

Vantage Plastics receives ALICE hero award



Pictured from left to right are Pat Killingbeck, Arenac County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Board Member; Vicky Stickler, Talent Specialist for The Network, Michigan Works! Region 7B; Stephanie Buffman, Director of Business and Economic Development for Michigan Works! Region 7B in Arenac County and Arenac County EDC Director; Paul Aultman, Vantage Plastics; Michigan Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist; George Aultman, Vantage Plastics; and Natasha Allen, Chief Operating Officer, Michigan Works! Region 7B.

PHOTO BY ASHLEY KRING OF UNITED WAY OF MIDLAND COUNTY.

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By Mallory Reetz

STANDISH— Vantage Plastics received the ALICE Hero Award at the ALICE Summit at Saginaw Valley State University Feb. 11. ALICE stands for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed which involves those who work but are still struggling financially. The 2020 ALICE summit was sponsored by Consumers Energy, EMCOG, 2-1-1, and United Way.

“We were very humbled by that (receiving award),” said owner of Vantage Plastics Paul Aultman. “It was totally unexpected.”

Vantage Plastics was nominated by East Michigan Council of Governments (EMCOG) program manager Jane Fitzpatrick who said, “I nominated them because we are looking for a for-profit organization that is stepping up and assisting meeting the needs of people who are working and still struggling.” Fitzpatrick continues saying it is “more than just a paycheck” to Vantage Plastics.

“One of our core values at Vantage is having a servant heart and a servant attitude,” said Aultman. “Part of that is serving the community we live in. When we have a training class and I think it offers value to the community, we will offer that up to the community.”

Aultman started the Well Outreach program which is an organization that focuses on ways to give back to the community. Through the Well program, they held a Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University course which they will be holding again starting March 2 through April 27 at the Arenac Community Center.

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“Last year there were about 40-45 people in attendance and there was over \$100,000 debt reduction in that week,” said Aultman. A couple people had come to him and said they paid off their mortgage as well.

“My dad always said it's not what you make, it's what do with it when you get it made,” said Aultman.

The Arenac Community Center is another place they are trying to help support. “I think it is a great opportunity for the community,” said Aultman “Their mission is bridging, building, learning, and growing, which I think is a great thing for the community.” Aultman said the community center is looking to open a childcare program and he is supporting that for his employees as well.

“Helping employees with the childcare issue would be powerful,” Aultman said. “We don't want to hurt other childcare places because there is really not enough of them. This would just provide additional capacity.”

Aultman said this would be especially helpful in the case of Vantage employees to have a daycare that has extended hours and can accommodate for longer shifts.

The Well program also held a Health and Wellness course for the community as well as Vantage Plastics employees. Aultman said how good you feel and how much energy you have has a merit on your budget as well. Programs like these helps those struggling financially with some tips on how to budget and be in a comfortable situation to live a happy life.

Another way Aultman serves his employees is by partnering with Michigan Works in Arenac County to offer counseling. “We partner with Michigan Works though the Network,” said Aultman. Talent specialists from Michigan Works come into Vantage Plastics weekly and are there to help employees with whatever obstacles they are facing.

“Vantage has a great reputation throughout the region and beyond for helping the ALICE population, whether they are employees or not,” said Director of Business and Economic Development for Michigan Works! Region 7B, Stephanie Buffman.