In Michigan, beer distribution is family affair

**Firms handed down through generations**

By JENNIFER DIXON

To understand the business of distributing beer in Michigan, step inside a volunteer-chauffeur service east of Metro Airport.

Today, your host is a somber 85-year-old man taking executive responsibility for the 991-square-foot building they call home. It's cold and the temperature is always set at 45.

Central's drivers truck beer between Chicago and 78 Michigan counties. Most of that business takes place within the breadbasket of Southern Michigan, one of the state's two major manufacturing hubs. And even here, only the harshest of customer service is acceptable. The driver is you. And the beer runs cold.

Central's drivers deliver cold beer to more than 1,350 retailers. Only the slowest trucks move the local beer from the Chicago distribution center to local bars and taverns across the state.

Kevin Basham, president of the company, said the trip was not swanky, but “as well as small specialty operations. And in November, Robert Gus-Press StafF Writer.

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