

### **EDITION 06**

A publication of The Manufacturers Association



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The Manufacturers Association

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# Strong Infrastructure Critical to Manufacturing Success



BY KARYN BURNS, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

WITH THIS ISSUE of Central Upstate Mfg. emphasizing the broad impact our regional manufacturing sector proudly provides, I found it fitting to couple this theme with the current focus on national infrastructure policy and its importance.

The current political landscape has brought issues pertinent to American manufacturing to the forefront through tangible changes and discussion. The Federal Tax Plan passed in late 2017, and the recent administrative overhaul and freeze of dozens of federal regulations imposed on businesses in recent years, are moves refreshing to manufacturers nationwide. Not only is the action taken beneficial, but it provides the ability to create dialogue about the stifling business climate our sector found itself in over the past few decades.

To the delight of our industries, the latest critical issue to garner attention is our nation's current infrastructure crisis. While transportation and infrastructure are often addressed at the local and state levels, it is necessary that the conversation begin at the top and work its way down: The Federal Government should weigh in on and facilitate interstate commerce dialogue. When even the smallest details impact and influence communities of every size, leadership from the top is necessary to make sure that the granular community needs – and the needs of the country as a whole – are met so we can get from A to Z easily, efficiently, and most importantly, safely.

Manufacturers understand this need better than most: agile transportation of supplies and goods is the lifeblood of our sector. When our businesses have superior and efficient ways to move goods to the market, our productivity soars and our communities thrive. The better the connections are between manufacturing and infrastructure, the stronger our economy will be.

The World Economic Forum addresses the crucial infrastructure issue annually and measures each country's infrastructure capability as one of the key indicators of economic competitiveness. In 2015-2016, the United States was ranked behind many of our major global competitors – #16 overall in national infrastructure quality. The statistics also showed China is spending more on infrastructure each year than North America and Western Europe combined. Over the past 20 years, the United States has spent consistently less on transportation infrastructure, as a percentage of GDP, than many of its peers and competing countries. The lack of investment in our deteriorating infrastructure has caused us to remain stagnant and fall significantly behind our global competitors; other countries that have observed and learned from us improved their own infrastructure, surpassing what once was considered one of the most sophisticated and advanced infrastructures in the world. Simply put, investment in infrastructure gives our country the ability to thrive.

As American manufacturing continues to grow and evolve, we need

our supply chain methods to adapt and do the same. Our industry's success has always relied heavily on the simple concept of being able to get supplies and end products from one place to another swiftly, safely, efficiently, and economically. Without improvement in infrastructure, our sector cannot live up to its full potential.

What is most promising is the bipartisan understanding of this – which is half the battle. Most politicians will agree that highways, bridges, waterways, ports, passenger rails, drinking water and waste water systems, electric grids, transit, and airports are all pivotal and in need of constant improvement. The challenge lies in how we get to the point of improvement and investment. Many members of Congress have committed to work together on this key issue, including our local Congressman, John Katko, for which we applauded him publicly. It is our hope that Congressman Katko and his colleagues on both sides of the aisle will work with the administration to achieve a result we all want: strong, safe, and reliable infrastructure that supports our communities, improves productivity, strengthens commerce, and improves quality of life. Enabling our sector with the strength of a reliable and advanced infrastructure system will only bolster our country's productivity and advancement as a global powerhouse.

Karyn Burns serves as MACNY's Vice President of Government Relations and Communications. Email Karyn at kburns@macny.org.







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# **Remote Control**

BY PATTY CLARK, HR SERVICES MANAGER

**ACCORDING TO RESEARCH** by Global Workforce Analytics.com, about 25 percent of U.S. employees work remotely at some frequency and that number is predicted to grow to approximately 75 percent by 2020. Job responsibilities are now more digital in nature making it easier to work off site. Companies have found that offering a flexible approach results in more efficient workers and is a way to attract top talent. With an increasing number of employees working remotely — whether from across town or across the ocean — it is essential to stay connected.

While telecommuting provides many benefits for both employees and employers, it is easy for remote employees to feel isolated or in the dark, so communication is key. Those working remotely may feel disconnected from the team or forgotten (out of sight, out of mind). Other employees, who work in the office, may feel that teleworkers do not do their share.



It's important to implement a few processes so everyone feels united: establish regular check-ins, utilize technology as a communication tool, and enable real-time collaboration.

- 1. Schedule Regular Check-Ins Consistent check-ins are crucial: the time can be used to review the status of projects. to update the employee on what is happening in the office, and to see how the work arrangement is going — can it be improved upon? Although the regular check-in can be conducted through a conference call or through an email, the best way to communicate is a video conference. A video conference allows the employee to interact face to face with others for a more personal connection.
- 2. Encourage Mobility Employees who work remotely may like to work in a non-traditional office like a coffee shop or library, instead of at a desk off site. Employers can encourage the use of apps that facilitate conference calls and video meetings whenever needed from anywhere in the world utilizing a cell phone, laptop, or tablet.
- 3. Real-time Collaboration It is also important to foster active collaboration on projects. One way to do that is to use technology that allows the sharing of presentations or computer screens, enabling everyone to ask questions or discuss concerns in real time.
  - 4. In-person Gatherings Although services such as Skype do help

to keep remote employees in touch with co-workers, it is worthwhile to schedule gatherings or meetings that require all employees to attend in person. There is nothing like being face to face with someone to talk business or to form personal bonds. Examples of these include team retreats, business dinners, celebrations, or important meetings with clients or team members.

- 5. Connect Through Work Events Invite remote workers to inoffice social gatherings such as a job-well-done celebration or a birthday party so they can be involved and feel like part of the team.
- 6. Leverage a Newsletter A newsletter lets those with flexible arrangements read at their own pace about events, get to know new hires through stories and pictures, and keep up to date on what others are working on.
- 7. Show Appreciation Make an effort to reach out on a regular basis to show they are being thought of and that their contributions are valued.

These are just a few of the many ways to connect with employees who telecommute. Although it may be a bit more challenging, successful and productive relationships with remote workers can be accomplished through technology and continued effort.

Patty Clark is the HR Services Manager at MACNY. Contact her for your HR needs at 315-474-4201 x10 or pclark@macny.org.





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# **Full STEM Ahead:** 25 Years of PEB

BY JOSEPH C. VARGO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PARTNERS FOR EDUCATION & BUSINESS, INC.



IN 1993, A group of school, business, and community representatives envisioned an organization that would be built upon partnerships — an ecosystem of participation and action focused on helping students in Central New York make better-informed college and career decisions.

As part of its incorporation, Partners for Education & Business' (PEB) mission called for "promoting, developing, and coordinating the involvement of schools, post-secondary institutions, businesses, employers, government, and the community to enable our students to become productive, responsible, and contributing members of our community." The vision was to leverage the resources of employers, educational entities, and the community to positively impact education and workforce development systems to increase the skills of individuals in the workforce pipeline.

Since that time, PEB has stayed true to its founding principles. Pilot programs developed early on have expanded into thoughtful initiatives designed to educate youth about manufacturing and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) careers, and to keep promising talent here in our area. PEB creates awareness of available career paths and local companies through industry tours, job shadowing, and career days. Other activities provide workforce preparation and networking opportunities. The number of students, teachers, and businesses impacted is ever increasing.

As a strategy for sustainability, PEB became an affiliate of MACNY in 2010. This strategic

partnership helped MACNY address the workforce development concerns of its 300+ members, while PEB was able to have more direct access to companies in the delivery of its services to schools.

Another prime example of PEB acting as a catalyst to increase awareness of STEM subjects and careers in the region was the evolution of the CNY STEM Hub in 2012. PEB assumed the role of hub administrator and started to work with a committee of educators and business representatives to identify strategies to increase the number of young people pursuing STEM degrees and careers.

The CNY STEM Scholars Program exemplifies the synergy between education and career development. In 2013, SRC, Inc. provided funding for PEB to begin a scholarship program. In the first year, there were just over 100 applications received for four available scholarships worth \$40,000 over four years of college. Each year since then, more companies, including C&S Companies, Carrier Corporation, King + King Architects, Schneider Packaging Equipment Company, and Marguardt Switches have joined the effort. Currently, \$298,000 is invested in the scholarship program with 28 scholarships including the current year. Over 600 applications have been received in the last four years.

Because a relatively small number of applicants receive the

scholarships, a STEM Scholars Connection group was created, comprising all the students who applied for the scholarships over the previous five years. The CNY STEM Hub holds two networking events per year to build connections between the STEM Scholars and the STEM-related companies in the area for the sole purpose of helping students see the wealth of opportunities to work and live in Central New York.

Together, PEB and MACNY are leading the effort to introduce a new pre-apprenticeship program. The program is gaining support as a vital strategy to bolster the pathway from school to jobs in advanced manufacturing and skilled trades.

Over 25 years there have been many examples of how PEB's efforts have broadened the participation of stakeholders in the community, as projected in the organization's early days. PEB looks forward to the future and to continuing its work as a driving force supporting the industry, while enabling our students to become productive, responsible, and contributing members of our community.

Joe Vargo is the Executive Director of Partners for Education & Business. Joe can be reached at joev@macny.org.

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# **Spreading the Word About Apprenticeship**

BY MARTHA PONGE, DIRECTOR OF APPRENTICESHIP



**EMPLOYERS NEED SKILLED** workers and young people want a path to a good career without accruing lots of debt. According to the United States Department of Labor, 87 percent of those who complete apprenticeship programs gain employment, with an average starting salary above \$50,000.

Reporting by CITYLAB succinctly explains the main reasons that apprenticeship is spreading not just across Central New York, but across the entire country.

Registered apprenticeships, which differ from company-specific apprentice programs, have five essential features:

- 1. Employers pay participants during their training.
- 2. Programs meet national standards with the Department of Labor.
- 3. Programs provide both on-the-job learning and job-related technical instruction.
- 4. On-the-job learning is conducted under the direction of a mentor.
- 5. The training results in an industry-recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency.



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The process of utilizing a registered apprenticeship does something that company-specific programs have never done - they ensure consistency of skill acquisition that can be documented and quantified, not just at one company but across many states, cities, companies, and different job titles.

The consistency of training and acquired skills clarifies to manufacturers exactly what to expect from an employee on day one and does it by speaking a language that manufacturers readily understand: competencies and industry-recognized credentials. This is an enormous help to employers who need to hire proficient workers with skills and education that didn't exist 20 years ago and may not be defined solely by a degree title from an academic institution.

On the student side, more and more individuals are graduating from degree programs with debt that far exceeds their earning potential and, with little to no onthe-job experience, are struggling to find meaningful and relevant employment.

An apprenticeship, which is first a job, comes with a salary and an employer who pays for related instruction, which is often a degree-bearing program — the original "learn and earn" model. This makes a degree an option with little to no academic debt and allows the apprentice the opportunity to move along a career path with expanding potential.

No wonder we are seeing the excitement for apprenticeship spreading. I personally have seen it in action on a national level since my participation in the Association for Manufacturing Excellence international conference, which took place in Boston last fall. Most companies in attendance were either involved already or wanted to hear more.

Though their sources of information regarding apprenticeship and the resources available to help them were very different, everyone agreed that apprenticeship is

one of the answers to solving the skills gap problem and consistently training wellqualified employees.

States such as Texas, particularly in the Dallas area, have formed very structured "talent pipeline" partnerships with technical high schools, community colleges, and businesses that support the introduction and relationship building between students and businesses in early high school. This gets kids personally involved with specific companies early on, so they can explore the potential of working there immediately after graduation.

In the Boston area. Jobs for the Future (JFF) has worked with Harvard University to spearhead an initiative called Pathways to Prosperity. The initiative is proposing new ways to envision high school education as a jumping off point that prepares students for youth apprenticeship programs.

Youth apprenticeship is one way to gain actual work experience, prior to turning 18, at the high school level. Low-income areas, such as in inner-city Boston, have seen a tremendous growth in apprenticeship training.

States such as Michigan are offering community college classes to apprentices for very reduced costs. This supports apprenticeship and encourages the apprentices to be lifelong learners and continue their education through company tuition reimbursement plans after they finish their apprenticeships and their initial associate degrees.

Here in Central New York, we partner with schools, workforce development agencies, community colleges, and businesses to develop apprenticeship opportunities.

No matter where they're happening across the country, the word is getting out about the benefits of apprenticeship programs and people are getting trained - well trained. An excellent result for all involved.

Martha Ponge is the Director of Apprenticeship at MACNY. Contact her at mponge@macny.org.



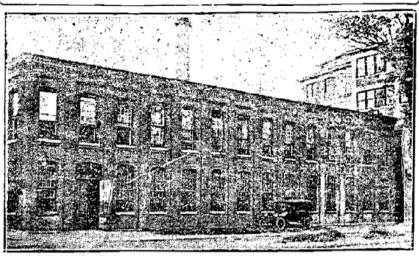


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### THE LIPE SHOP ALONG **SOUTH GEDDES STREET** IN SYRACUSE BECAME AN INCUBATOR FOR **MANY RECOGNIZABLE** MANUFACTURING ENTITIES. **SOME OF WHICH STILL EXIST TODAY IN ONE FORM OR** ANOTHER.

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LIPE MACHINE SHOP IN S. GEDDES ST. ERECTED IN 1861.

# Repeating **Our History**

BY CINDY OEHMIGEN. DIRECTOR OF ENERGY AND CORPORATE SERVICES



THE CENTRAL AND Upstate New York area has a history of industrial innovation. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Syracuse, New York, was a hub for manufacturing: in 1909, there were 537 factories operating within the city limits. We were producing typewriters, candles, pottery, gears, electrical and air conditioning equipment, traffic signals, plated silverware, window fixtures for trains, clothes pressing equipment, and door knobs. Take a trip down memory lane with me to see how local manufacturers contributed to a natural evolution of business that today's inventive climate echoes.

Around 1880, Charles E. Lipe, a young Cornell engineering graduate, purchased the Lynch Building on South Geddes Street — originally a machine shop to serve the salt industry — to set up his own machine shop. He also rented out space to several other entrepreneurs. The Lipe Shop, as it was informally known, became an incubator for many recognizable manufacturing entities, some of which still exist today in one form or another.

Several industrial firsts were developed at the shop as companies produced goods such as agricultural equipment (at least two of the firms were later purchased by John Deere), iron works for fire escapes and elevator doors, and cars (Franklin, Brennan, H. A. Moyer, Van Wagoner, Stearns, Iroquois Motor).

As the auto industry created the need for differentials, gears, and other components,

auto parts manufacturers arose out of the Lipe incubator, including the companies that became Lipe-Rollway and the Brown-Lipe Gear Company. Willard Lipe, Charles' brother, along with Alexander Brown and Winfield Chapin, established a company to build differentials, transmission gears, and clutches, which eventually became Inland Fisher Guide (a former unit of General Motors). Elsewhere in the city, the New Process Rawhide Company, established by two Baldwinsville families who were making rawhide boats with their patented method of laminating rawhide, began to use that material to produce gears for electric trolleys. Ultimately, these gears were made of brass, steel, and cast iron and the brand changed its name to New Process Gear.

Several electrical companies grew out of this same era. Electric Engineering and Supply Co. was a manufacturer and dealer of an assortment of electrical supplies: Jesse L. Hinds worked there as a factory superintendent but left in 1897 to found Crouse-Hinds Electric Company, which made traffic lights among other specialties. Pass & Seymour, now a subsidiary of Legrand, formed and began manufacturing in Solvay by 1908. Thomson-Houston Company was established in 1883 and subsequently combined with the Edison General Electric Company to form General Electric, which later employed thousands in our area.

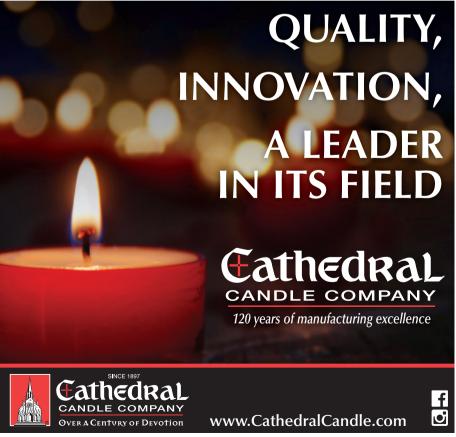
There is no doubt that natural resources also helped shape the manufacturing community. The salt beds supported a multitude of concerns: ice companies and salt kettle, basket, and willowware manufacturers. Soda ash, a key component in the manufacturing of glass, chemicals, detergent, and paper, set the stage for The Solvay Process Company. It also led to the development of laundry equipment manufacturers The Prosperity Company, The Easy Washing Machine Corporation, and in 1946, G. A. Braun, still in business today, was founded.

It is clear to me that many of these manufacturers came into existence because someone saw an opportunity and capitalized on it. Leaders in the community were visionaries and willing to help one another for the good of all. As new industries developed, manufacturing companies emerged to produce the resources and technology required by these endeavors. More than 100 years later, our region still exudes the entrepreneurial spirit that supports new and existing companies. With growth in industries such as unmanned aerial systems, another era of innovation in the area is upon us.

Even companies that have closed or relocated influenced the community and business dynamic. General Electric (GE) is no longer manufacturing in the area, however we have Lockheed Martin, Anaren, SAAB Sensis, SRC. Inc. and SRCTec. PPC. JMA Wireless. and a multitude of suppliers that serve these interconnected descendants of GE. Welch Allyn (Hill-Rom), Tessy Plastics, HHP (Hand Held Products), and JADAK can all be traced back to a common point, Carrier Air Conditioning, Air Innovations, SBB, BITZER, and a wide net of companies in their supply chain form another family of manufacturers tracing their lineage back to Carrier. This only touches on a few examples of companies that grew on the shoulders of their predecessors.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to connect with a wide variety of startup companies and I am continually impressed with the founders' ingenuity and tenacity both characteristics crucial to being successful as an entrepreneur. One can't even begin to predict where the next GE may come from, but I believe we have the right ingredients for it to happen in our community. Luck has little to do with success; it takes hard work and willingness to take risks. We have a network of incubators, some of the best higher learning institutions, and community partners who are passionate and dedicated to assisting in any way they can.

Cindy Oehmigen is the Director of Energy and Corporate Services for MACNY. Contact her at coehmigen@macny.org.







Forged knife blades ready for trim and finishing. PHOTO BY AMELIA BEAMISH

# **Forging Ahead**

Liberty Tabletop Takes a Direct Approach

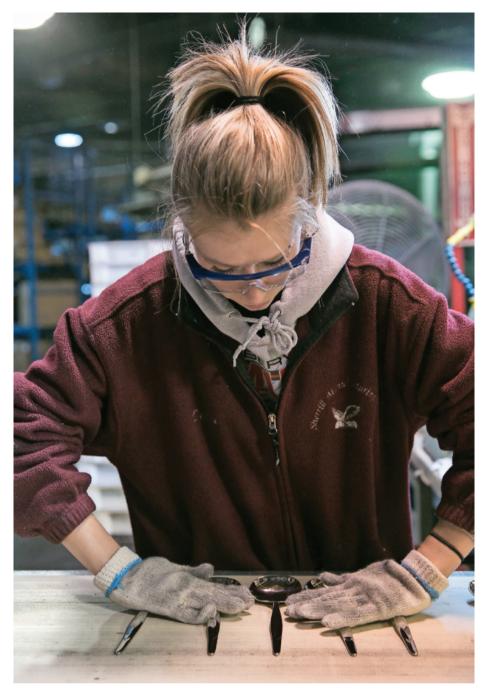
For those who understand the value of products made in the United States, Sherrill Manufacturing, Inc. is a remarkable example of a business that has dedicated itself to preserving its craft and American jobs. The company behind the Liberty Tabletop brand – the only remaining flatware manufacturer with production operations in the U.S. – makes its products in Sherrill, NY, the Silver City, and sources all its materials, from steel to packaging, domestically as well.

Using direct sales to reach customers interested in traditional, high-quality craftsmanship makes sense in a climate where discerning buyers want to know exactly where their purchases come from. MACNY spoke with Greg Owens, Co-founder and CEO, and Matt Roberts,

President and Partner, to learn how Sherrill Manufacturing has persevered by utilizing social media and the web.

# GIVE US SOME DETAILS ABOUT LIBERTY TABLETOP'S HISTORY.

Sherrill Manufacturing was founded in 2005 when we purchased substantially all the flatware manufacturing assets from Oneida Ltd. at their Sherrill, NY facility. We had both been employees at Oneida, and we purchased the facility to keep it from closing. The day after the Oneida Ltd. plant closed in spring 2005, it reopened as Sherrill Manufacturing with a small staff. We started out as a captive manufacturer supplying Oneida with flatware, silver plating, packaging on demand, and rental



Top, Sandy inspects gravy ladles after final buff; Right, John runs the fork tine machine that sands and polishes between the tines.

PHOTOS BY AMELIA BEAMISH



space. That relationship ended during the great recession of 2009-2010.

In 2011, after surviving a difficult decade, we adopted a direct sales business model to sell flatware, under the Liberty Tabletop name, aimed at customers who value American-made products and are willing to pay for them. We re-shored the Government Services Administration (GSA) and Cutco contracts back from Mexico to Sherrill. This production volume, along with our Made in USA Liberty Tabletop line, allowed us to re-start the factory in full production. In 2016, Sherrill Manufacturing was selected to provide all the flatware for the Marriott Syracuse Downtown (the former Hotel Syracuse). We now have 51 employees and are still growing.

### WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY MAKE?

We make bridal-quality 18-10 stainless steel flatware.

### **HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS CHANGED?**

We are the only flatware manufacturer in the United States; our main competitor is China. Over the past five years, we have become more sophisticated in our approach to web marketing using Google, Facebook, and other social media techniques to reach customers directly. Product development has been key in reaching younger customers. Affinity marketing of our flatware products and designs is centered around four basic issues: American job creation, environmental concerns, product health and safety, and free trade concerns.

Our sales are direct via our website. libertytabletop.com, and Amazon. We supply the Federal Government – mainly the U.S. Military – with flatware shipped worldwide through GSA contracts and sell to various OEM companies, mainly Cutco Corporation in Olean, NY. We also produce flatware for several other companies, including Cutco, under their private label.

Our products are mainly sold in the United States and Canada, but we have recently begun exporting to countries such as the

UK, Germany, and Australia. Export sales will be a focus for us over the next few years.

### TO WHAT THREE COMPONENTS WOULD YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS?

Disruptive thinking, the awakening of the American public to the importance of our manufacturing base, and persistence.

### IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF SHOWCASING THE RIPPLE EFFECTS LOCAL BUSINESSES CAN SET IN MOTION, PLEASE SHARE HOW YOUR COMPANY MAKES AN IMPACT ON A LARGER SCALE.

We are known as "America's Flatware Company" and are the only flatware manufacturer left in the United States. We have been honored to be featured multiple times on ABC News' "Made in America" with David Muir and have been invited to the White House to meet with the President and his staff during Made in America Week.

### WHAT MAKES YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT?

We are the only company that manufactures in the United States and we are one of the only brands in the marketplace that does not sell through mainstream retail.

### TELL US ABOUT A CHANGING POINT IN THE COMPANY HISTORY THAT CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR SUCCESS.

The launch of libertytabletop.com changed everything. We also sell through other online retail channels, mainly Amazon, but do not sell to the large retail channels such as big box stores and department stores. The ability to have a direct sales model or B2C model allows us to offer the customer a Made in the USA product at a competitive price, comparable to what they would find in the store - and still make nice margins - because we are not giving up 85 percent of the profits to retail stores and vendors.

### HOW HAS BEING THE ONLY U.S. MANUFACTURER OF FLATWARE IMPACTED YOUR SALES?

We own the market for folks looking for flatware made in the USA. Roughly 10 percent of the American public is adamant about buying American and upwards of 80 percent will buy American if all things are equal. That is a nice-sized niche to have!



A rack of forks comes out of the buffing unit ready for final inspection and bagging. PHOTO BY AMELIA BEAMISH

### HOW HAS BEING THE ONLY U.S. MANUFACTURER OF FLATWARE GIVEN YOU LEVERAGE TO IMPACT POLICY **CHANGE?**

During the past year we made several trips to Washington, including our visit to the White House last summer. It seems as if all doors are open and our story is so compelling that our representatives, as well as those outside of our state and district, listen intently to what we have to say. The PR has been very positive. in terms of the impact that it has had on our sales. The prominence of being featured in the media has opened the door to our involvement in several organizations, such as The Coalition for a Prosperous America (CPA), where we are actively engaged in the promotion of Made in America. The CPA is a nonpartisan group advocating to fix the huge American trade deficit and revitalize American manufacturing.

### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

We hope that our story can serve as inspiration for other small manufacturing companies that are struggling to survive as they are whipsawed by mainstream retail and large institutional conglomerates. It is a challenge to produce and sell at smaller volumes, but the rewards - in terms of profit margins - can be the difference between giving up and moving forward in a profitable, sustainable way where you, and not others, are in complete control of your destiny.

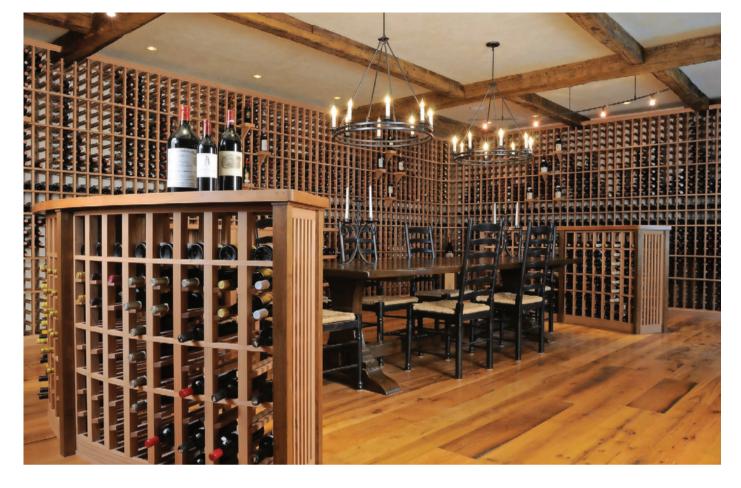


**WE ARE KNOWN AS "AMERICA'S FLATWARE COMPANY**" **AND ARE THE ONLY FLATWARE MANUFACTURER LEFT IN THE** UNITED STATES. **WE HAVE BEEN HONORED TO BE FEATURED** MULTIPLE **TIMES ON ABC NEWS' "MADE IN AMERICA" WITH DAVID MUIR AND HAVE BEEN INVITED TO THE WHITE HOUSE** TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT **AND HIS STAFF DURING MADE IN AMERICA** 

WEEK.

# **Making Waves**

**FROM THE SMALLEST** idea or action can come results beyond what was initially intended. Ripples are caused by movement, and our area's manufacturers are always moving, responding, and proactively making decisions that can have a range of effects. We spoke to leaders from six local companies to ask them what they see as their companies' and their personal impact on their employees, their industries, and beyond.



Air Innovations launched the Wine Guardian brand of wine cellar cooling applications in 2005. Since then, the brand has grown to represent 50 percent of the company's total business.





# **44** A Climate of Success

**OUR CLIENTS RELY ON US TO SOLVE** THEIR UNIQUE **CHALLENGES**; **THIS INNOVATIVE SPIRIT FLOWS THROUGHOUT** THE **ORGANIZATION. DRIVING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT** 

AT ALL LEVELS.

From its headquarters in North Syracuse, Air Innovations' reach is ever expanding, making an impact close to home and globally. The company manufactures specialty environmental control systems for a variety of applications. Additionally, custom products are often sold to original equipment manufacturers who ship their systems worldwide.

Honored for International Development at the 2017 Family Business Awards of CNY and with offices in North Syracuse, NY and in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, Air Innovations has shipped more than 30,000 units to 45 countries worldwide to date. MACNY spoke to President and CEO Mike Wetzel about where his company has been and where it's going.

### GIVE US SOME DETAILS ABOUT AIR INNOVATIONS' HISTORY.

In 1996, my father - Chairman of the Board Larry Wetzel

- and I purchased ten-year-old company, Floratech Industries, which built refrigerated floral coolers for supermarkets. Floratech purchased portions of Clestra Cleanroom in 1999, to diversify the company by adding a division dedicated to the design and manufacture of HVAC systems for the cleanroom and high-tech industries.

We changed the company name to Air Innovations in 2001 to better reflect an expanding portfolio of specialty environmental control systems used to regulate temperature, humidity, and air cleanliness for many industries. We launched the Wine Guardian brand in 2005 and committed to developing an array of products to meet the wide range of wine cellar cooling applications. Since then, Wine Guardian has grown to represent 50 percent of our total business.

### WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY MAKE?

Air Innovations designs and manufactures world-

class custom environmental control units (ECUs) for a range of industries and applications. In addition to the Floratech and Wine Guardian brands, our portfolio of brands includes Micro Environments (console management, personal desktop cooling, heating, and lighting systems) and IsolationAir, which enables a standard patient room to become an isolation room to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Customers also rely on us to design and build custom solutions that protect some of the world's most valuable systems and sensitive processes. Some of our marquee clients and projects include high-profile systems: the Vandenberg AFB rocket launch facility, Stennis Space Center's rocket engine test stand, the Las Vegas High Roller observation wheel, and a cooling system for a silicon pixel sub-detector located inside a linear accelerator at a federal laboratory.

### HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS CHANGED?

To ship products throughout the world, our business has changed to conform to regulatory requirements, various product standards, and diverse climates in different countries, such as CCC (China Compulsory Certification) regulations for China, as well as different electrical supplies in Europe and other continents. We also manufacture military and homeland security environmental control units built to withstand harsh climates around the world where extreme heat, blowing sand, driving rain, or extreme cold could be the norm.

As we've grown worldwide, we have been forced to be more competitive and innovative, not only by having a good knowledge of the competition in other countries, but also by understanding the different cultures and how that might impact our products or services.

### TO WHAT THREE COMPONENTS WOULD YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS?

Vision: Having a vision of where we see the company in one year, as well as long term, and effectively communicating that vision regularly to the employees.

People: Every employee must possess the company's core values and be seated in the correct position. Engaged employees are paramount in helping achieve an organization's goals and objectives. Successful business and successful culture go hand in hand.

Innovation: Our clients rely on us to solve their unique challenges; this innovative spirit flows throughout the organization, driving continuous improvement at all levels.

### IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF SHOWCASING THE RIPPLE EFFECTS LOCAL BUSINESSES CAN SET IN MOTION. PLEASE SHARE HOW YOUR COMPANY MAKES AN IMPACT ON A LARGER SCALE.

While we call ourselves manufacturers, we are really designers





Some of Air Innovations' projects include high-profile systems for rocket launch facilities and the Las Vegas High Roller observation wheel.

and assemblers. Most of the components that are required to build our systems are manufactured by suppliers. Approximately 65 percent of our vendor base is in New York State. For every job at Air Innovations, we are supporting four to five times that number of jobs in our vendor community.

### WHAT MAKES YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT?

Air Innovations is very diverse. While we have competitors at the brand level, we are not aware of a competitor to Air Innovations as a whole. At the brand level, we leverage the assets of the whole corporation – being part of Air Innovations gives access to a larger engineering and marketing team than a standalone brand would otherwise have access to. We also never stop innovating, be it new products or new processes. Ultimately, that is our true strength.

### TELL US ABOUT A CHANGING POINT IN THE COMPANY HISTORY THAT CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR SUCCESS.

Several times in our history we faced significant headwinds, generally after the loss of a major client. As many of our customers are some of the largest companies in the world, there is often pressure on them to try new vendors, so change happens. These losses have made us focus on not becoming complacent and on constantly striving to grow and to diversify our business. This commitment to diversification goes beyond product and industry, and now extends to region - we want to be globally balanced.



Fourth-generation family members from left, Mark Steigerwald, Louis Steigerwald III, and John Hogan.





**MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, OUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED** TO THE PEOPLE INVOLVED. **WE'RE LUCKY** TO HAVE VERY **TALENTED AND DEDICATED EMPLOYEES** THAT ARE **PASSIONATE ABOUT WHAT** 

THEY DO.

For over 120 years and five generations, Cathedral Candle Company has produced liturgical candles in Syracuse. Machinery and tools built to founder Jacob Steigerwald's specifications are still used today, alongside newer, state-of-the-art equipment designed by the company. Its original factory on Kirkpatrick Street remains at the heart of an expanded facility.

**Igniting Faith** 

The quality of Cathedral's candle formulations, ornamentation, and hand work has been as consistent as its commitment to innovation. Cathedral distributes its products through a network of dealers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom who sell directly to chapels, churches, and cathedrals around the world. The best example of its influence on the candle making industry: Over the years, Cathedral candles have been burned by Popes, Saints, and U.S. Presidents everywhere from Syracuse to Rome.

Marketing Director and fifth-generation family member

L. John Steigerwald IV shares how a dedication to their niche has led to Cathedral's success.

### GIVE US SOME DETAILS ABOUT CATHEDRAL CANDLE COMPANY'S HISTORY.

In 1897, a German immigrant named Jacob Steigerwald founded the Cathedral Candle Company in an empty lot behind his home on the North Side of Syracuse. Jacob had mastered the art of candle making through training in his native Bavaria, and after years of working as a production supervisor at another candle company in Syracuse he decided to found a company devoted entirely to the liturgical candle market. He developed a reputation for making beautiful candles of exacting quality – a legacy that has been passed down to the fourth and fifth generations of the Steigerwald family who still own and operate the business today.

### WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY MAKE?

Cathedral Candle Company makes candles for liturgical use primarily in the Roman Catholic market, as well as Protestant and Orthodox denominations. We make anything from small votive candles to the large, highly decorative Paschal candles used at Easter.

### HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS CHANGED?

Being in a niche industry for over 120 years, much of our business has been very consistent: we have always been focused on the liturgical candle market and sold only through our network of dealers. In fact, some dealers have been customers for as long as we've been in business. Nonetheless, we're constantly reinvesting in our plant and equipment to be more efficient and continue making the highest quality product available on the market.

### TO WHAT THREE COMPONENTS WOULD YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR COMPANY'S SUCCESS?

More than anything else, our company's success can be attributed to the people involved. We're lucky to have very talented and dedicated employees that are passionate about what they do, and this clearly shows in the quality of our product. We also have a strong network of knowledgeable dealers who really know their local markets. Lastly, being a family-owned and family-operated business allows us to form meaningful relationships with our employees and dealers so that we can do what's best for business in the long-term, not just the next quarter.

### IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF SHOWCASING THE RIPPLE EFFECTS LOCAL BUSINESSES CAN SET IN MOTION, PLEASE SHARE HOW YOUR COMPANY MAKES AN IMPACT ON A LARGER SCALE.

One example of this would be our Paschal candles used primarily in Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Methodist services every Easter. For generations, candle manufacturers treated these candles as a mostly utilitarian product. In 1988, however, we introduced a new line of Sculptwax® Paschal candles that approached these candles as works of art. Using innovative high-relief appliques and color-infused wax, these designs celebrate the craftsmanship that goes into our work. Since then, we've introduced a wide array of new Paschal candle designs (and inspired many imitators). Now, any time you walk into one of these churches, you're likely to see a highly decorative Paschal candle that helps to enhance the liturgy and beauty of the church.

### WHAT MAKES YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT?

We make everything ourselves right here in Syracuse, so we have total control over the quality of our product and we're able to make a lot of specialty items that our competitors can't.



Intricate designs are applied by hand to Paschal candles.

### TELL US ABOUT A CHANGING POINT IN THE COMPANY HISTORY THAT CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR SUCCESS.

Each successive generation joining the company has represented a changing point contributing to our company's success. Second-generation brothers Louis Steigerwald Sr. and Carl Steigerwald, for example, guided our company through the major changes in our industry following the Second Vatican Council. Fourth-generation family members Lou Steigerwald III, Mark Steigerwald, and John Hogan have made major investments in our plant and equipment over the years that have allowed us to become a go-to source for any of our customers' candle needs. Each generation has remained focused on our core business of the liturgical candle market, but we have always evolved and adapted to serve that market better.



With corregated packaging and displays, BCI Empire reproduces its clients' branding to support the perception of those brands and products in the marketplace.



\$

COMPANY PROFILE

SIMPLY STATED,
WE DO NOT JUST
MAKE BOXES
AND DISPLAYS.
WE BUILD THE
MEANS TO SHAPE
IMPRESSIONS
AND INFLUENCE
PERCEPTIONS IT'S YOUR PRODUCT
IN OUR PACKAGE.
IT COMES DOWN

**TO THIS: WE THINK** 

LIKE CUSTOMERS

**AND ACT LIKE** 

OWNERS

# **Boxing Clever**

BCI Empire Division, the Syracuse-based branch of Buckeye Corrugated, Inc. (BCI), has been designing and engineering customized corrugated packaging solutions locally for nearly 40 years. With two factories in upstate New York, BCI serves clientele in most of the Northeast. The parent company has locations in nine other states; its independently managed businesses supply a diverse range of customers across the country. Last year, Empire expanded to include a second shift.

An employee-centered corporate philosophy empowers the business to be a flexible, service-oriented partner to its customers and take a proactive approach to its environmental impact. BCI Empire earned a 2017 CNY Best Places to Work award for businesses with 51-150 employees. This award, sponsored by the CNY Business Journal, allows employees to rate their employer on areas that contribute to their job satisfaction, such as

benefits, empowerment, salary, and morale.

Division President Jim Trombino sat down with us to discuss the benefit of thinking outside the box.

### GIVE US SOME DETAILS ABOUT BCI EMPIRE'S HISTORY.

BCI Empire Division began its Syracuse operations in 1979 as Empire State Container and joined the BCI family in 2011. In Rochester, we have BCI Koch Division, formerly known as Koch Container, which was acquired by BCI in 1984. BCI is a privately-held, employee-owned company with 10 corrugated manufacturing facilities to date.

### WHAT DOES YOUR COMPANY MAKE?

BCI is a leading designer and manufacturer of custom-made corrugated packaging, point-of-purchase displays, and point-of-sale packaging. Our products are



**BCI Empire Division President Jim** Trombino.

custom-crafted to support the perception of our customer's image and products in the marketplace.

### **HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS CHANGED?**

Corrugated has become more than just the box that holds your product: it's become a package designed to demand customer attention, ensure safe shipping, and express your brand. It has driven us to invest in our people and equipment in conjunction with our sales-driven designs, high-quality execution, and exceptional customer support packaged into every box.

### TO WHAT THREE COMPONENTS WOULD YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR **COMPANY'S SUCCESS?**

Having multiple facilities gives us breadth of capability and tremendous flexibility. Each BCI division is also guided by the principle that our success relies upon our unwavering commitment to our customers' success. Throughout our locations, BCI employees give their time, skills, and effort to recycling initiatives, service organizations, educational programs, and outreach services to make an impact on the lives of others and ensure the longevity and sustainability of the environment.

IN KEEPING WITH THE THEME OF SHOWCASING THE RIPPLE EFFECTS LOCAL BUSINESSES CAN SET IN MOTION, PLEASE SHARE HOW YOUR COMPANY MAKES AN IMPACT ON A LARGER SCALE.

There has been a steady increase in demand for corrugated packaging that can be attributed to the growth of e-commerce retailing. Flexible and quick responses to clients' changing needs have contributed to their success, as well as ours. Sustainability initiatives have also caused a push for "green" packaging. BCI Empire considers helping the environment a meaningful social issue. The manufacturing of corrugated packaging provides a key opportunity to aid in environmental efforts since corrugated boxes make up the vast majority of materials recycled each year.

### WHAT MAKES YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT?

Simply stated, we do not just make boxes and displays. We build the means to shape impressions and influence perceptions – it's your product in our package. It comes down to this: we think like customers and act like owners.

### TELL US ABOUT A CHANGING POINT IN THE COMPANY HISTORY THAT CONTRIBUTED TO YOUR SUCCESS.

Since BCI acquired Empire State Container and Koch Container, their immediate and continuing investment of millions of dollars in equipment have made a significant impact on our capabilities. This contributed to our continued success and growth in the region.





# Caeresa Richardson

MANAGER - NY OUTDOOR LIGHTING DEPARTMENT. NATIONAL GRID

### HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO EMBARK ON A CAREER IN MANUFACTURING?

After graduating from Syracuse University with a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, I sought opportunities that would provide me with a broad range of industry exposure so I could make an informed decision about my professional career path. I was ultimately hired into a Leadership Development Program for Engineers at an international manufacturing company where I gained accelerated experience leading projects, managing people, and learning business acumen. This experience provided me with a great foundation that has contributed to my continued career growth.



I attribute much of my growth to the many mentors and individuals I have worked with. The main method I used was the "go and see" where I would physically visit locations or shadow people so that I could learn about processes and products I was interested in. I learned so much about the industry and the production processes, while also gaining a different perspective about the business. Over the years, I've acquired — and continue to draw on — a catalog of information gained through discussions and firsthand experience with the most knowledgeable people in various areas.

### TELL US ABOUT SOMEONE WHO HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOU AND YOUR CAREER.

My first manager had a very similar background and has been a great guide throughout my career. From her, I learned many of the leadership tools I continue to use today. What made her so impactful was her visibility in the organization and her enthusiasm to use her place of influence to ensure I was assigned challenging highvisibility projects that gave me good exposure to the business. I was able to see what leadership looked like at various levels and learn from the ways she approached challenges. I think this type of sponsorship

is very important for anyone seeking to progress in their leadership career, especially a woman seeking a leadership career in manufacturing.

### HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE CAREER GROWTH WITHIN YOUR COMPANY?

As a leader, I feel accountable for ensuring each person on my team achieves the career goals that they have set for themselves. I encourage participation in our employee resource groups where they can learn and grow with others based on specific common interests; I also encourage participation in external training with industry groups. I like to lead by example, making my team aware of my participation in similar trainings, employee resource groups, and what I gain from my leadership roles in industry and community organizations.

### IF YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN YOURSELF ANY ADVICE EARLY ON IN YOUR MANUFACTURING CAREER, WHAT WOULD THAT ADVICE BE?

I would tell myself to know that I belong, and deserve to be, exactly where I am. I have typically taken roles where I've been the youngest person in a leadership position. I'd often spend time questioning whether I deserved to be in that position at that time. As I progressed, I learned that this is a normal response to the leadership journey and I have grown to appreciate learning and knowing that, because of the broad range of roles and experiences I've had very early in my career, I have much to offer any team that I am a part of.

### **HOW COULD MACNY ASSIST IN NOT ONLY CAREER** GROWTH. BUT GROWTH OF MANUFACTURING IN **GENERAL?**

I like the P-TECH program MACNY hosts and I would encourage MACNY to think of other innovative ways to partner with community organizations doing work with developing emerging professionals to create opportunities to expose these professionals to the broad career opportunities that exist in manufacturing.



AS A LEADER. I FEEL **ACCOUNTABLE FOR ENSURING EACH PERSON** ON MY TEAM **ACHIEVES THE CAREER GOALS THAT THEY HAVE SET FOR** THEMSELVES.





# **Michael Szidat**

PRESIDENT. FELIX SCHOELLER NORTH AMERICA

### HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO EMBARK ON A CAREER IN MANUFACTURING?

I didn't really plan to be in manufacturing, let alone running a manufacturing operation in the paper industry. But, growing up with a dad who worked all his life in the automotive industry, I developed an appreciation for companies that make stuff. I had never seen myself as a real manufacturing guy; I thought I'd be working in sales and marketing for companies that make great products. Today, I am fortunate to enjoy all aspects of a manufacturing company: developing, producing, and selling some of the best papers for the digital printing industry.



THE **CHALLENGE FOR ANY MANAGER IS TO BREAK COMPLEX CHALLENGES DOWN INTO SIMPLE PIECES THAT ARE EASIER TO** SOLVE.

### OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR CAREER. WHAT TOOLS. METHODS, WAYS DID YOU TAP INTO TO GROW WITHIN YOUR CAREER?

I had a boss who would bring his laptop to meetings, open an Excel spreadsheet, and start breaking the discussions down to numbers, facts, or simple documentation. It was a great way to dissect complex topics, visualize the discussion content, and build a process for decision making. So, I started using this tool for all my meetings and I got really excited when my team began doing the same. Using facts and figures, even if you have to guess, can be a tremendous help in making sound decisions.

### TELL US ABOUT SOMEONE WHO HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON YOU AND YOUR CAREER.

I have been very fortunate to be surrounded by some great industry leaders during my career, but I owe it to one mentor and friend that I ended up where I am today. I was born and raised in Germany and began my professional career working for a German specialty paper company. But it was a U.S. distributor that we worked with who had a profound impact on me. He took me under his wing and taught me everything about our industry, the products, the players, and market dynamics. Not only did I end up in the country he taught me so much about, but with the privilege of running one of the leading companies of our industry. It wouldn't have happened without him.

### WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE MANUFACTURING LEADERS FACE TODAY?

Finding talent! Manufacturing is competing with other industries for the best and brightest. And although there appears to be a revival of American manufacturing, our industry seems to lack some of the appeal that other segments offer. We need to work extra hard to catch the interest of younger professionals and convince them that we actually operate in a high-tech, fastpaced, international business environment that offers tremendous career opportunities and is also a lot of fun.

### HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE CAREER GROWTH WITHIN YOUR COMPANY?

Although we are part of the global Felix Schoeller Group, our local operation in Pulaski is a midsize company with a fairly flat hierarchy. Therefore, career growth is much more horizontal than vertical. It is really about enriching a job, adding responsibilities, and adding to the success of the company. We develop employees that are excited to take on new assignments, enjoy cross-functional projects, and get the manager's attention by bringing ideas and initiatives without being asked. If you are looking for a pre-planned career path that outlines every step of your professional future, we are the wrong company.

### IF YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN YOURSELF ANY ADVICE EARLY ON IN YOUR MANUFACTURING CAREER, WHAT WOULD THAT ADVICE BE?

Ask, ask, ask! Especially when I was younger, I didn't want to appear clueless and at times I nodded in agreement, when I hadn't really understood everything. With more experience and self-esteem, it became easier to ask questions. Especially in today's high-tech manufacturing world, there is so much to learn about equipment, processes, and products. My advice is: Ask until you understand. Even when it is a bit uncomfortable.





# Michael Ernenwein

DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION OPERATIONS, LOCKHEED MARTIN

### HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO EMBARK ON A CAREER IN MANUFACTURING?

I originally entered the manufacturing field to cut down on my travel time, so I could spend more time with my family. I became a manufacturing engineer, which allowed me to still work on solving problems, work with people on the floor, and ensure the product went out the door. Given the time I spent in the Air Force, I wanted to support products that assist our troops. Over time, as I gained more knowledge and experience, I was asked to take on more responsibility.

### OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR CAREER, WHAT TOOLS. METHODS. WAYS DID YOU TAP INTO TO GROW WITHIN YOUR CAREER?

I was always willing to take on challenging tasks and volunteer for tough assignments, including a lead manufacturing engineer position on a challenged production program. I made plenty of mistakes along the way that I learned from. I always look for a way to solve problems, instead of going into a project with a "we can't do it" mindset. Public speaking has always been tough for me, but instead of shying away from speaking engagements, I signed up for Toastmasters to overcome the problem.

When it comes to mentoring, it is something I feel strongly about. Though I never had the opportunity to have a formal mentor, I learned by observing managers and trying to emulate how they handled issues and certain situations. Because of that, I have made a point of mentoring others.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE EMBARKING ON A CAREER IN MANUFACTURING?

I would advise them to start at the bottom and become familiar with all the different roles within the industry. The path upward is not always a linear one and it's important to understand you may have to make some lateral moves to ultimately grow.

### HOW DO YOU ENCOURAGE CAREER GROWTH WITHIN YOUR COMPANY?

Mentoring and relationships. I mentor approximately 10 people with varying levels of experience in different stages of their careers across Lockheed Martin. We work together on issues affecting their progression. We look at whether the time is right to pursue a management position or if they have the necessary skills to reach their next goal. Overall, it is about listening to them, finding out what they really want, and helping them achieve that goal.

I also build relationships with employees who we believe are on track to achieve higher positions within the company. Part of that relationship includes making sure they are aware of opportunities for advancement and helping them make informed decisions regarding their career path.

### IF YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN YOURSELF ANY ADVICE EARLY ON IN YOUR MANUFACTURING CAREER, WHAT WOULD THAT ADVICE BE?

I would tell myself to enjoy the ride because working requires more time away from your family and life than anything else. If you don't enjoy what you do, it makes the time away appear daunting and can affect your personal life. Focus on the positive, not the negative.

### HOW COULD MACNY ASSIST IN NOT ONLY CAREER **GROWTH, BUT GROWTH OF MANUFACTURING IN GENERAL?**

I have been a member of MACNY for almost 20 years and have always been impressed by the organization's continued focus on current and future issues that manufacturing companies deal with. I initially joined for the networking opportunities, including the Factory Managers Council. Today, I am more focused on encouraging my employees to become involved to help them increase their knowledge of the manufacturing industry outside of their job at Lockheed Martin.



**THOUGH I NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY** TO HAVE **A FORMAL** MENTOR. I **LEARNED BY OBSERVING MANAGERS** AND TRYING TO **EMULATE HOW** THEY HANDLED **ISSUES AND CERTAIN** SITUATIONS. **BECAUSE OF** THAT, I HAVE

MADE A POINT

**OF MENTORING** 

OTHERS.



# You Never Know



David's grandson Silas, now 6.

BY DAVID FREUND, CHIEF LEADERSHIP OFFICER

IT WAS A cold, early February morning in 2012. I was feeling a whirlwind of emotions: concern, fear, and hope. My daughter Bethany, 24 weeks pregnant, was lying in a bed in the maternity ward of Akron General Hospital. It had been a difficult pregnancy from the beginning. Just how serious it was had hit me a few days earlier, on Monday evening at about 8:20 pm. Andrew, my son-in-law, called to tell us they were taking Bethany by ambulance from Mansfield, Ohio, to Akron because she had gone into labor and they were not able to stop it. Akron General was chosen because of its proximity to Akron Children's Hospital. On Tuesday, my wife battled the wintery elements and drove to Akron; by Friday, I decided that I needed to make the trip as well. Late in the afternoon, I drove to Akron with my two younger sons. We arrived too late to visit Bethany, so we picked up my wife at the hospital and went to the hotel. On Saturday morning, Andrew called

to say that we needed to come quickly: the situation had become more serious, and Bethany was being prepped for an emergency C-section.

We arrived at the hospital and rushed into the room where Bethany was already prepped for surgery. I said a quick prayer, gave Bethany a

kiss, and she was off to the operating

room. The wait was very difficult, with so many thoughts, prayers and yes, fears — running through my mind. After what seemed like hours. Andrew came out to tell us we had a new grandson and that Bethany was doing well. The tiny baby, soon to be named Silas, was doing as well as could be expected. Andrew said we might get a glimpse of Silas as a transport team took him out of Labor and Delivery and down the street to Akron Children's Hospital. A few minutes later, the team of four

rushed through the doors with

what looked to be a small submarine with wires, hoses, and monitors in tow. No chance to get a glimpse of our first grandchild. Soon word came that we could go in to see Bethany. Thankfully, she was doing very well, an answer to many prayers.

Later that afternoon, we were informed we could go visit Silas at Akron Children's. We took the short walk with a cold wind blowing against our faces. As we entered the hospital, I was struck by the amazing colors in the lobby. It was such a welcoming and cheerful place; you could almost feel the love and compassion all around you. We signed in and started down the hallway toward the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. We were directed to an isolette with wires, hoses, and monitors all over it. On its sides were openings where the doctors and nurses could reach in to care for Silas. A cacophony of sounds alerted the staff to every aspect of Silas' condition. His isolette was covered with a hand-sewn quilt. As my wife and I approached the isolette, I was shocked by two specific things. The first was how tiny he was. His ears were not fully developed. His skin was almost translucent. The second surprise was that Silas was lying on top of a fiber optic blanket emitting a blue light used to break down the bilirubin in his blood. I wasn't surprised that he needed the phototherapy — I was surprised because I had built the prototypes for the blanket when I worked at Volpi Manufacturing years earlier.

What an amazing turn of events: a product I helped develop 20 years earlier was being used to save my grandson's life. I had never seen the product in use in a hospital. I wasn't even around when the product moved from prototype to production, but there it was helping my tiny grandson, weighing less than two pounds, cope with his early arrival.

You may never have the opportunity to see the fruit of your efforts as I did at Akron Children's, but rest assured that others have. Throughout the world, products made in Central and Upstate New York are making a difference in the lives of others. Thank you for being willing to make a difference right here in our great state.

# Resource Guide

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### FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

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# RESOURCE GUIDE

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### MACNY. The Manufacturers Association

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