

OAKLAND TECH NEWS
DETROIT AUTO SCENE

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VPG Autos' New HQ Is in Detroit

ALLEN PARK – Last week, the Vehicle Production Group LLC, maker of the wheelchair-accessible MV-1, formally announced that it was establishing its company headquarters in Detroit, having relocated from Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

VPG's earlier office in Allen Park formerly housed only its engineering staff; the company's south Florida office will continue as a regional sales office.

The decision to move its headquarters to the Motor City was made by CEO John Walsh, who says Detroit is "where America's fourth automaker belongs."

Walsh further added, "We are proud to establish ourselves as an All-American car company with the MV-1. We designed and engineered the MV-1 in Metro Detroit and we plan to stay here and support the local economy – and commit to the state of Michigan as well."

VPG produces the MV-1 while providing more than 900 jobs, including employees, suppliers, retailers and service personnel in the U.S. MV-1s are sold at a growing number of dealerships throughout the country.

Currently there are two MV-1 dealerships in Michigan – one in Grand Blanc and one in Grand Rapids.

LTU Panel Discusses Future of Technology's Rapid Growth

by Gerald Scott

Remember a few years back when there were T-shirts and graffiti surrounding the catchphrase, "The Future Isn't What it Used to Be?"

Well, if a panel discussing "High Tech and Beyond . . . Reaching for the Technology of the Future" is any indication, with recent advances in technology, society's future might be even brighter than anyone might've first guessed.

A stellar panel of local and national experts discussed this very topic at Lawrence Tech University (LTU) in Southfield and the give-and-take between panelists is worth reviewing.

On the panel were furniture design entrepreneur Joseph Jeup, DTE Energy Vice President of Distribution Operations Vincent Dow, state of Michigan CIO David Behen, CalTech professor Dr. Yu-Chong Tai and LTU President Dr. Virinder K. Moudgil.

The panel, held in the Architecture building auditorium, was part of the university overall celebration and welcoming of Moudgil as the school's new president. Moudgil was previously the provost at Oakland University and he appears to be well-suited to tackle the challenges that face traditional engineering schools like LTU.

Overall, the panelists were surprisingly optimistic about just how well emerging technologies may help revolutionize society.

Nanotechnology, followed by an entire suite of miniaturized tools and techniques being used in health care, promise to bring even more good health to aging bodies – but, of course, at a cost that may or may not be affordable.

Technology is impacting society in large and small ways.

Joseph Jeup, the furniture designer from Grand Rapids, pointed out that modern desktop and industrial publishing software has helped him save money on the slick brochures that his firm still produces to market themselves at trade shows and the like.

Notably, he's gone from a \$20 cost per unit, using 20th century technology, down to maybe \$4 per unit here in the 21st century. He was pleased that the quality of the brochures has gone up while the price has gone down



Dr. Virinder Moudgil, far right, the former Oakland University provost and the recently new president of Lawrence Tech, led a panel discussion at the university that examined how today's fast pace of technology developments would impact consumer electronics, health care, autos, education and more.

and for a small business operation with 45 people, he found that to be a significant savings.

"When it comes to design, there's still a fair amount of low tech involved," he said.

"As far as design is concerned, we're still doing a great deal of hand-sketching. That may sound surprising, but one of the things about design is that it comes from the brain and comes out through the hand.

"We still communicate these ideas with hand sketches, charcoal renderings, all the way through water colors.

"Now we're also using today's technology – 3D-rendering software programs that are photo-realistic."

Indeed, mixing the old with the new seems to be a good way to transition from 20th to 21st century technologies, according to other speakers on the panel as well. Mixing old with new can help keep an old school sense of hands-on applications together with high-tech, computer-driven, modern applications.

Balancing the two is society's, corporations' and individual peo-

ple's collective challenge as we're bombarded with such technology these days that the Apple iPhone is already on its 5th iteration.

Then there was CalTech's Dr. Tai, whose research is centered at the CalTech MEMs laboratory that he built.

The facility has a clean-room lab, CAD lab, and a measurement metrology lab. It supports about 30 researchers, who are collectively developing innovative MEMS/NEMS devices, such as micromotors, microphones, micro scanning mirrors, neural chips, micro relays and even micro power generators.

And all from one lab. Tai has also worked on active fluid sensing and control. He's a pioneer of various nanotechnologies, being tested on lab rats, to enhance implants such as for artificial retinas for human vision and more.

He made a claim to the Biblical parable about the blind seeing and the lame walking. With the help of today's microchips, sensors and implants, that's all fast becoming a societal reality.

All in all, the panel said, technology is enabling better lives,

cost savings and the promise of more, such as renewable energy sources. Managing the technology to keep the humans in control and in favor, seems to be the trick, they claim.

Meals on Wheels Needs Volunteers

Macomb County Community Services Agency is seeking volunteer drivers to deliver meals to homebound senior citizens on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 22, and Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25.

Holiday routes are now available in all communities within Macomb County. Volunteers are asked to deliver a route of approximately 10 to 12 meals. Volunteers must register to deliver Thanksgiving meals by Monday, Oct. 22, and Christmas meals by Monday, Nov. 5.

Additionally, volunteers are needed for regular meal route deliveries. Drivers are needed in Clinton Township, Eastpointe, Harrison Township, Sterling Heights, Utica, Warren and more.

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