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Surfing the sky



EVAN O'CONNELL • THE BATTAL

Members of The Sky Surfers perform death-defying acrobatic aerial stunts on the trapeze during Tuesday night's Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus

performance in Reed Arena. The climax of The Surfer's show occurred when one of the acrobats crossed the entire arena, wowing the crowd.

Cities, states looking to retool images to lure young professionals

By Martha Irvine
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAUGATUCK, Mich. — At 27, Kristin Gebben made a decision that cut against the flow: She packed up the life she'd started building in Seattle and moved back to her native Michigan.

The lure was Saugatuck, a quaint artists' haven near the shores of Lake Michigan, where she now takes early morning strolls with her yellow lab pup named Pete. It's one of a few cities that Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm is counting on to bring more young people to the state.

"I feel like people work all their lives to settle down in a place like this — and I've done it now," says Gebben, who found work at an art gallery and recently bought it with the help of an East Coast business partner. "But I'm one of the lucky ones."

Between 1995 and 2000, Michigan lost an estimated 43,000 young college graduates, who left the state for everything from jobs to warmer year-round weather. It's a story mirrored in many other cities, from expensive New York to crowded Los Angeles, which both lost more 25- to 34-year-olds than they gained during those same years.

Now officials in some cities and states are looking to reverse the trend.

In Michigan, Granholm has launched the "Cool Cities" initiative, a grants program that she insists is more about economic development than just bringing "lattes and bookstores and nightclubs" to her state.

Saugatuck, where residents are renovating an old pie factory into a center for the arts, was among the first to receive one of the state's \$100,000 grants. Already, the unfinished center houses the new Mason Street Warehouse theater, where 25-year-old Kelly Carey found a leading role in this summer's first musical.

"They not only created opportunities for them, they're good opportunities," says Carey, who commutes to Saugatuck from Grand Rapids, another "Cool City" grant recipient. Gebben, too, says the arts center adds to Saugatuck's appeal — making it a more "happening" place.

Philadelphia is using a civic leadership and program to try and persuade students who attend colleges and universities there to stay.

Attempting to build upon small but positive gains among 25- to 34-year-olds in the late '90s, Miami has dubbed itself the "never-sleeping, funky, soul of the global economy," pushing every-

Magnetic metropolitan areas

An analysis of migration data indicates many young people in recent years moved to cities with warmer climates and a relatively low cost of living.

Largest net increases in migration, 1995-2000

| Ages 15-24 | Ages 25-34 |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Austin, Texas 49,196 | Atlanta 98,019 |
| San Diego 45,918 | Dallas 58,774 |
| Phoenix 43,060 | Phoenix 55,774 |
| Raleigh, N.C. 35,758 | Denver 53,795 |
| Atlanta 31,375 | Las Vegas 47,824 |

SOURCE: Brookings Institution

from a citywide optic network to music scene.

And Cleveland's partnership with Colgate and other universities, has a summer internship program which students with host families show them the points of Cleveland — from a vibrant and political scene to more reasonable cost of living.

"Most have been to Cleveland their lives. And of what they had

was not particularly favorable," says Maria Crosley, a Colgate alumna who is coordinating the 10-week program known as "Summer on Cuyahoga."

While many of last summer's participants tially said their expectations for Cleveland were fairly low, after their summer in town 41 percent said they would "definitely" consider a job there.

Some experts who track population would focussing on 20somethings is the best tactic plugging brain drain.

"They're like a revolving door. They go to one place — and they move away," says Frey, a demographer and visiting fellow at Brookings Institution in Washington. "So any that thinks they can get a hold on this is expecting too much."

Are you a student leader?

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