

MiMfg Magazine

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Manufacturers on the Red Carpet

 Michigan Manufacturers Association



Alro Steel
Metals • Industrial Supplies • Plastics

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On the Cover: Amigo Mobility's Beth and Al Thieme joined the best of manufacturing on the red carpet in East Lansing at the MFG Excellence Awards. Read the recap and meet the winners in this issue.

From start to finish, the 2018 MFG Excellence Awards in East Lansing was a night for manufacturers to build their legacy and inspire others to go one step further.

The idea of legacy is important to so many manufacturers. Whether you have built a business from the ground up or are carrying on its tradition, manufacturers are passionate about seeing their company and their products live on long after they've gone.

How a manufacturer achieves their legacy varies from one to the next. It can be the way they lead. It can be how they create awareness of manufacturing career opportunities, locate next generation workers and provide training for the skills of tomorrow. Some manufacturers establish a legacy with clever innovation of new technologies while others look to philanthropy and community engagement.

While most manufacturers don't look for praise, adulation or accolades; many are deserving of it. Without the industry, Michigan's economy and the global economy would be far worse off.

The MFG Excellence Awards celebrates and recognizes Michigan manufacturers for their hard work and provides an opportunity to share their stories with peers, supporters and those ready to follow in their footsteps.

"If you think about it, there're only three industries that really better our economy," said Harry Leaver, executive director of the Central Michigan Manufacturers Association (CMMA) and recipient of the 2018 MFG Lifetime Achievement Award. "Natural resources, agriculture and manufacturing. Everything else provides a service for one of those three sectors. That's why I love manufacturing. It can provide tremendously rewarding career opportunities, not just for me but for everybody who is willing."

Leaver continued by saying, "this is an industry that rewards hard work and dedication. You don't have to be the brightest person in the room; you only have to work the hardest and want it the most. What do you want your legacy to be when you are done?"

Honoring Lifelong MFG Leaders

The evening ceremony was highlighted by Michigan manufacturers celebrating the awarding of the MFG Lifetime Achievement Award to two pillars of the industry.

Al Glick • Alro Steel

If any manufacturer in Michigan deserved a standing ovation from a room full of industry leaders, it was Al Glick. For 70 years, he has represented Michigan manufacturing. From the values he sets on the shop floor to the example he sets in the community — the Glick family has given millions back to a variety of charitable efforts ranging from next generation skills training to pediatric care — few have achieved what Al Glick has, yet he remains more humble than almost anyone you'd meet.

"Any success Alro has had over the years hasn't been because of me, it's because of the great people that I've been fortunate to work with," said Glick, decked out in his University of Michigan cap. "You don't do this by yourself."

Learn more about Al, from his father's arrival in Jackson in 1916 to the advice that changed his life and what makes him deserving of the MFG Lifetime Achievement Award, on page 32.

Harry Leaver • CMMA

Harry Leaver has worked in the industry for nearly 50 years, adapting and innovating processes which remain in use around the world, before choosing to walk away. As it turns out, once you're in manufacturing, it is hard to leave it behind. He was soon back at it, now working with the Central Michigan Manufacturers Association (CMMA) to help manufacturers and, now in the latter stages of his career, work to give back to current and future workers.

"What are some of the things I've learned," Leaver asked of himself. "Don't be afraid to look past where you are and past those intermediate goals to what you want your end game to be."



Balance your family and work life. The higher you go in any organization, the more of your time gets spent on that organization. Finally, find ways to help with the recruiting and nurturing of our future workforce and to be a mentor to those around you.”

Leaver continued, saying that “the tagline at CMMMA is that business is better when we work together — that resonates with our members. People want to be able to get engaged and find ways we can work together to better all of our lives.”

Read more about Harry and how, even after half a century in manufacturing, he still finds special “aha” moments in every tour he takes on page 30.

Taking Talent to the Next Level

For many companies, the greatest challenge facing manufacturing over the next decade will be locating and retaining talent. Ready to help employers take on this challenge are outside resources, dedicated future leaders and company-wide efforts to create a youth movement in manufacturing.

MFG Emerging Leader

With resource-sharing a top priority for effective statewide growth, Jeremy Bockelman’s recognition as an industry leader worth watching stems from his ability to put 100 percent of his passion and energy into benefitting regional manufacturing throughout northeast Michigan and taking every opportunity to support the industry.

“My father lived by the motto that challenges are inevitable and defeat is optional. I too live by this motto and I’ve learned that Michigan manufacturers do too,” said Bockelman. “Every day I have the great fortune to serve the many manufacturers across the state and strive to help them as they transform raw materials into products that have a positive impact on our community. Again, I am beyond honored and look forward to working with you all.”

Learn more about why Jeremy is considered one of manufacturing’s “go-to leaders” on page 18.

MFG Talent Champion

When manufacturing leaders understand the importance of workforce diversity and have a willingness to educate Michigan’s future workforce on existing career opportunities, the talent challenge for all manufacturers becomes easier. John Tucker, human resources director for PTM Corporation, is placing an emphasis on talent and getting great results.

“They say it takes a village to raise a child and when we are bringing young people into manufacturing, that’s exactly what we’re doing — we’re raising them up,” said Tucker. “The support of manufacturers, the work they do in the community and their willingness to come together with educators like those at St. Clair Community College, Macomb

Community College and the St. Clair County Tech Center...all makes my job so much easier and, let’s be honest, so much more enjoyable. As Lt. Governor Brian Calley once said, ‘manufacturing is not a second place career choice, it’s a first place career choice.’”

John is making talent the top talking point for manufacturers in and around Ira Township. Learn why this is a critical step in addressing the talent challenge on page 22.

John G. Thodis Michigan Manufacturer of the Year (Large Tier)

Eagle Alloy, a Muskegon-based foundry, began with two men cutting down trees in Muskegon County to clear the space necessary to build the 3,000-square-foot facility that would become Eagle Alloy. Today, the business is a leading employer in the county and is showing how one of manufacturing’s oldest sub-sectors can captivate everyone from Baby Boomers to Millennials.

“The Eagle Alloy team, from its executives to its shop floor, represents the very best of manufacturing and places a high emphasis on integrity, teamwork, respect, continuous improvement and accountability,” said Chuck Hadden, MMA president & CEO. “With a tradition of social responsibility and innovative products, Eagle Alloy belongs in the John G. Thodis Michigan Manufacturer of the Year Award lineage.”

“If you’re growing like us, you’re undoubtedly feeling the pain of not being able to find enough people with the right soft skills; we need to work on dispelling a few myths that are hurting manufacturing,” said John Workman, co-chair of Eagle Alloy. “We can work with educators and graduating students to help current students learn the advantages of careers in manufacturing. We can work with local school districts and elected officials to increase the importance of career exploration. We can invite schools into our facility. Finally, we can do more for the high school graduates who move directly into the workforce. This is a population underserved by K-12 education and we must find a way to do more.”

Discover how the employees at Eagle Alloy are taking on a leadership role to secure the company’s long-term future on page 28.

Making a Mark Through Innovation

Manufacturing has always represented the highest level of innovation. From simple parts to complex systems transforming society, manufacturers do amazing things every day

Get More!

Check out MMA’s Facebook album for more highlights from the 2018 MFG Excellence Awards: facebook.com/MIManufacturers





and establish a legacy through ideas and processes which will carry on across the industry.

John G. Thodis Michigan Manufacturer of the Year (Small Tier)

Jim Richards is a leader at home, at the office and in the community and has spent his career putting people first, all while watching Total Security Solutions develop a reputation second-to-none. When you talk about legacy, the John G. Thodis Michigan Manufacturer of the Year Award's 38 years of recognizing industry leaders certainly counts. To have his name next to some of Michigan's greatest business leaders tells a lot about Richards and his passion for manufacturing.

"People talk about how manufacturing is dead and how all the work is moving overseas. We're committed to proving those people wrong. We're growing and focused on building a great company that provides a superior workplace, product and customer experience," said Richards. "Don't get me wrong, manufacturing is definitely a tough industry to be in. From finding and training people to investing in new equipment to staying ahead of the competition, there are challenges to overcome every single day."

He continued, saying "to me, those challenges are what makes it exciting; to me, it's about getting all the people and pieces to work together to deliver that final product. Coming up with solutions to problems people think are impossible to solve — that's what I love."

Turn to page 26 to learn how Jim's values and the culture at Total Security Solutions allows the team to operate — and excel — at 25 percent above their comfort zone.

MFG Innovation Excellence

You would think a rearview mirror is just that...a rearview mirror. You'd be wrong. For a business in West Michigan, as their technological capabilities improved, the mirror came to represent prime real estate in an automobile and endless possibilities. Gentex Corporation is a technology company that is reimagining the needs of drivers around the world and turned what many would see as a simple mirror into a strategic piece of essential technology.

"We can't do anything without the support of everyone here behind me — this is a representation of what we are," said Paul Flynn, vice president of operations for Gentex, while surrounded on-stage by the Gentex team. "Gentex has been in business for 44 years and...listening to you all tonight, we're very humbled by all that you do. Thank you so much for the recognition; we're going to continue doing what we're doing and we'll be back here next year to strengthen our relationships with all of you."

Innovation isn't easy, but it is at the heart of everything manufacturers do. Flip to page 24 for more on how Gentex makes sustained innovation a company-wide goal.

The "Coolest Thing Made in Michigan"

Selecting one product as the "Coolest Thing Made in Michigan" was the culmination of a months-long social media campaign narrowing a wide variety of Michigan-made products down to a competitive Top 10 before



Stormy Kromer's globally recognized cap was announced as the winner in a surprise on-stage reveal.

"Given the rich history of manufacturing in our state, to be voted the winner is truly an honor," said Gina Thorsen, president of Stormy Kromer, a division of Jacquart Fabric Products located in Ironwood. "We work hard every day to make apparel and caps that people can be proud of; whether they are the person making it or the person selling it or, most importantly, the people wearing it."

The cap is a unique six-panel hat hand-stitched by some of the world's best craftspeople. Rich, warm and wonderfully-fitted, the cap has been available since 1903 and continues to build on its legacy of being the one piece of winter apparel every person has to own.

"This hat is made in a little, small town that is as far away from this spot as I could be and still be in our great state and we sometimes feel isolated; but without the support we get, we couldn't do this," Thorsen expressed.

Going Beyond Your Four Walls

The world's most successful manufacturers influence beyond their four walls. They represent their communities. They give their time, they invest their resources, they create connections.

MFG Community Impact Award

The team at Aircraft Precision Products, Inc. (APPI) is comprised of men and women — from the C-level to the shop floor — who understand the important role manufacturers must play in their local communities. In addition to their philanthropic efforts, they also embrace the role of stewards for the future through their commitment to education and growing awareness of manufacturing careers.

"Businesses have a symbiotic relationship with their communities; they create wealth, they create jobs and new opportunities for businesses to grow," offered Bill Henderson, third-generation president of the Ithaca-based manufacturer. "In return, communities aid in preparing future employees and aid in recruitment — we don't operate in a vacuum. A strong community helps everyone."

Learn more about APPI's belief that a rising tide, and strong business-community connections, really can lift all ships on page 20.

Kellogg Company: Celebrating 100 Years of Industry Support

In 1906, W.K. Kellogg founded the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company. In 1918, the company which would soon become the Kellogg Company joined MMA and has since become a trusted part of our effort to keep all manufacturers competitive with other states and around the world.

MMA was proud to honor Kellogg Company for 100 years of dedicated membership.

"When I look at the partnership between MMA and Kellogg, I think the reason it works is because both of us have stayed true to the mission and values that we started with," said Tracy Mihas, Kellogg's senior director for state government relations. "Kellogg has always been dedicated to nourishing families so that they can thrive. MMA remains committed to effective advocacy, meaningful education and strategic business services. The words may have changed over the last century, but the missions and their intent remain."

Looking Forward

Michigan's success, from top to bottom, is manufacturing's legacy and you all deserve to be recognized and celebrated for making it possible.

For more information about the 2018 MFG Excellence Awards or to learn about plans for 2019, contact MMA's Sarah Martin, at 517-487-8521 or martin@mimfg.org.

The winner of the "Coolest Thing" was announced live by the Luminous Group's Murray Sittsamer.



2018 MFG Lifetime Achievement

Al Glick

Alro Steel

Sometimes, all it takes is a little encouragement, a little persistence and a belief in yourself to accomplish great things.

Alro Steel's origin, and Al Glick's story in manufacturing, can be traced back to 1916 when Al's father Louis Glick and his family arrived in Jackson and started a scrap metal business, Glick Iron & Metal.

At the end of World War II, unsure of what his path might be but still dreaming of becoming a sportswriter rather than a manufacturer, Al was offered a chance by his older brother Robert, the "Ro" in Alro Steel, and a questioning quip that changed his life — Al, what have you got to lose?

With Robert's guidance and support, Al became an asset to manufacturers struggling to purchase materials due to the steel shortage following the war. Al networked every day to match up companies in need with materials in excess. He quickly became the region's one-stop-shop for quick resource solutions.

Seventy years later, the legacy of Al Glick and Alro Steel continues to push Michigan forward. Today, Alro distributes metals, industrial supplies and plastics, cut-to-size with next day delivery to over 25,000 customers in North America. The metal inventory includes aluminum, alloys, carbon steel, cast iron, stainless steel, tool steel, brass, bronze, copper and more.

Now 92, Al is looking forward to retiring.

"June 1, 2048. That's our 100-year anniversary and I'm thinking that's a good time to step aside; 30 years from now and all of Michigan is invited," says Glick, a wry smile on his face as he thinks 30 years down the road. "Being here, getting up each day to work with these people — it just makes me happy. Why walk away when you still love what you do?"

Al's commitment to people runs deep and is evident in every aspect of his business.

"It comes down to people and Al has always done right by them," says David Schmidt, chief operating officer for Alro Steel. "He's committed to them. Without the people we have nothing — Al understands that and that way of thinking flows down to how we all perform at Alro."

Alro Steel began with family — that conversation between Al and Robert when a little excess steel changed their lives — and it continues because of family.

"It's still funny, growing up, Al Glick was just 'dad' to me," says Randy Glick, executive vice president at Alro Steel. "It wasn't until I became an adult that I

realized my dad is just one of the single coolest people you're ever going to meet in this business."

Remembering back to the days when, at five or six years old, he'd spend Saturday mornings at work with his father, Randy continues, "Working with your father is an interesting dynamic whether you are five, 15 or 35. He taught me to love manufacturing and to love helping people, but more than that it was the life lessons learned along the way — honesty, integrity, loyalty. That's the legacy of my dad."

That legacy continues and may be never-ending for the weight the Glick name carries across Michigan.

Although Al never played football, he gained a passion for the sport and the teamwork required to perform at a high level, saying "football is a great learning experience for life. You learn about teamwork, communications, working together, and you build life-long friends out of football."

In 2018, Al added to the family tradition of giving back to youth and sports, the Al Glick Youth Football Camp. The one-day camp brought together over 250 children from the Jackson community to work with local coaches as well as college players and coaches.

Beyond the gridiron, the family foundations are many — Al Glick Foundation, Alro Steel Foundation, Louis Glick Memorial and Charitable Trust — and each works to make an impact, focusing on supporting and enhancing youth programs, helping the underprivileged, improving children's health, and assisting with manufacturing education and training.

"The way I treat people is a byproduct of how I was brought up," admits Glick. "The team here, my family, the Jackson community and all the people I've met along the way. They are what made all of this possible. God's got me on overtime and now it's about giving back, lifting people up and saying thank you."

The hardest worker you'll ever meet, at 92 Al's finally cut back to 12-hour work days — part-time as he calls it — and he continues to put forth the effort to change lives because, at the end of the day, it's all about a person's willingness to try.

"He taught me early on that the simplest way to avoid mistakes is to never try; but if you never try you'll never grow," recalls Randy. "Think of all the ways Michigan is better because one man with a little leftover steel from the war took a chance and was willing to try. Our state would be different without Al Glick." 🌀

“ Being here, getting up each day to work with these people — it just makes me happy. Why walk away when you still love what you do? ”



Lifetime Achievement recipient Al Glick took the stage amidst a standing ovation for his career of contributions and accomplishments to the manufacturing industry.