

Trade Center Earns Award

Organization Is Recognized For International Help

By Elizabeth Sanders

GRAND RAPIDS — The Van Andel Global Trade Center has been helping West Michigan companies with international business since 1999.

Now the Grand Valley State University organization is being honored with the Trader of the Year Award at an awards ceremony and reception Tuesday. The event is part of World Trade Week and takes place from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at Loosemore Auditorium of Grand Valley State University, 401 W. Fulton St.

"We're extremely excited about it; it's a great honor," said Jeff Meyer, executive director of the Van Andel Global Trade Center.

Though he said he appreciates the award, the week itself is the real excitement for Meyer.

"We're more excited about the celebration of world trade, as an event, as a topic and almost as a way of doing things," he said. "We've very excited about bringing attention to that during World Trade Week."

Meyer said the mission of the center is to make Michigan more marketable through global business development. The center offers training, education, consulting and resource development services to its members.

As a part of GVSU, Meyer said the center is in the unique position of being non-competitive with other companies and also acts as a link between the university and the business community.

"We do some curriculum development for the university, bringing back the knowledge from the business community into the education community," he said. "We also provide a bridge between our



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Representatives from Van Andel Global Trade Center, from left, Jeff Meyer, Sonja Johnson, Lindsey Gorsline and Norma Roelfsema have helped more than 6,000 individuals better understand international issues.

faculty and the business community."

With more than 100 members, Meyer said the center offers a good value for its membership fees.

"We want to change the way in which you engage in the global market in a profound way," he said.

Meyer said he believes people have misconceptions about how global business takes place.

"The global economy is all about not just the economy, but world peace, stability, hope, human development — they're all interrelated," he said. "I believe a lot of people think it happens in a silo."

West Michigan World Trade Association President Melissa Kail said she thinks the Van Andel Global Trade Center has done great work with helping the businesses of West Michigan with international trade.

"I think they've done an excellent job of promoting themselves over the last

four or five years," she said. "This year was really their year."

The award is presented to a business, individual or organization that has demonstrated a commitment to international trade for more than a three-year period.

Kail said by helping more than 125 West Michigan entities and more than 6,000 people, the Van Andel Global Trade Center more than fits the criteria.

"They do a fabulous job of getting the word out and getting people educated," she said.

The award has been given out since 1960. Past recipients include JSJ Corp., American Litho Inc. and Irwin Seating Holding Co.

Kail said the award is an important way for West Michigan individuals, businesses or organizations to be recognized for their work with international business.

"It's sort of an award from your peers and that makes it significant," she said. **BJ**