

## POSITIVE EMPLOYMENT FORECAST FOR OTTAWA COUNTY



An economist from the W.E. Upjohn Institute in Kalamazoo expects employment in Ottawa County to show more improvement in 2014, according to The Grand Rapids Press.

“We think 2014 is going to be a great year,” said George Erickcek. Erickcek is the senior regional analyst at the Upjohn Institute. He made his statements at the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce breakfast. The breakfast was held at the Hope College’s Haworth Inn and Conference Center.

The employment forecast from Erickcek predicts an increase of 2.4 percent in the number of jobs that will be created in 2014. The predictions also call for a 2.6 percent increase in 2015. This is for the Holland-Grand Haven metropolitan service area.

This projected growth is in addition to a report that showed the workforce in Ottawa County increased by 3,300 jobs in 2013.

“The county unemployment has been falling and it has been falling for the right reasons,” Erickcek said.

In November of 2013, the unemployment rate in Ottawa County was at 5.8 percent, according to a report from the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget. This number is a considerable drop from the 6.4 percent in the month of October.

The industries showing the most employment growth in the region include computers, office furniture, food and beverage, and fabricated metals. The industry of manufacturing has levels 10 percent less than when the recession hit even though they are improving.

“We’re starting to see a more mature expansion, as more jobs are being created across the board,” Erickcek said.

According to the report from Erickcek, Ottawa County should see 2.5 percent growth in the goods-production industry and 2.8 percent growth in the private services sector. There will also be a 0.2 percent drop in jobs in the government sector.

Of note, jobs are increasing in Ottawa County due to an increase in wages. Employers in the county are expected to increase what they will pay in an effort to keep their current employees.

“We’re starting to see wage pressure in the data,” Erickcek said. “The labor market is getting so tight, especially for entry-level assembly workers.”