



# Michigan Paving Industry Reinvigorates Scholarship Program

Students attending the 105 colleges and universities in Michigan can pick from a variety of classes. Choices range from astronomy to zoology, from aquaculture to turf grass management, from coaching to rhetoric. Despite this variety of subjects, students would have difficulty finding a course in asphalt. In just four Michigan universities can students take a class about the crucial material that serves as the building block for 94 percent of the roads in America.

The Asphalt Pavement Association of Michigan (APAM) wants to make sure that qualified students can receive proper instruction in asphalt. The students could get that chance through APAM's expanding scholarship program.



**The Michigan APA provides a scholarship to a student at Ferris State University in Michigan.**



**More than 100 golfers participated in the golf tournament sponsored by Michigan APA, raising some \$12,000 for scholarships.**

Michigan is among the state asphalt pavement associations around the country that have contributed funds to NAPA Research and Education Foundation (NAPAREF). Contributions are coordinated through NAPAREF, with the investment income funding scholarships to deserving students in the states participating in the program.

### **Current scholarships**

Members of the APAM decided to invest funds in NAPAREF, but at the same time wanted to provide scholarships now while the funds coordinated by NAPAREF were accumulating to provide the income necessary to support scholarships for the future.

"Through the years our dues to our state association had been managed in a very frugal manner, so there was some \$50,000 that was available to be rebated to the members," said Jim Klett, president of Klett Construction, and also president of Michigan APA. "Our members decided that instead of getting a rebate we would invest that money in scholarships."

For the past seven years the Thompson Scholars program provided scholarships for students at Michigan Tech in Houghton, Mich. Those funds were used to pay for 357 scholarships. But that money is now used up. The Michigan program needed to be invigorated. And the APAM members were ready to get started.

Reasoning that if you're going to give money away, you should at least have some fun doing it, the members organized a summer golf tournament and silent auction, with the proceeds going to benefit the scholarship program. The bottom line for the 2007 event was that the association raised enough money to finance four scholarships at \$1,000 each. "We sent letters about the program to all

The NAPAREF scholarship program was launched in 1994. Together with related scholarship programs from NAPA members and state asphalt pavement associations, NAPAREF and affiliated programs have awarded 1,459 scholarships. The money awarded since the start of the program exceeds \$3.6 million.

eight universities that educate civil engineers in our state," said Klett of their efforts to re-launch the program. Scholarships were given to students at three universities in the state: Ferris State, Eastern Michigan, and Michigan Tech. Each of the universities has classes on asphalt which the scholarship winners are required to take.

### **Knowledge of asphalt**

"We believe the scholarship program is an important way to educate students about our industry," said Klett. "Graduates from these schools could some day be in positions to specify materials in the industry, so we want them to have a solid knowledge about asphalt."

Tony Winters of Aggregate Industries-Central Region, Michigan, is the co-chairman of the APAM scholarship program. Last year's efforts raised more than \$10,000 for the program, and the leaders would like to see that amount doubled. "It's getting harder to attract young people to this industry and a strong scholarship program is one way to do it," he said.

Too often companies are just looking at winning the next contract or focusing just on the next paving season. With a growing scholarship fund in place, the Michigan APA members are seeking to influence their industry for decades to come.

**HMAT**