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Rochester Hills' Oakland University Announces \$150M Campaign

Rochester Hills-based Oakland University has announced a \$150-million fundraising campaign, the largest in the school's history. So far, it has raised more than \$50 million in a quiet phase over the past two years.

U-M Research Spending Reached Record-Setting \$1.6B in FY 2018

Research in areas ranging from mobility to opioid addiction, sustainability, and the arts were beneficiaries of a record high in research expenditures at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor during fiscal year 2018.

Wayne State University Joins National Effort to Increase College Access

Detroit's Wayne State University is participating in a national effort by 130 public universities and systems to increase college access, close the achievement gap, and award hundreds of thousands of degrees by 2025. The participating institutions will work in clusters of four to 12, and WSU President M. Roy Wilson will lead a cluster of 11 urban universities.

Wayne County to Sell 511 Woodward Building to Birmingham's Elia Group

Wayne County has reached a \$4.65-million tentative deal to sell the 511 Woodward Building in downtown Detroit to Birmingham's Elia Group. The deal is pending approval by the Wayne County Commission in early 2019.

Denso in Southfield Invests Nearly \$100 Million in Startups to Advance Mobility

Denso, which operates its North American headquarters in Southfield, says it has invested nearly \$100 million over a four-year period in startup companies around the world as part of its long-term vision to provide software-based solutions focused on electrification, automated driving, connectivity, and shared economy.

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The Son Also Rises

A formerly down-on-his-luck restaurant worker now owns multiple eateries in Royal Oak and Howell.

BY R.J. KING

Times were so tough for Adam Merkel back in 2010, he cashed in his silver piggy bank to help feed his family. In the process, he did manage to parlay the last \$18 in his savings into what today is three restaurants in downtown Howell and two in downtown Royal Oak, with more on the way.

Merkel's rags-to-riches adventure began when he was 9 years old. He started bussing tables at his family's diner on Detroit's west side and, when it was sold, he worked at other restaurants — all the while dreaming of opening a fine dining establishment.



The 2008 global economic recession made it difficult to obtain a bank loan, while his plan to save money ran up against his role of being the breadwinner for a young family. "The line that no amount of success can be accomplished without an extended family to support you is true," Merkel says. "A year later, my life turned around."

Cobbling together loans from family and friends, Merkel acquired Diamonds Steak & Seafood in downtown Howell, a successful white-linen-tablecloth eatery that had been operating since the mid-1980s. The business continued to boom, and in 2016 Merkel acquired a neighboring restaurant, closed it, and moved Diamonds in after the space was renovated.

In the old location, he launched an Italian restaurant called Cello. And in a nod to humility, he added the Silver Pig Bar & Oyster Room — think a speakeasy with plenty of oysters and brick pizza ovens — next door to Diamonds.



ALL IN THE FAMILY

Adam Merkel acquired Diamonds Steak & Seafood in downtown Howell in 2009 and has since added more restaurants located there and in Royal Oak.

As time went on, Merkel looked to expand from Howell.

When the opportunity to take over a restaurant space in downtown Royal Oak became available, Merkel jumped at the chance. He acquired the former Cantina Diablos at 11 Mile Road and Main Street, and converted the first floor into Diamonds Steak & Seafood. He took the second floor and an outdoor deck and opened the Red Fox as a way to test the prospect of establishing a Cello restaurant nearby. On Dec. 31, the Red Fox closed; it's now being converted into Pinky's Rooftop (akin to the Silver Pig), and is slated to reopen by Valentine's Day.

"Down the road, I'm looking at opening a restaurant in downtown Detroit and in the Ann Arbor area," Merkel says. "My mom and two sisters (recently) opened the M Street Baking Co. (in downtown Howell). I guess you can say things organically fell into our laps." **db**



Industry 4.0 By R.J. King

THE REBOUND OF THE manufacturing sector in recent years has helped stabilize and propel the state's economy. More growth is on the horizon, as recent federal policies favor production on American soil.

Still, Michigan lost 4,000 small- to medium-sized manufacturers over the last decade due to competition, bankruptcy, mergers, or acquisitions. That leaves close to 12,600 companies — 45 percent of which are automotive related — for the five locations operated by the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center.

Each facility is an educational, research, and partnering complex staffed by experts, many of whom have

years of manufacturing experience. The centers, located in Plymouth Township, Grand Rapids, Saginaw, Traverse City, and Marquette, offer businesses new means to boost efficiency, lower costs, reduce waste, and more.

"Large manufacturers can do all the things that make up a smart factory, also known as Industry 4.0, but if you're a small operation, the steps needed to boost your efficiency can be daunting," says Mike Coast, president of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center in Plymouth Township. "That's our sweet spot."

"Since 1991, we've built up a database of more than 10,000 records (as part of) helping manufacturers

improve their operations. We use that to help companies measure their output relative to the competition, we offer classes on everything from cyber-security to lean production, and we test new methods of assembly with 3-D printers or new automation techniques."

Apart from auto suppliers, the centers work with food processors, medical device makers, aerospace firms, and others in enhancing their operations. "We work with companies so they can absorb new technologies at their own pace," Coast says. "We also look at what manufacturers will need three to five years from now. We help Michigan manufacturers meet or beat their global competitors." ■