

MUSKEGON COUNTY SEES INCREASE IN JOBS FOR 2013



If you base a strong economic year on job creation, then Muskegon County in Michigan had a successful 2013, according to MLive.com. George Erickcek, the regional labor economist, issued a report on Friday morning.

Erickcek is from the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research . The county experienced an increase of 1,700 jobs for 2013, which equates to 2.7 percent. The increase brings total employment in the county to within 3 percentage points of the levels before the 2008 recession.

In 2014, the county has to create 2,100 more jobs to break even with the numbers prior to the recession. Erickcek did not predict that strong of job growth for 2014, but did say that jobs will be added in the county this year. Erickcek spoke about the data in front of the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce Business for Breakfast in Muskegon Harbor.

In 2014, total employment in the county is expected to increase by 1.6 percent and then by another 1.9 percent in 2015.

"2013 was a good year and 2014 will be as well," Erickcek said.

Erickcek said that the unemployment rate in the county is still 'stubbornly high,' but it is falling slowly because of the 'right reasons.' In November, the county unemployment rate hit 7.9 percent.

"Individuals are finding jobs and their success is pulling other individuals back into the labor market," Erickcek said.

Retail, manufacturing, health and education all posted **job gains** within the county in 2013. Tourism in the county saw the largest increase at 11.3 percent.

"What is amazing is the balance, this growth is not just in manufacturing," Erickcek said. "This is a cross the board. That is what is such welcome news. The local economy is balance among the sectors and is growing."

Erickcek has tracked the economy of Muskegon County and compared it to other counties in the region along with non-college towns in the Midwest. He said that some comparable communities include Saginaw, Jackson and Monroe in Michigan and Elkhart, Ind., Racine, Wis. and Pueblo, Colo.