PortraitsFromRuralWisconsin05BAPIRuralRecruiting

*- The Applewood Business Park* *has streets named after apples,* *so you could mistake the name BAPI* *for a new variety,* *but the inside of BAPI's facility* *looks much more like the Silicon Valley* *than the Kickapoo Valley.* *Ritch Stevenson is the founder.*

- *We're a high-tech business in a...* "low-tech market," uh, and-- and we do quite well.

- *They do well as a global leader* *in sales and manufacturing of sensors* *and climate-control products.* *BAPI, or Building Automation Products, Inc.,* *has their technology used* *in buildings on every continent.* *Take a tour, and Ritch will emphasize* *that BAPI jobs include* *much more than what's seen on the plant floor.*

- *We employ all the different* career functions, so we have accounting; we have marketing, manufacturing engineering, and engineering management. Wave. *Mechanical engineering, electrical engineering.* *We have drafting.* Tech support, and, uh, professional fly fisherman.

- *Mentioning the fly fisherman* *isn't just trivia.* *It's more of an HR strategy.*

- It's a lot more quiet lifestyle than you have in the city, but there's plenty to do. *My passion is bow hunting.* Canoe, bike, fish, hike, *bird-watch.*

- *The rural setting and remote location* *of Gays Mills* *could be seen as an impediment* *for many businesses,* *but BAPI makes it a selling point.*

- *We took being in Gays Mills* *as an asset.* *We're looking for talent that wants* *to live in this type of environment,* *which is, you know, rural America,* a good quality life, you know, an easy commute to work.

- Wouldn't live anywhere else.

- *Michael McCarthy grew up on an area chicken farm,* *got an electronics degree from a nearby* *tech school, and settled in at BAPI.*

- It is beautiful out when I'm driving back and forth to work. *I'm not stuck in traffic* *or anything, and--and...* just gotta watch out for deer.

- *If Ritch thinks he can sell recruits* *on a small-town life,* *it's because it's what he values* *and what he wants BAPI to play a part in preserving.*

*[spacey music]*

- *Growing up as a kid, I remember* *it was a vibrant community,* *and with all the small farmers in the area to support it,* *it, you know, was a bustling little town.* *When, uh, we saw* the small farmers shutting down, you could also see the local businesses closing as they were leaving, *and you could see the community constricting.* *You have to hit the bottom* *before you start building back up,* *and I'd have to say we're right close to that right now.*

- *But Ritch is confident BAPI can play a role* *in a revival.*

- *It takes effort and there is* *a lot of effort to rebirth* *and pioneer a new Gays Mills* *and get us* back on the track of growth and prosperity that, you know, some of the old-timers remember from when they were kids.

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- *And he encourages others to follow* *the BAPI model.*

- *We have room in the business park,* *if anybody wants to come.*

*[laughs]*

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