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## Butler County manufacturers growing

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By Chelsey Levingston

Staff Writer

Butler County is the only area county to recover in 2012 all manufacturing jobs lost since the national economy sank into recession, according to estimates provided to the Hamilton JournalNews/Middletown Journal by labor data analysis firm Economic Modeling Specialists International.

There were 20,648 manufacturing jobs in 2007 in Butler County, according to EMSI's estimates, which are used by local economists. By 2012, 68 net new manufacturing jobs were created, for a total 20,716, an overall flat change.

The gains propelled manufacturing to be the second largest jobs industry in Butler County in 2012 behind government. The number of manufacturing related jobs in the county last year surpassed jobs held in the health care and social assistance field, a high growth field. EMSI estimates there were 19,116 health care and social assistance jobs last year in the county.

It seems 68 additional manufacturing jobs is a small victory, but consider this: all surrounding counties saw declines over the same time in manufacturing employment. Warren County has lost 2,715 manufacturing jobs from 2007-2012; Hamilton County lost 7,638; Montgomery County lost 9,883; and Preble County lost 695, also according to EMSI.

Dennis McLaughlin, chair of the manufacturing industry group for accounting and business planning firm Clark Schaefer Hackett, said profits are improving at manufacturing companies in the region.

"What they attribute to that is some growth in revenue, modest to moderate growth. Going through the tough periods of the economy the last few years, they had to scale back operations...which put them in a profitable position in 2012," McLaughlin said.

"They've scaled back operations, they've cut costs everywhere they can find. Now that volume has picked up, they've enjoyed the profits of that. Also they've become more productive," he said.

Manufacturing jobs are important because they tend to be higher paying, and create wider economic impact than other industries. Average annual earnings in 2012 for Butler County manufacturing jobs were \$77,128, according to EMSI.

The Great Recession accelerated some manufacturing job decline in recent years, but manufacturing jobs have been declining in the U.S. and in Ohio for several decades, according to a new report released in April by Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. National manufacturing employment peaked in 1979, the report said

Despite the declines, manufacturing is still vital to Ohio's economy. The value of goods produced by the sector in 2011, the most recent estimate available, was \$80.7 billion, making up nearly 17 percent of Ohio's total economy. Almost 638,000 people statewide worked in manufacturing in 2011, about 13 percent of Ohio's total employment.

However, no expert expects Ohio going forward to regain all jobs lost over the decades.

Companies are moving to more advanced manufacturing production, which is less labor-intensive and requires more skills and training.

“The type of manufacturing jobs we had, the big industry jobs, we’re not going to get that to the level we were in Ohio,” McLaughlin said. “What we’ve seen in terms of growth is the middle market companies and smaller companies, and the suppliers to bigger companies.”

Southwest Ohio companies produce steel, car parts, plane engines, electrical control panels, beer, corrugated paper and incense, for example.

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- Posted by KemalGreen at 6:49 a.m. Apr. 23, 2013
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Regarding your article on manufacturing jobs. Using the wages quoted as 77,128 equates to 37 dollars per hour based on 40 hour work weeks. Some friends of mine would like to know where these average paying jobs are located. This seems more than a college education can obtain so why bother repaying a student loan?

Kemal Green

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