

# Helping Veterans with Jobs Fairs

DETROIT – With higher-than-average unemployment among veterans and an estimated 1 million men and women leaving the military within the next five years, General Motors and the GM Foundation are helping to pay for job fairs across the country aimed at finding meaningful employment for returning veterans.

GM and the GM Foundation are contributing \$250,000 to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Chamber Foundation's Hiring our Heroes program, a national grassroots effort to find jobs for returning veterans and their spouses, many of whom have put their own careers on hold because of long separations and overseas deployments due to military service.

Since Hiring Our Heroes was launched in March of 2011, more than 9,500 veterans and spouses have found jobs, according to the National Chamber Foundation, which said it is on track with partner agencies to host 400 hiring fairs this year.

The goal is to engage the business community in committing to hire 500,000 veterans by the end of 2014.

GM also said it is recruiting qualified veterans to fill some salaried and hourly job vacancies and is encouraging its network of more than 7,000 suppliers and dealers to hire veterans and spouses for openings.

GM will sponsor a booth at the National Veteran Small Business Expo and job fair June 26-28 at Cobo Hall in Detroit. The UAW Veterans Department will also attend in support of the recruiting effort.

In a June 19 letter addressed to suppliers and dealers, GM Chairman and CEO Dan Akeron asked them to support Hiring our Heroes by considering veterans and spouses when filling job openings.

"The best way to thank the men and women who volunteered to serve our country is with a good job when they return home," said Kenneth J. Barrett, GM chief diversity offi-

cer and a retired Navy captain. "Between this gift and the combined efforts of our GM family, we hope to help more veterans jump-start their new careers in the civilian world."

Veterans bring discipline, a work ethic and skills to employers unique to their military training, so hiring them isn't just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do," Barrett said.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the May unemployment rate among veterans who have served since 2001 was 12.7 percent, compared with the national jobless rate of 8.2 percent.

"As the auto industry continues its own recovery, we hope to help identify as many jobs as possible within the GM family – including suppliers

and dealers – for qualified veterans," said Barrett.

"At GM, we have nearly 5,000 veterans in our workforce today and 45,000 more who are retirees."

GM's gift will help fund at least 20 veterans' job fairs in strategic GM markets. At these fairs, GM, a GM supplier and GM dealer will serve as sponsoring hosts.

David M. Warner, who attended a veterans' career fair in Livonia on Feb. 10, left the Marine Corps on Feb. 23, and started work at GM Fairfax (Kan.) Assembly on April 1 as a material group leader in the plant that builds the Buick LaCrosse and Chevrolet Malibu.

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity," said Warner. "Many of my fellow Marines

are seeking work, and I hope their search goes as well as mine did."

The GM Veterans Affinity Group works closely with GM recruiters to identify and mentor job-seeking veterans, including those who are disabled.

"Because military men and women are trained to not brag about personal accomplishments, they sometimes need coaching to sell themselves in the civilian world," said Ryan Church, an Affinity Group member and assistant program engineering manager for the Chevrolet Equinox. Church also is a 12-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard.

"Veterans can identify when they see and talk to 'one of their own' on the other side of



GM engineer Ryan Church, left, aids an applicant at a recent veterans' job fair. Church is with GM's Veterans Affinity Group.

the table at these job fairs," Church said.

GM Talent Acquisition sends weekly updates on salaried job openings to state employment agencies, veterans' groups and outplacement firms, and uses

analytics to refine and improve its outreach to veterans.

The GM Careers website includes a Veterans section on the home page with a link to the company's recruiting calendar.

## Borroni-Bird on Panel Discussing Michigan's Automotive Future

by Jim Stickford

When asked how information collected by today's smart cars will be protected from being "hacked," GM's Dr. Christopher Borroni-Bird said maybe it would be like insurance, where there are opt-in clauses that allow information to be used with a driver's permission.

Borroni-Bird, GM's director of Advanced Vehicle Concepts and EN-V Programs, was speaking as part of a panel of experts at a conference on the new auto and Michigan's place in the 21st century auto industry.

The panel met at Michigan State's Management Education Center on June 14 to participate in the WWJ-sponsored conference.

The event was moderated by WWJ personality Matt Roush and other participants, including Amy Cell, senior vice president for talent, Michigan Economic Development Corporation; Jerry Ku, college of engineering, Wayne State University; Garth Motschenbacher, director, employer relations, College of Engineering, Michigan State University; and Peter Sweatman, director, Trans-

portation Research Institute, University of Michigan.

Continuing on the subject of privacy, Borroni-Bird pointed out that GM wants the OnStar brand to be protected in the minds of the public and that means making sure privacy is respected.

Borroni-Bird then answered another audience question about driver distraction and how that can be avoided even while customers are "living" in their cars more than ever and demand things like access to email and satellite radio stations.

The GM executive said it's a fact of life that people want to remain connected even while driving.

"I don't think it's a matter of regulations," he said. "They always find a way around the regulations. The goal for manufacturers is to accept that this happens and design interfaces with this in mind."

Another question from the audience asked if OEMs would put alcohol detection devices in cars to reduce drunk driving incidents.

Borroni-Bird said Saab was considering something like that when GM owned the company.

U-M's Sweatman chimed in, saying that there are billions of car trips made every day. Even reducing the number of false incidents of .001 percent would still mean a lot of false-positive incidents.

"They would have to get the tech absolutely right," Sweatman said. "And that's hard."

He added that they've collected a lot of data on how drivers are distracted. There's physical distraction – stuff attracting their eyes, and cognitive distraction, where drivers aren't paying attention.

He said a lot has been done to make sure displays aren't distracting, but more research has to be done on how to cut down on cognitive distractions.

Patrick Anderson, CEO of Anderson Economic Group, pointed out that Michigan is one of the hubs of the world car industry, and the state has a high concentration of hi-tech workers.

But the tough times recently experienced in the state have paid off, said Anderson.

He recently went to Turkey, where he was able to promote products made in Michigan and truthfully say that they are well-made and less expen-

sive than similar products from Germany or Japan.

WWJ's Roush asked that given how much tech is being put in cars, just how "chatty" can they get before drivers suffer from information overload and create driving hazards?

Sweatman responded, saying it's really a behavior issue. Everyone is excited about connected cars, but drivers don't need to know all the information they collect.

Roush then asked MEDC's Cell about state education efforts. She said the state is working with employers to see what they need. She noted some high schools are developing technical programs that students can start when they're 19 and two years later end up with a technical degree.

Another question was what could be done to make sure that students are taught the right things the right way.

Ku said at Wayne State, there are multi-disciplinary programs that cut across different branches of engineering from mechanical to chemical. Given the nature of today's automotive research, developing a new battery-powered drive-

train, he said, you need that kind of program.

One audience question dealt with attracting sophisticated computer engineers and programmers to the state.

Motschenbacher said young people are brand-oriented and Michigan's brand has seen better days.

"I remember the times when you were an auto recruiter and you'd go to schools across the country and they'd be able to get anyone," said Mtschenbacher.

"But the industry has taken a hit. Even the hi-tech people from here are skeptical. They remember the bad times. Michigan has competition and it's not just from 'cool' companies like Google or Microsoft. Competition comes from all around the world."

These students, Mtschenbacher said, know they have world-class skills, and Michigan as a state, and Detroit as both a city and a region, must be made cool again.

Cell said the state is also making efforts to make Michigan a talent destination.

Ku said engineers are like anyone else. They want to work on "sexy" projects that are going somewhere.



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