

REGION

# Groups encourage patronizing local firms

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Midstate business groups want to link local firms to keep money in the community and help companies save costs and gain efficiencies.

The Manufacturers' Association of South Central Pennsylvania recently hosted a speed networking event in York so businesses could meet others from the area to possibly start buying more from each other.

The meeting was a regularly scheduled session for the regional energy equipment manufacturers group Pennergy Source, said Dana Dehoff, vice president of operations for the group. She also works for the association.

York-based Pennergy opened the session to association members and 27 companies attended, Dehoff said. There is talk of more events like it, she said.

One attending company, Trola-Dyne Inc., has been looking for alternative suppliers near its facilities. The Manchester Township operations are

please see **LOCAL**, page 9

## LOCAL

continued from page 1

busy with work and its existing subcontractors are operating at their capacities, company buyer Mary Miller said.

Trola-Dyne makes custom hydraulic and lubrication systems. The company likes working with local subcontractors because it can see how the product is made and keep better tabs on the work.

"There are certain specifications we have to meet," Miller said.

In some cases, Trola-Dyne might pay more for keeping business local, but it is worth it, she said.

Keeping employees at other local businesses employed allows them to go out and spend money in the community, which cycles back to create a better economic environment for Trola-Dyne and its employees, Miller said.

The Great Recession has shown what happens when the cycle gets broken, Miller said.

Tate Access Floors in Windsor Township attended the networking event to find out about opportunities to buy from local suppliers to help save costs and logistics time, corporate buyer Denise Rau said.

Tate specializes in manufacturing raised floors to accommodate cables,

wires and heating and cooling equipment in commercial facilities, Rau said. The company has American manufacturing facilities in Windsor Township and Jessup, Md., where its corporate offices are located.

Tate uses some vendors from the local community, Rau said. But the firm would like to increase its local business to possibly reduce freight costs and to help facilitate better relationships with its suppliers, Rau said.

"It's easier to communicate if you can jump in the car and drive five minutes down the road," Rau said.

Entire communities benefit from patronizing local businesses, said Crystal Davis, sales representative for Jackson Township-based KBS Inc. truck service and founding member of the coalition.

The Buy Local Coalition has more than 25 Central Pennsylvania company members, according to its website, and aims to raise awareness of the benefits of spending money in the local community. Membership is free, Davis said.

Spending \$100 with a locally owned company keeps about \$45 in the local community; spending money with a national company keeps about \$13 local, according to the coalition.

Local companies also tend to donate more money to nonprofits in a community, Davis said. They have a stake in the community, she said. ■