move from Detroit to Chicago because of their connections to their communities.

"We do see a lot of resumes," Fleming said. "The quality is hit and miss. Right now we're looking for specific skill sets dealing with electronics and software powertrain controls. We do see smart people, but we're looking for specific qualifications."

Courtney Winston, a recruiter for Aerotek, which is headquartered in Baltimore, also attended the fair. She said they're looking for people with electrical skills and programming experience in vehicle recharging.

"Electronics are in every part of a vehicle now," Winston said. "There are electronics in transaxles. The schools we love are Kettering, Lawrence Tech, Oakland

University. They're giving us the students we need. Wayne State is good with hybrids. These are schools where people can specialize in power electronics. A lot of this is related to hybrids. Five or 10 years ago there wasn't a demand, now there is."

Mark Nelson, another recruiter for Aerotek, said even last spring a lot more people were looking for work.

"There was a time there would have been a line out the door of people looking for work," Nelson said. "That wasn't too long ago."

Nelson said those still in the job market have to keep up with technology.

"Things change so fast," Nelson said. "You have to stay on top of updated software releases. Now we're looking for people who have at least a bachelor's degree, where in the past people with associate's degrees and life experience could still be readily accepted."

Michele Weinert, account executive for Talascend out of Troy, Mich., said her company provides engineering services and document controls for other companies. She said the hot engineering position deals with battery technology.

In fact the demand is so great, that some companies are willing to retrain engineers in different specialties to get the needed battery engineers, Weinert said.

"We find there's good transition into batteries by people who have infotainment engineering skills," Weinert said. "The intricacies of infotainment software and electronics transfers well."

Weinert said it's not hard to get people to transfer to Detroit. It's actually easier getting them here than to Boston, Weinert said, because the cost of living here is so much better. She added that in the last two years battery development has seen a huge explosion in Michigan.

Until recently batteries were developed around San Francisco, Boston and Maryland.

"With all the plants and engineers for the auto business, Michigan has a great engineering base for battery developers to draw from," Weinert said. "But now it's getting harder to find good talent, which says something about the market. We have even created a global training academy in Troy to provide our clients with what they need."

This is unheard of, Weinert said. The classes last eight to 12 weeks to get engineers up to speed to meet the very specific needs of her company's clients.

"The demand for engineers is there," Weinert said. "I'm not saying things are perfect, but people at all levels of the auto business are beginning to hire again."



PHOTO: JIM STICKFORD

Organizers of the auto engineering job fair at the SAE Convergence trade show were Michele Weinert, left, and Katie Jackson of recruiting and personnel firm Talascend.

Federal-Mogul Earns Award from Chrysler

Chrysler Group recently honored Federal-Mogul Corp. for its outstanding performance in providing a number of key powertrain components and enabling the successful launch of the 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee.

"The extraordinary work of the Federal-Mogul plants and the employees was integral to the successful launch of the 2011 Jeep Grand Cherokee," said Eric Humphrey, Chrysler's senior manager of

procurement.

"We thank Federal-Mogul for their contribution to the program."

Said Federal-Mogul President and CEO Jose Maria Alapont, "Federal-Mogul is extremely proud of this recognition and is pleased to contribute to the success of the new Jeep Grand Cherokee."

The Federal-Mogul powertrain products recognized are produced at a variety of factories across the U.S.



PHOTO: STEFANIE CARANO

"Hallowe'en" came early at Greenfield Village recently as visitors gathered for family events celebrating everybody's favorite traditional costume dress-up, fall-season holiday.

Spirit Willing, Flesh Weak at Hallowe'en

By Stefanie Carano
Staff Reporter

October in Greenfield Village meant visitors were given a chance to be spooked, or at least entertained, by the annual Halloween excursion, "Hallowe'en."

Waiting for the gates to open at 7 p.m., many visitors were expressing their Halloween spirit, ranging from sophisticated, coordinated garments to simply painting their lips black. All, of course, were enthusiastic to find out what was waiting for them inside.

With the opening of the gates, the crowd was led by a path of hand-carved jack o'lanterns to different destinations that included costumed candy givers and spooky sites set up just for the occasion.

The first attraction was the

"Grim Reaper," which greeted guests at the Ford House property, sharpening his scythe and pointing to something unknown in the distance beyond.

Visitors were witness to a number of other unusual sites, including a specter on top of the Robert Frost House and a warped carousel spinning madly by itself.

Those who needed refreshment along the way could stop at the concession stand. Across the street, Ford employee Kevin Iwasko and his daughter, 5-year-old Kyle, stopped to admire the scarecrow display (where one of the scarecrows is actually a costumed Greenfield Villager).

"We come here every year, for the girls, they enjoy it," Iwasko said. "We have a Greenfield Village member-

ship."

Other visitors included Todd Caccamo, an employee at GE Aviation, who came with his wife Kay and sons, Carter, age 3, and Dominic, 1 year. The whole family dressed as Batman.

"It started out he wanted to be Batman," Todd said, pointing at Carter. "So we got the rest of us to dress up."

The Guras also came to Hallowe'en with their children dressed up as mice for the occasion. Jon Gura, his wife Jolene and children, Melanie, 1 year and Gideon, 2, live in Sterling Heights.

"Our friends have membership passes for down here, so we came with them," he said.

As twilight turned to dusk, visitors ended the night with a bagful of goodies, a sweet conclusion to an exceptional Halloween excursion.

Ligocki Named Next Autoworks CEO

The Board of Directors of Next Autoworks Company (formerly V-Vehicle Company of San Diego) has named veteran Detroit auto executive Kathleen Ligocki as its new Chief Executive Officer.

Ligocki previously served as CEO of Tower Automotive and GS Motors and also led several global divisions of Ford Motor Company.

Her appointment as CEO was effective Oct. 11 and she will also join the Next Autoworks Board of Directors. She replaces Interim CEO Ray Lane, who will continue in his role as Chairman of the Board.

During Ligocki's more than

20 years in the mainstream automotive industry, she has served as the CEO of two large companies: GS Motors, the auto business of Group Salinas, the Mexico-based conglomerate with strengths in retail and banking, and as president and CEO of Tower Automotive, a global Fortune 1000 automotive supplier.

At Tower, Ligocki led the big supplier company through a successful restructuring process that culminated in the sale of the company for \$1 billion to Cerberus Capital Management.

Previously, as a corporate officer with Ford, Ligocki led several of Ford's major opera-

tions: the global Customer Service Division; Ford of Mexico; Ford of Canada; Ford's Worldwide Export Operations; Consumer Connect, and Ford Worldwide Marketing. She joined Ford as the Director of Business Strategy in 1998.

Early in her career, she also worked for United Technologies Corporation and Delco Electronics, a division of General Motors.

"Every automotive leader dreams of running a successful new car company," Ligocki said. "And I firmly believe that Next Autoworks is destined to be one of the truly great American success stories."

Women Form New AutomotiveNEXT Business Support Group

By Jim Stickford
Staff Reporter

Things aren't always what they seem. People don't always associate the auto industry with high tech, they don't see the product as cutting edge as Google or an iPhone, and they don't think that there are opportunities for women in what must be a "boys' club."

The women who have formed AutomotiveNEXT would disagree on all counts. They started their group to educate and inform the public on just how wrong those perceptions are.

Colleen Haley, executive vice president and president, US OEM Unit - Yazaki North America, said the idea for starting AutomotiveNEXT came about after a recent event honoring the 100 most influential women in the auto business. Haley and several other women being honored started talking among themselves.

"I'm just going on anecdotal evidence," Haley said, "but my memory of that event was that many of the 100 women being honored were in engineering and manufacturing and not just 'traditional'

women's jobs like finance or marketing."

But Haley said Terry Barclay, president and CEO of Inforum and Inforum Center for Leadership, said that during the downturn a lot of women had left the industry and something should be done about it.

Barclay saw an opportunity to do something and has put together a team to address the concerns of women in the auto business, Haley said.

And so AutomotiveNEXT was born. The group is brand new and organizers plan on making their first big splash at the North American International Auto Show in January, Haley said.

Their efforts will have two goals. The first is to bring together women from across the auto industry to work together and develop a message that shows just how hi-tech, modern and interesting the auto business is.

Once they have crafted their message, they will reach out to women within and outside of the auto business.

"I've been in the auto business for 15 years now," Haley said. "My impression has been that women play important roles throughout the industry.

My focus now is to attract and keep women in the industry so that the pipeline is full and women can fill any job that comes up."

Jay Iyengar, head of electrified powertrains - Chrysler LLC, also serves on AutomotiveNEXT's executive committee and was at the event that honored women in the industry. Misunderstandings about the car business extend beyond what role women have in it.

"This is important," Iyengar said. "The perception is that the auto industry is in manufacturing and so an old technology field with not a lot of room for women. But women buyers are very important to the business. They make up or influence around 70 percent of all car purchases."

Yet, Iyengar said, there is a gap between the role women play as consumers and their numbers as producers of automobiles.

"There is a real business need to have women in the auto industry," Iyengar said. "So, like-minded people have gotten together and are working to come up with a solution. It all started with a breakfast."

Iyengar's background is en-

gineering and she's helping lead the way at Chrysler on electric powertrains. It doesn't get more high-tech than that, she said. Even today's "regular" cars are sophisticated machines that use state-of-the-art electronics.

"As I've talked with college students around the country, I've been told by students that the auto business isn't as attractive as Google or developing the next iPhone," Iyengar said. "We need to get the message out that working in the car business can be more challenging than launching a space shuttle."

Retention and networking are also important, Iyengar said. AutomotiveNEXT's goal is to help attract and keep women in the car business. If they can't keep the women in the business, they will end up with the wrong mixture of people in the industry.

Fortunately, she said, young people seem to be interested in electrification, so recruiting is a little easier.

"If the media can help us change the image of the industry, it goes a long way to helping us reach our goals," Iyengar said. "Detroit and Chrysler are so much more than old manufacturing these

days. We're very high tech."

Haley said that while AutomotiveNEXT will reach out to women in the auto industry not based in Detroit, the organization is based in South-east Michigan, so for practical purposes, it most likely will be mostly a local entity.

In addition to Haley and Iyengar, members of the executive committee are: Jan Bertsch, vice president and treasurer, Borg Warner; Joy Greenway, president, climate product group, Visteon Corporation; Janice Uhlig, executive director, global compensation and planning, General Motors; and Nancy Gioia, director, global electrification, Ford Motor Co.

Members of the group's steering committee include Terry Barclay, president and CEO, Inforum and Inforum Center for Leadership; Margaret Baxter, senior vice president, operations and internal affairs, Original Equipment Suppliers Association (OESA); Katherine Huetter, director, Buck Consultants, a Xerox company; Anne Cascadden, trade commissioner - investing, Canadian Consulate General; Sandra Quick, vice president and general counsel, North America automot-

ive, Johnson Controls; Mary L. Foster, vice president, supply chain management, Inteva Products; Maureen T. Taliaferro, director, automotive sales, Stoneridge, Inc.; Jeanne Hanley, vice president, global business development and strategy - HEV/EV business unit, electrical power plant management systems, Lear Corporation; Kim Brycz, executive director, group global electrical systems, General Motors; Amy Marentic, group marketing manager, North America car and crossover, Ford Motor Co.; Marianne Fey, executive vice president and managing director, McCann World group; Kim Brink, executive director, advertising and promotion, Cadillac, General Motors; Millie Marshall, vice president, human resources, Toyota - TEMA; Mary Lehmann, senior vice president, strategic initiatives, Arvin Meritor, Inc.; Lisa Wicker director, talent acquisition, training, diversity and compliance office, Chrysler Group, LLC; Chris Barman, vehicle line executive, Chrysler 300, Dodge Charger and Challenger programs, Chrysler Group, LLC; and Alice Wachol, partner - Deloitte.