

# UPCC: Building the future by supporting the U.P.

**By Orrin E. Bailey**

*For Upper Peninsula Business Today*

**T**he Upper Peninsula Construction Council (UPCC) is continuously seeking ways to improve the workforce and economic development climate of the Upper Peninsula.

Under the leadership of its Executive Director, Tony Retaskie, the UPCC campaigns to educate and increase awareness of all residents and businesses of the Upper Peninsula regarding the positive impact skilled union labor has on the Upper Peninsula.

The UPCC is a private, nonprofit corporation serving the Upper Peninsula and its 4000 members since 1984. Its mission is to facilitate communication and foster teamwork between contractors and unions.

The member contractors and trade unions pledge their commitment to provide the skilled workforce that produces the highest quality construction services. The return on investment to the U.P. by the construction trades is more than bricks and mortar.

The men and women of the U.P. con-

struction trades live in our communities; their children attend local schools; their families use local health care facilities; and they shop in our stores. The living wages, health insurance and retirement benefits they receive help to keep our local economy strong.



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The U.P. Construction Council membership workforce's average hourly rate is \$22.74, plus fringe benefits, and annually contributes nearly \$100 million to the U.P. economy.

Some time ago, this Council began looking at the reason why the number of young people joining this industry has decreased. Out of that effort came the Upper Peninsula Construction Trades Regional Skill Alliance. The Regional Skill Alliance (RSA) is convened by the UPCC and the Job Force Board.

A Regional Skill Alliance is a group of employers across an industry that band

together to identify top-priority common industry challenges such as problems of importance to the economy of a region, worker shortages, an aging workforce, the out-migration of youth, skill shortages, training mismatches, worker retention and career progression, regulatory issues, including safety and raising career awareness among parents, students and educators.

The overall mission of the U.P. Construction Trades RSA is to build and maintain a viable and competitive applicant pool for the construction trades industry.

Over the next three years, the U.P. Construction Trades RSA will work on achieving its goals to build the workforce pipeline to meet the construction trades industry needs, build skill capacity to ensure a competitive workforce and develop solutions to industry specific challenges.

In October of 2006, The UPCC and its RSA worked in partnership to hold an Industrial Trades Career Day hosted at New Page facility in Escanaba. Over 200 students participated in this event to learn first hand about skills in the Trades. This year, it is anticipated that over 250 Marquette and Alger students will participate in the Industrial Trades Career Day being held in conjunction with WE Energies in Marquette.

When you get the opportunity, please check out the UPCC website at [www.upcinc.com](http://www.upcinc.com), where you can find out all about the careers associated with the construction industry.

Are you interested in what a career is like? How to prepare for the Trade? Want to know how to qualify and what the training program requires? This website has the answers. Looking for a contractor? The UPCC website links you to UPcontractors.com, a website that consists of over 250 quality construction contractors located across the UP, with specialties ranging from general to electrical and mechanical.

This site is designed so you can easily find a commercial, industrial or residential contractor that services your area. You can also search the site for Construction Managers and Contractors that specialize in Building Design.

Overall, the UPCC's community awareness campaigns show recognition of the Upper Peninsula's strengths that make the U.P. one of the best regions to live.

We have highly skilled local labor, a lot of local involvement with economic development and individuals that are devoted to investing their money and resources locally to further our own economic viability.

Take a look around you and be proud to be part of such a great and advancing region of our beautiful State.

When you take that look around, you will see the Upper Peninsula Construction Council and its Regional Skill Alliance right in the forefront as leaders of our community.

*(Orrin Bailey is chief executive officer for Michigan Works! The Job Force and Six County Employment Alliance.)*

## Training & Safety Make the Difference

Quality construction begins with classroom training, apprenticeships, certifications, and on-going education. It is a career path that delivers the hard-working men and women to important milestones, like exceptional workmanship and exemplary