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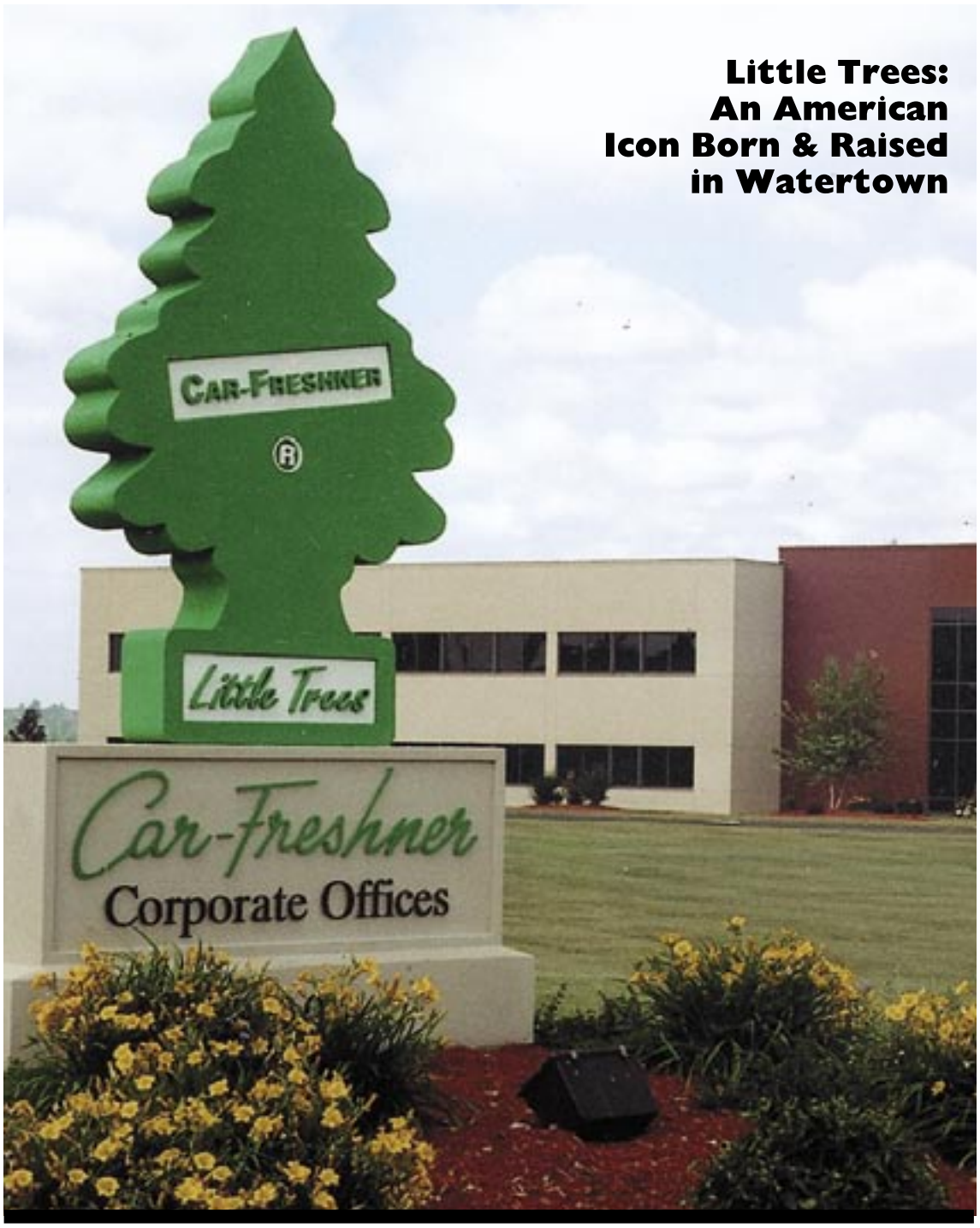

Little Trees: An American Icon Born & Raised in Watertown

MANUFACTURING

Inside this Issue:

CITEC • DEWBRIDGE • CURTIS FURNITURE • LOCAL MANUFACTURING • AND MORE!

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Note FROM THE PUBLISHER

August 2005

As we mark the end of the first year of our magazine, I'd like to personally thank all of you for sticking by us as we navigated through our growing pains. We've changed the look, the size and the design of the magazine in our quest to get it "just right" and provide you with a great regional business magazine. There will probably be more changes to come and we'll probably never be fully satisfied, but complacency breeds boredom anyway! One big change will be the inclusion of Lewis County readers and businesses now, making us a tri-county publication.

We thank you for your feedback and we hope you keep it coming. We want the magazine to be useful as well as interesting to our readers.

The staff has planned some interesting issues for the coming year. We'll focus on new topics that include financial services, husband-and-wife-run businesses, transportation, energy, and craftspeople, and bring back some favorite subjects such as construction, entrepreneurs and family-owned businesses.

Thank you again for your support and best wishes for a prosperous fall!

John Macdonald, Publisher

Correction

In the July issue an incorrect byline was placed on the *Small Business Development Centers Provide Networking Resources for Women in Business* article located on page 6. The article was written by Michelle Collins.

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FURNITURE MANUFACTURING IS ALL IN THE FAMILY

By Andrea Pedrick

Curtis Furniture Company has been manufacturing and selling handcrafted wooden items including bedroom sets, coffee tables and cabinetry, to individuals and local businesses for more than two decades.

When you enter the Curtis Furniture showroom on Route 342 between Watertown and Evans Mills, a young woman with light brown hair and a big smile greets you. She is well-versed on the products. She leads you through the showrooms as if they were her own home, pointing out different pieces of furniture as you go. She is well-educated on the quality of the furniture and can answer decorating questions without blinking an eye. For Jessica Curtis-Priestly, this is her passion. It is also her family's business.

Curtis Furniture Company has been manufacturing and selling handcrafted wooden items including bedroom sets, coffee tables and cabinetry, to individuals and local businesses for more than two decades. In September of 2006, Curtis Furniture will celebrate 25 years of doing business in Jefferson County.

After the tour of the showroom, Jessica will show you where the product is made. It is a short walk to a building behind the showroom. When you step inside, it is clear this is where it all happens. In an average week, three to four pieces of furniture will be made by hand and go out the door to a family home or a new executive's office. More complicated pieces like a full bedroom set, a hutch, a dining room table or kitchen cabinets, take a bit longer, sometimes up to five weeks to complete.

A young man approaches and he, too, speaks about the quality of the work done here, and he, too, is passionate about it. Mark Curtis is a Craftsman, and Jessica's brother. Their father is a Master Craftsman; Peter L. Curtis is not short on words when it comes to verbalizing how proud he is of his children joining the family business. Peter says he never put pressure on them to get involved, they simply were born with a natural talent for it.

"Over the course of 25 years, the quality is all the same, the designs and lines are different," says Peter Curtis.

Manufacturing in the North Country can mean different things to different people. For many, it's the image of a worker on an assembly line, standing at a conveyor belt, or it is a person running a complicated piece of machinery. For others, it's taking the time to handcraft a bedroom set or an end table from scratch. Those jobs require hard work, patience and someone who takes pride in the final product; all of which are hallmarks of Curtis Furniture.

Mark says he remembers sweeping in the

work area as a small child. He watched his father closely as he carefully shaped the wood into functional living pieces. He gained a respect and understanding of carpentry and sharpened his own skills while attending carpentry/masonry classes at Jefferson-Lewis B.O.C.E.S. At 16 years of age, Mark was hired as a subcontractor to design and install the kitchen inside a modular home built on the B.O.C.E.S. campus in Watertown. This is work usually done by adult professionals. Today, Mark oversees the Curtis Furniture products from start to finish.

Jessica's talents are utilized in the design phase of the project. She learned this skill from her father. "I always loved watching him do his sketches. He was so good - and still is," says Jessica. She works directly with the customers, helping them to choose the wood, the design and the style of the furniture to fit their home or office.

They have certainly followed in their father's footsteps. Born and raised in the Town of Leray, Peter Curtis took an interest in his vocation at 21 years of age. For four years he worked as an apprentice cabinetmaker for a craftsman in New Hampshire. In the early 1980s he returned to Jefferson County to strike out on his own.

"Over the course of 25 years, the quality is all the same, the designs and lines are different," he says. At the start of his business, pine was all the rage. It is no longer the number one wood; pine has been surpassed by natural cherry and maple.

"The key to what makes us unique is that we do everything from traditional to contemporary to Shaker-style furniture," Peter points out.

Curtis Furniture has cultivated a solid reputation for making and selling quality furniture in the North Country. A handcrafted piece of furniture is an investment, an heirloom and a fine piece of work. It can also be a topic of conversation in the boardroom. However, the Curtises would like potential customers to know that their products are also affordable for the average person. "Our products are superior to assembly line sets, yet our prices are about the same," Mark says.

The elder Curtis points out that the personal attention his staff provides will result in personal satisfaction and, in the end, the product will usually exceed customer expectations.

While the company has developed a good reputation through the years, the Curtises are not content to stop there and are looking to the future and new possibilities.

Mark is very excited about the potential opportunities presented by the recent addition of a piece of equipment to the manufacturing area. The CNC Router will allow Curtis Furniture to do some basic woodwork ahead of time. This opens new possibilities for millwork projects. For example, a home project could include the installation of new cabinetry, baseboard trim, door trim, shelving, and new furniture, all in the same wood. Mark says they can also do restoration projects. The router can match replacement pieces for wall applications, such as wainscoting, special moldings and interior/exterior house trim. Additionally, Mark would like to see the company install more cabinetry; the router will allow them to do it more quickly. "We can start doing our box sides, tops and bottoms and drilling out the holes which will shorten the turnaround time."

An upcoming name change will reflect the fact that the company is now doing more millwork. "In a few months we are going to change our name from Curtis Furniture to Curtis Woodworking. It gives the public more of a sense of the variety we now have," says Peter.

The name of the company is changing, but not its mission. The customer will continue to come first. Pleasing the customer is important to the Curtis family, whether they are building an entire kitchen or a credenza. A professional relationship is built with every turn of the saw.

In September of 2006, Curtis Furniture will celebrate 25 years of doing business in Jefferson County.

"After all these years of working directly with the customer, we have seen families grow. They are accustomed to good quality furniture and that second generation is now buying pieces from us, adding to what they already have," says Peter.

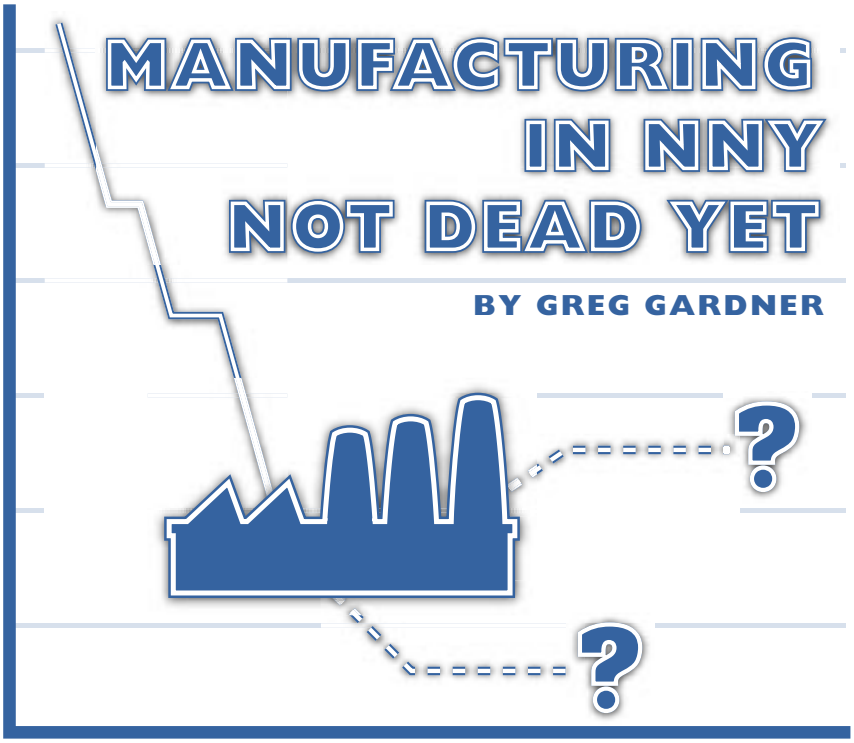
"People we sell to need to touch the wood. They can't just see it in a magazine and give their credit card number," says Mark. Jessica says they want to be proud of what they are showing the customer. "We love what we do. We take our time when we make something and we take pride in it."

They felt the support of the community after a devastating fire in the late 1980s. Back then, their showroom and manufacturing area were in the same building. The building caught fire and burned to the ground in March of 1988. Mark was a young child at the time, but he remembers it well.

"We were faced with starting over. It was our chance to better ourselves or call it quits. There were no thoughts of quitting. We came back because the customers wanted us back." Today the two distinct work areas are in separate buildings. "This is home," says Jessica. ab

MANUFACTURING IN NNY NOT DEAD YET

BY GREG GARDNER



Like the character in the Monty Python comedy skit, manufacturing in northern New York is not dead yet. It isn't growing and its future is uncertain, but it continues to play a major role in our economy and it offers some glimmers of hope that it may confound the pundits and recover some of its former economic glory.

Times have been tough for those businesses that make things in the region. New York state lost 37.5 percent of its manufacturing jobs between 1990 and 2003. Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties saw similar declines across the same period, according to New York State Department of Labor data. During that period, U.S. Census Bureau figures show the total number of manufacturing businesses declined steadily in the North Country, as we saw more exits and fewer new businesses arriving or being created. Most industry observers attribute this decline to the outsourcing of manufacturing overseas, as well as to the increasing productivity of U.S.-based manufacturing, which is learning to produce more with fewer people.

The erosion of manufacturing jobs and plants has had a significant impact on our regional economy. Manufacturing is the highest-paying private sector in our regional economy and the loss of manufacturing jobs has contributed to declining rates of wage growth in the region. Overall, between 1991 and 2001, northern New York saw wage rates increasing at less than half the state and national averages. At the same time, research by the Center for Community Studies at Jefferson Community College shows declining rates of benefit coverage among employees in Jefferson and Lewis counties (no data is available for St. Lawrence) as we shift from a manufacturing base that traditionally offers significant benefits to a service base which does not.

Arguably, it is these higher wages and generous benefit packages that are helping to drive manufacturing out of the region, but they are not the only culprits. A recent forum on manufacturing as part of Jefferson County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) effort unearthed the usual round of complaints by manufacturers in the region – taxes are too high, energy costs at roughly $.12/KWH are three times what companies pay in the south, our distance from markets and suppliers makes transportation expensive and difficult, and New York imposes a blizzard of regulations that make businesses hard to operate in the state. Although New York State Department of Labor figures show that local wages are roughly 25 percent below state averages for experienced workers, local manufacturers still complain that the cost of employing workers is high. These costs are inflated by high workman's compensation and health care costs. Listening to these concerns, it is easy to see the allure of a plant in South Carolina – or China.

In the midst of this gloom and decline, however, are a number of bright spots in the region. We have dozens of small and mid-sized manufacturers who are managing to thrive, even under these conditions. They produce everything from wooden picture frames to gun cleaning kits, to high explosives and industrial chemicals. They are growing, adding employees, and can face the taxes, regulations, and energy costs and still earn a profit.

After interviewing the CEOs of many of these businesses, some trends become very clear. Each company is owned, at least in part, by local owners who live in the community and have no intention of leaving. Where a large corporation might simply move the plant elsewhere or outsource the work entirely, local owners have a commitment to the area and are obligated to stand their ground.

Each of these companies is operated with an entrepreneurial flair, with their management teams focused on constant innovation and aggressive market exploration. Rather than stay in a cost-driven market, they concentrate on finding elements of service to differentiate them from competitors while constantly searching for new customers and markets. They take risks and invest in new technologies and capacities, betting that they can find markets for their new output.

Some examples?

• ***Climax Manufacturing, Inc.*** is a paper and converting company with plants in Jefferson and Lewis counties. The company is family-owned and has operated in the North Country for over 100 years. Climax recently invested over $10 million in new lithographic equipment that allows it to increase the value offered to customers and penetrate new markets for decorative box products.

• ***St. Lawrence Explosives, Inc***. manufacturers commercial explosives and provides blasting services to quarries and mines across the northeastern U.S. Managed and partially owned by a North Country native, the company has grown 10 percent in the last two years by aggressively marketing new products and packaging solutions as well as expanding its service focus.

• ***Slack Chemical***, a producer of industrial and commercial chemicals located in Carthage, has survived the loss of the paper mills that were its primary customer base. The company has replaced that lost business by constantly developing new markets in areas such as food processing and swimming pool maintenance. They use service as a tool for competitive differentiation.

• ***Timeless Frames*** was a dying little Watertown business producing wooden picture frames until its new owner, Lisa Weber, took it over in 2001. Since then, the firm has expanded rapidly as it develops new products and markets, while improving production processes and adding more value to its frames.

• ***Otis Technology, Inc.*** was started around a kitchen table in Lewis County, making gun cleaning kits for local sportsmen. Its founder and current CEO, Doreen Marks, invented the first kit when she was 16 years old. It has grown to be a national leader in gun cleaning kits, providing them to the armed forces and law enforcement operations, as well as individuals. Sales in 2004 exceeded $10 million.

In each case the success of the company is in spite of the challenges facing manufacturers in our region. While all of these companies are interested in cutting costs and making their production operations more efficient, the real source of their growth comes from their ability to find and satisfy new customers – something that the branch plants of distant corporations cannot do. Each of these entrepreneur-owners have also proven willing to take significant risks – investing in new equipment and markets that might have proven to be costly mistakes. It is unlikely that many of these new ideas would have survived a typical corporate review process.

While many regional manufacturers complain of high employment costs and some difficulty in finding skilled workers, they all seem to agree on one thing. North Country workers tend to have a strong work ethic and can be counted on for their loyalty and good sense. We have the right raw material for a good manufacturing work force. What we need now are more of those aggressive entrepreneurial owners and managers who have strong marketing skills and the courage to take measured risks.

Manufacturing in our region is not dead yet, but its face is changing from a landscape dominated by the branch plants of large food processing and paper corporations, to one populated by smaller, more nimble operations characterized by local ownership and an entrepreneurial focus. According to Census Bureau data, over 70 percent of the new manufacturing businesses started in the region since 1992 have 10 or fewer employees. Rather than focusing on attracting new branch plants from outside our region, it might be a better strategy for our economic developers to search for skilled entrepreneurs and give them all the assistance we can. Those manufacturing entrepreneurs are the real future of the industry in the North Country. ab

Ask the owner or manager of any manufacturing business what goals they'd most like to achieve and chances are the top two answers will be to cut costs and increase profits. The challenge lies in how to accomplish these goals and keep a company afloat, or better yet to grow it.

That's where CITEC Manufacturing and Technology Solutions can help. The not-for-profit agency specializes in finding solutions to all kinds of issues faced by manufacturing firms in a six-county area that includes St. Lawrence, Jefferson, Lewis, Franklin, Essex and Clinton counties. The organization's target market includes a wide range of start-up and emerging growth companies largely in the field of manufacturing, but it also services companies in some other industries as well.

"We try to help companies change," says CITEC Executive Director Tom Plastino. "Many companies know they need to change, but they don't know where to start."

The range of services offered by CITEC includes assistance with strategic planning, quality control, marketing and sales support, process improvement, funding, health and safety, and training resources. From this menu of services, CITEC's staff can tailor an assistance program that will best benefit each individual company.

Plastino points out that all manufacturing companies can move toward efficiency by evaluating and changing their operations. "If manufacturing is going to continue to be part of the North Country economy, companies have to change," he says. "The ones who stay in business are the ones who are changing."

While change can be intimidating, Plastino notes that change may not always require a drastic transformation in a company. "It really just involves finding a way to do what you do now better."

Plastino describes a three-pronged approach to achieving efficiency in manufacturing, which begins with productivity improvements. To assist in this area CITEC has been providing an active program of consulting and training in Lean Manufacturing under the direction of Lean Manufacturing Analyst Jim Myers. Plastino explains that Lean Manu-

facturing involves "rationally analyzing what you do and figuring out how to save time, space and money" and says the method has helped a number of companies in the North Country already.

Myers is an Ogdensburg native who has 37 years of experience as a "lean enterprise" consultant. Plastino describes him as "passionate" about the lean concept. "He's seen it work and he's come back to this area because he knows it can work here," Plastino says. "He's here because he wants these companies to succeed."

A second prong that supports manufacturing success, according to Plastino, is new product development. "Just doing Lean Manufacturing isn't enough," he says. "Every manufacturing company has competition in the U.S and globally and they're all doing Lean Manufacturing too."

Constant development of new products is the only way for manufacturers to stay competitive, Plastino says. "Companies have to create a culture of constant change and creativity," he explains. Again Plastino makes the point that change need not always be drastic. He notes that staying competitive can involve creating entirely new products, but companies can also stay competitive by developing products to complement current lines, or developing new products for an existing customer base.

As a third prong supporting manufacturing success, Plastino points to sales and marketing. "Companies have to look for new ways to sell and market their products," he says. "And that includes customer service." Assistance in this area comes from CITEC Marketing Director Patricia Wilson and can include market analysis, development of marketing materials, guidance in e-commerce, lead development and public relations. Over time, Plastino has witnessed how management of these three factors has led to success in local companies. "The companies that have been successful are successful because they have changed on all three points," he says.

Headquartered on Clarkson University's downtown campus in Potsdam, CITEC's staff specializes in tailoring services to the companies they serve and assuring they have lean operations, new products and a sales strategy.

Wilson explains that the agency has an informal screening process that all the companies they work with are put through. "Before we can help, we need to ask what the issue or problem is."

Often, companies need to go through a planning process before they can identify their need for services. "A big part of what we do is help with planning issues, helping companies find out where they want to be in five years," Wilson says. She notes that even companies that already have a strategic plan may need help in executing it.

To help manufacturing companies in northern New York achieve success, CITEC draws on a vast array of resources. The agency's core staff of seven includes specialists in planning, technology, human resources, supply chain management and marketing. In addition, four outside consultants are also on CITEC's staff to assist North Country companies.

CITEC also has access to staff at 350 other similar assistance agencies across the nation through its affiliation with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP). As an example, Plastino notes that CITEC often enlists the help of an ISO specialist at an MEP in Binghamton since the local agency does not have anyone with that specialty on staff.

Plastino also credits CITEC's board of directors as another valuable resource. The 15-member board includes representation from two of the area colleges, economic development agencies and banking. But the majority of the board is made up of CEOs, retired CEOs and managers of manufacturing companies.

"Since manufacturing is the biggest segment of our target market, we wanted to have a good representation of both small and large companies on the board," Wilson says. There are many industries represented by the board including food production, plastics, biomedical and retail production.

Plastino says that CITEC's board is very hands-on and takes an active role in assuring the agency's future. But the board also serves as a valuable resource. "Some of these people became members of the board after they were our customers. Some of them are still customers," Plastino says. "This is 15 more people who we can use as resources when serving new clients."

CITEC's services are offered on a fee structure significantly lower than the industry standard, making its services more accessible to manufacturers in the North Country. CITEC receives significant financial support from the New York State Office of Science, Technology, and Academic Research (NYSTAR) and NIST. It is because of these funding streams that CITEC is able to serve the area's companies affordably.

"Without this funding we would have to charge the customers who need our services the most, more than they could afford," Wilson says. "We need that buy-down to make it affordable."

Keeping CITEC's services accessible to northern New York companies creates an end result that benefits the entire region. Increased sales, investment in local companies and new job creation are among the positive benefits that contribute to a strong North Country economy and CITEC has been careful to track such impact.

Approximately eight months after CITEC completes a project with a customer, an independent firm surveys the customer to quantify the impact the agency's assistance had. This impact is measured in terms of increased sales, cost savings, client investment in the business and jobs created or retained. With the financial value of these factors combined, CITEC generated an economic impact of $36 million in the first quarter of 2005. ab

CITEC 's staff shows off the renovation work being done on what will soon be a business incubator for North Country businesses. The CITEC staff includes: (left to right) Milner Grimsled, office manager; Tom Plastino, executive director; Ellie Newvine, office assistant; and Patricia Wilson, marketing director.

Variety of Business Ventures Find a Fit in Northern New York Industrial Parks

By Michelle Collins

Communities that want to encourage business development often find that an industrial park, or some variation of it, is one of its most valuable tools. In northern New York, industrial parks were historically geared toward companies whose primary function was manufacturing or processing. In recent years the face of industrial parks has started to change, but regardless of how they are named their purpose remains the same: to make it easier for new and expanding businesses to get started or grow.

Industrial parks often offer financial incentives such as tax breaks, funding assistance or Empire Development Zone benefits to the businesses locating there. But other factors are just as vital to spurring business development. The golden rule of real estate applies here: location, location, location. Businesses locating in industrial parks are typically interested in being able to receive materials and ship their product efficiently. They may also be interested in a location with easy access to their suppliers or to other company facilities.

"They're usually located near an interstate or an airport for access to transportation and shipping," explains Mary Ann Hanley of the Jefferson County Job Development Corporation (JCJDC).

The industrial parks in Jefferson County meet the location needs of a variety of different businesses. The Jefferson County Corporate Park is located just off Interstate 81 in Watertown and a privately owned industrial park, Murrock Circle, also has easy interstate access. In addition, the City of Watertown operates the City Center Industrial Park in the heart of downtown Watertown, which is just a few blocks from the interstate. "Being right on Route 81 makes these locations very attractive," Hanley says.

For existing companies, an industrial park location may make expansion possible. In St. Lawrence County, Kinney Drugs took advantage of a location in the Gouverneur Industrial Park for warehousing and distribution two years ago partially because of the proximity to its company headquarters.

"In order to fuel their growth, they must be able to warehouse and distribute merchandise," explains Patrick Kelly, Deputy Administrative Director for the St. Lawrence County Industrial Development Agency (IDA). "They needed to supplement the space they currently occupied on Route 11 in Gouverneur. The industrial park setting is appropriate for them because there is good access to trucking and it is close to their original location."

This particular location also allows Kinney Drugs enough space for future expansion, a trait that could not be found in other commercial properties.

In some cases, an industrial park location can a save a business the time and hassles that are involved in the search for a commercial location. "These buildings already have the appropriate zoning and they have existing infrastructure," explains Richard Williams, Facilities Manager for the St. Lawrence County IDA. "It can really save a company a lot of time because several of the hurdles they might face with new construction are already taken out."

The "spec" buildings and shovel-ready building sites provided in industrial parks are ideal for companies that have a strict

timeline for start up or expansion. "The idea is to present an appropriate location for a variety of industrial operations," Kelly explains.

This includes making accommodations for truck access, industrial lighting, and a layout that is spacious and flexible. Most spec buildings are designed with open spaces and renovations can be made to suit the individual company occupying the space. The St. Lawrence County IDA is currently constructing a spec building in the agency's newest park in Potsdam. That building will include some pre-constructed office space but will otherwise be renovated to meet the needs of the tenant that occupies it.

For companies seeking easy access to Canadian markets, northern New York industrial parks offer another advantage. Foreign trade zones are available in some Jefferson and St. Lawrence county parks, providing a variety of tariff and duty benefits to accommodate international trade. In addition, industrial parks in Ogdensburg and Massena provide companies access to the Canadian border, just a few miles away.

This access to Canada proved to be an important factor when Ottawa-based electronic equipment manufacturing company BreconRidge selected a site in the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority (OBPA) industrial park. After distributing products from Ogdensburg for several years, the company had the opportunity to also manufacture its products. Kelly noted the company searched for a suitable location all over the U.S. but choose the OBPA park because of its proximity to the company's Canadian base and the availability of ample space.

"They wanted to have access to U.S. customers but remain close to their existing suppliers and customers," Kelly explains. "Another factor was that this project was able to be turned around quickly. The OBPA prepared a new facility quickly and efficiently."

With a variety of companies all having different needs and goals when selecting a location, it has become more and more important for industrial parks to expand their offerings.

In St. Lawrence County, parks have been developed at a variety of locations including Ogdensburg, Massena, Gouverneur and Potsdam. "We have a collection of diverse communities and each park offers the different strengths of the host town," Kelly explains. "This is an advantage when trying to develop business relationships."

For example, the Massena Industrial Park has access to affordable municipal power, in Potsdam businesses may have the opportunity to partner with the town's two colleges, and in Ogdensburg businesses have access to the Canadian border.

Industrial parks in Jefferson County have also been developed in order to appeal to a diverse audience of businesses. The Jefferson County Industrial Park was renamed the Jefferson County Corporate Park in 2003 to correlate with the county's change in business recruitment. Rather than have a strict focus on manufacturing and industry, the park now also includes warehousing and distribution, and professional businesses. The corporate park is on the slate of offerings in Jefferson County along with the City Center Industrial Park operated by the City

An aerial view of the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority Industrial Park.

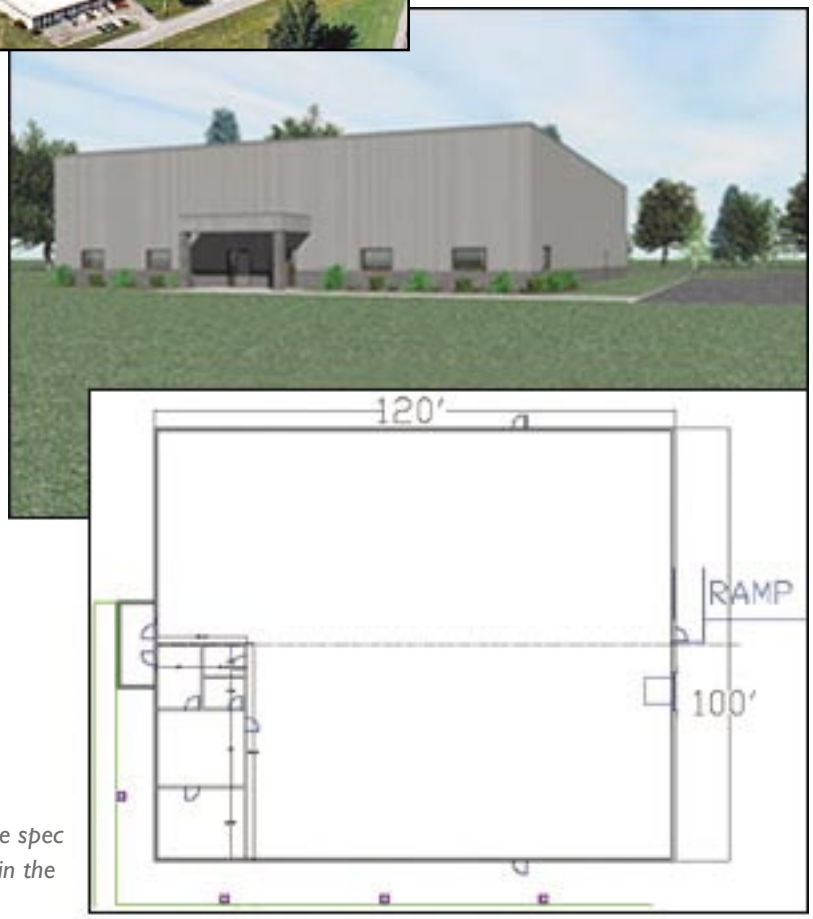
Kelly describes industrial parks as excellent marketing tools. "They play a big role in attracting and keeping business in St. Lawrence County."

of Watertown and the Watertown Center for Business and Industry, the county's newest incubator for business expansion. This diversity has been able to accommodate both new business ventures as well as expansion.

Hanley points to Structural Associates, Inc. (SAI) as an example of a company benefiting from multiple choices. The construction management company expanded its WCBI office in 2004 and built a 3,200 square-foot office building in the corporate park.

"This is a company that has chosen to stay in the North Country," Hanley says, pointing out that available real estate options contributed to making this possible.

Kelly describes industrial parks as excellent marketing tools. "They play a big role in attracting and keeping business in St. Lawrence County." ab



Artist's rendering and floorplan for the spec building currently under construction in the Potsdam Industrial Park.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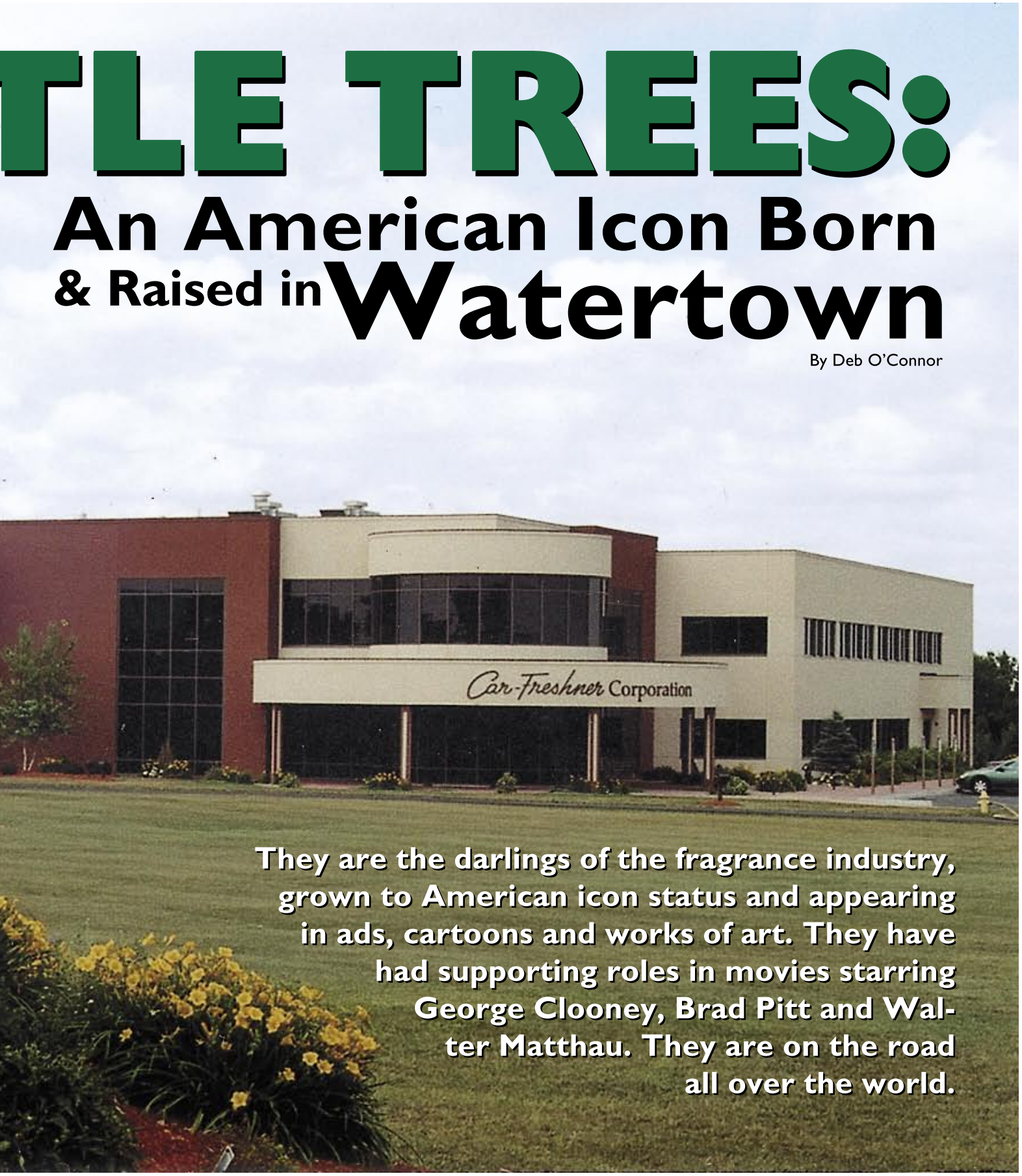
TLE TREES:

An American Icon Born & Raised in Watertown

By Deb O'Connor



They are the darlings of the fragrance industry, grown to American icon status and appearing in ads, cartoons and works of art. They have had supporting roles in movies starring George Clooney, Brad Pitt and Walter Matthau. They are on the road all over the world.

"They" are the Little Trees, those distinctive pine-shaped air fresheners for the car. Known internationally, these aromatic wonders first came into the world in a Watertown garage 53 years ago.

Today Little Trees and related products are turned out by the hundreds of thousands in plants in Watertown, Berlin, NH, and Dewitt, IA, as well as in licensed plants overseas. Corporate headquarters for Car-Freshner Corporation, manufacturer of the Little Trees, are located at 21205 Little Tree Drive in the Jefferson County Industrial Park.

Car-Freshner Corporation headquarters in Watertown.

Car-Freshner employs approximately 420 workers at its three U.S. locations. Although the company, which is privately owned, does not share information on annual sales, suffice it to say that hundreds of millions of its air fresheners are sold annually, according to Jody LaLone, the firm's president. Customers are national retailers, including department stores, dollar stores, and automotive product outlets, as well as companies in the car wash industry. In addition to its strong U.S. presence, the market for Little Trees is growing internationally.

From the very beginning, the company Web site states, Car-Freshner's goal has been "to make high-quality air fresheners with pleasing and long-lasting fragrances at an economical price." Merchandise quality, customer service, savvy product development and astute marketing have been elements of the organization's success.

"The idea is we make a good product," LaLone says. "We sell it, we ship it when we say we're going to ship it, and we stand by the quality."

Julius Sämann, a native of Germany, who came to Canada at the outbreak of World War II, founded Car-Freshner. A chemist, he developed methods to extract essential oils from evergreen trees and in time started a successful oil company. He sold his interest in that firm in 1946, moving to Watertown to try his hand at something new. While in Canada, he had developed a process for pressing scent into cardboard and getting it to last for months. At the time, air fresheners existed for homes and offices but there were none made specifically for automobiles. Sämann decided his invention would be an inexpensive scented product for cars. In 1952 he set up shop in a rented Watertown garage and produced the very first Little Tree. It was in the shape of an evergreen and smelled of pine.

The company had several locations in Watertown through the 1950s and '60s, establishing its headquarters on North Hamilton Street in the mid-70s, and later moving its manufacturing and warehouse facilities to the Jefferson County Industrial Park. Corporate offices moved to a new building in the Industrial Park two years ago.

Car-Freshner was a fairly small company until the 1970s when retail sales began taking off. Growth has been steady, built on a solid customer base. LaLone joined the firm in 1988 as a staff accountant and has made a career with the firm, becoming president two years ago. She succeeded retiring president Richard Flechtner, who had been at the helm during many of the growth years. Car-Freshner continues to be wholly owned by the Sämann family, with Ronald Sämann, the son's founder and himself an international entrepreneur, actively involved in corporate decision-making.

Julius Sämann was not only an inventive chemist, but also a smart businessman. He retained ownership of the formula for the original pine scent, establishing a company protocol that continues to this day. Car-Freshner now produces more than 50 different fragrances of Little Trees, LaLone says, using the same process that Sämann developed.

Scent Trends

Car-Freshner works hard to stay on top of trends, not just in fragrances, but also in culture and fashion. What's "hot" today, such as this season's fashion colors, can translate into a new air freshener. The company also encourages feedback from its sales and marketing staff and field representatives to understand what is working, and what new ideas might appeal to consumers.

Developing a new scent is not a simple task. Elizabeth Perry, the company's vice president of marketing, who provides leadership in new product development, says Car-Freshner researches trends to stay on top of what scents and flavors (which are associated with scent) are popular. Many studies have been done about how people are affected by fragrances, she noted. Her current reading includes a book on how fragrance figures into success.

When a new scent is in the creation stage, Car-Freshner's product development department does a lot of testing, maintaining "sniff rooms" where employees can stop in to check out and rate fragrances in development. Once the new scent is approved, the company takes it to a fragrance house—the type of place that makes perfumes. The new fragrance is formulated specifically for Car-Freshner for use in the manufacturing process.

"The reason people buy Trees is because of the quality of the fragrances," LaLone says. Little Tree scents are also long lasting, creating a product that performs consistently.

The original scent, Royal Pine, has always been a popular seller, and was number one until about seven years ago, she notes. Vanillaroma moved into the top spot, but was overtaken two years ago by the current bestseller, New Car Scent.

Fragrance is important, but it is part of a larger equation in product development. Appearance is the other key, and the company is always on the lookout for good combinations of scent, color and design. One popular seller in the U.S. is a stars and stripes Tree called Vanilla Pride. There are Trees with fruity and floral fragrances. There are others with manly fragrances, such as Leather, and manly colors, such as the new Black Ice. There are trees with dragon and cobra designs, which appeal to younger customers. There are even "extra-strength" Trees—larger than the original Little Trees—that originally were made for the janitorial market but that now have found a place with customers driving vans and other large vehicles.

The firm has branched out into other air fresheners, not only for the car, but the office and home as well. Products include pump and aerosol sprays, incense and candles. In addition to Little Trees, which remain the company's bestseller, Car-Freshner makes paper air fresheners in other shapes and designs. The National Pride line, for example, features rectangular air fresheners bearing patriotic emblems for nations that include, among others, Canada, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Another line of products bears religious symbols, while at the other end of the spectrum are air fresheners with images ranging from flaming dice to tongue piercings. Licensed designs produced by the company feature NASCAR driver Dale Earnhardt, and characters from the Garfield and Rubes comic strips.

Retail packaging and displays also have evolved through the years. Where once Little Trees were sold to end users in single packs for $1 each, the shift in the last five to 10 years—due to a push from retailers–has been to multiple packages that pro

vide higher consumer value, LaLone says. Sales of products in three-packs have been growing. Displays also have changed with the times. Where once single-packed air fresheners were stapled to big cardboard displays to be pulled off when sold, they now are packaged, both singly and multiply, to hang from hooks, display racks and clip strips. The company has developed neat, brightly colored, eye-catching packaging to grab consumers' attention.

Car-Freshner also has promoted the product for the past 10 years by sponsoring a Little Trees car which races in NASCAR's Busch North Series circuit. The bright yellow #61 Chevy Monte Carlo, driven by Mike Olsen, bears the likeness of the green Little Trees logo on its hood. The car, which competes throughout the northeast, makes a regional appearance each summer when the Series comes to the Adirondack International Speedway in Beaver Falls.

Little Trees Go Global

While the sales of Little Trees have boomed in this country, international business offers even bigger growth potential. What sells varies from country to country, Perry says, noting that it is important to stay on top of trends that develop in other cultures. Different scents are popular in different parts of the world. Green Apple, for example, is the top choice in Italy, while Coconut and New Car Scent are favorites of the British. Fruity fragrances sell well in South America, while in Russia, where the market is growing, everything sells well. The Americana aspect of the product also helps it sell overseas—a jeans shop in Japan, for instance, has added Little Trees to its inventory of American products.

Developing the worldwide market will be a company focus for the next several years, according to LaLone. Recognizing this opportunity, the firm in the last two years hired its first international sales people. Prior to that, sales overseas were dealt with primarily through phone, fax and customer service employees.

LaLone predicts that while growth in domestic sales will continue to increase, particularly with the addition of new products, the global market will boom. International sales currently account for 15 to 20 percent of Car-Freshner's business. Within the next five to 10 years, she says, that percentage will surpass the percentage of business done in the United States.

In other countries, Car-Freshner not only sells Trees, but the license to manufacture and sell the company's products. In those nations, the brand name may be different—Little Trees are known as Magic Trees in Great Britain, for example. The shape and the fragrance quality, however, remain the same.

Car-Freshner has trademarked its distinctive Little Trees shape, and is conscientious about defending it. "Your trademark is one of your greatest assets," LaLone says. "For it to mean anything, you have to protect it."

When a trademark infringement is brought to the company's attention, Car-Freshner initially contacts the offender and points out the problem. About 90 percent of the time, people don't realize that they have infringed on the trademark, and simply withdraw, LaLone says. Of the rest of the offenders, about half back down once the company's lawyers get involved. And the remainder—well, Car-Freshner has successfully brought suit through the years against companies who have traded on the Little Trees success by knocking off tree-shaped car deodorizers.

"We've prided ourselves on the quality of our product," LaLone says. Consumers, who may think one tree-shaped air freshener is like any other, can be tricked, and could end up with a product whose fragrance doesn't last or smells differently from the Little Trees' customized scents. Inferior quality fakes reflect back poorly on the Car-Freshner product.

The company has found that its biggest problem with knockoffs comes not from competitors in the United States, but overseas. The majority of counterfeits, LaLone says, are from China. The company is working to educate U.S. Customs, so that the knockoffs are not allowed into this country to begin with.

LaLone believes that in addition to product quality, a strong customer service philosophy is another reason for Car-Freshner's success. The company's dedicated customer service employees really care about doing everything they can to support customers big and small. Requests, questions and problems are dealt with promptly. The firm also receives many consumer letters, from people who like a certain scent, or who see Little Trees in another part of the country or world, or who know Car-Freshner's roots and have fond memories of Watertown. Every letter is answered, and, in a tradition established by Julius Sämann, every piece of correspondence sent by the company includes an enclosed Little Tree.

Car-Freshner's employees work hard and are highly valued by the firm. Visitors have commented on how friendly and happy employees seem to be, and also have been extremely impressed with the cleanliness of the plant, LaLone says. "We want people to have a safe, clean, good atmosphere to work in," Perry adds.

The Sämann family has placed an emphasis on taking care of employees, according to LaLone. Benefits include health coverage, childcare assistance, an on-site cafeteria and fitness center, family memberships at the Watertown YMCA, 401K retirement plans and profit sharing.

Car-Freshner also has shared its success with the community, and regularly supports a number of organizations. In 2001, Car-Freshner made a $1 million donation to the community to honor Julius Sämann and the company he founded. The gift was shared by the Thompson Park Conservancy, which used its portion to build its Little Trees Visitors Center, and Jefferson Community College, which named its instructional resource building The Jules Center, in honor of Sämann, who died May 9, 1999, at the age of 88.

The recognition factor of the Julius Sämann's Little Trees has made them part of the American scenery. Not everyone asks if they can use the Little Tree for things other than air freshening, and the company has started working with a licensing agent to develop rights for merchandise that features the Little Trees logo.

Meanwhile, company officials are continually amazed at how the small air fresheners have been incorporated in so many different forms of media and art. Photographs and posters showing Little Trees in movies, cartoons, greeting cards, and print advertising are hung throughout the lobby and hallways of Car-Freshner's corporate office building. In the many pictures on dis-

Elizabeth Perry, left, and Jody LaLone, right, infront of the product display board at Car-Freshner.

play are a big tree made entirely of Little Trees, from a Boston School Museum of Fine Arts show; a book cover for novelist Pete Duval's 2004 novel Rear View, and a Macy's Department Store window display featuring a mannequin dressed in an outfit made entirely of green Little Trees.

The Trees have appeared on television, in such popular shows as "The Tonight Show" and "Letterman." They've made it to the big screen many times. In the comedy "Grumpy Old Men," Walter Matthau used half a dozen Little Trees dangling from his rearview mirror to disguise the odor of a dead fish tossed surreptitiously into his car by rival Jack Lemmon. In "Seven," a thriller starring Brad Pitt, Little Trees were hung en masse from the ceiling of a room where a crime had been committed. And in "Ocean's Eleven," a single Royal Pine Tree was used as a clue in identifying a getaway vehicle used by George Clooney's band of rogues.

Watertown's Little Trees have made it big. As for what's in store for these small but mighty American icons, hometown fans just need to stay tuned and stay alert. ab

For more information about the Car-Freshner Corporation and its products, visit the company's Web site at www.little-trees.com or contact the firm at 21205 Little Tree Drive, Watertown, NY, phone 800-545-5454 or 315-788-6250.

BROWNVILLE SPECIALTY PAPER PRODUCTS:

A GRASSROOTS SUCCESS STORY

By Wil Hansen

> “When BSPP opened for business, they set a sales territory of 500 miles from the plant. Today, they ship coast to coast in the United States. They also sell products around the globe and have customers in 25 countries.”

The story of Brownville Specialty Paper Products has all the elements of a Movie of the Week: three community-minded friends make a commitment to bring a small town employer back to life and keep it running through good times and bad.

The specialty paper mill at 1 Bridge Street in Brownville, along the shores of the Black River, was built in 1901. It was originally owned by Boise Cascade. In 1987 when Boise Cascade decided to close it, the plant employed 80 people. Some of those employees were third- generation papermakers when it shut down in 1988.

Then Brownville resident Don Alexander got involved with a community-based volunteer effort to try to bring the mill back on line, and as many jobs at they could along with it. While community leaders searched for a viable strategy for the mill, Boise Cascade was stripping the plant of equipment.

“It was just a disaster,” recalls Alexander.

During this time, Alexander had a chance to have

a conversation with Gene Rood, the former plant manager for Boise Cascade in Brownville.

"He said that the mill was closed because it wasn't meeting a percentage over investment that the corporate owners wanted," Alexander recalls. "But he said the plant could make money."

The next day Alexander phoned his friend and fellow businessman, Dick Howland, and asked him if he was interested in buying a paper mill.

"After he was done laughing at me," Alexander says with a bit of a laugh, "He listened to what I was thinking, and that is how it all started. And at that point, neither one of us knew anything about the paper business."

Howland remembers that same conversation and when it was over, he realized that this was something that they should do for the benefit of the community if they could pull it off.

"The area has given me a lot," he says candidly. "The area has given (Don) Alexander a lot and it has given Gene Rood a lot, so this was an opportunity to invest in a community and give back."

Gene Rood joined Boise Cascade in 1969. He came to Brownville from Brattleboro, Vermont in 1986. From his first day in Brownville he knew that it was unique among paper mills.

"Brownville had 40-year retirees, I'd never seen that before," Rood says.

After the three men met and discussed plans to reopen the mill, they began a three-year process to put people back to work and inject life back into the town. They had to put the mill back together piece by piece.

"People said that we wouldn't know where everything goes," says Rood. "We had a great group of people to get us started, with enthusiasm and a common goal. It was an unstoppable combination!"

In March of 1991 the plant reopened with 29 people working two 12-hour shifts.

"(I) was just ecstatic that those machines that were rusting away, literally came back to life," Rood says of the first time they started making paper at Brownville again.

Dick Howland remembers it a bit differently.

"They told me that they were going to make paper, so I went down to the plant," he explains. "And when I got there, I saw this brown sludge coming out of the machine. I didn't know that was part of the process, (and) I walked out." He laughs and adds, "Since then, we have made tons of paper - I am not even sure how many - and shipped it all over the world."

When BSPP opened for business, they set a sales territory of 500 miles from the plant. Today, they ship coast to coast in the United States. They also sell products around the globe and have customers in 25 countries.

As the corporate name implies, the company makes specialized products rather than trying to compete in the large volume commodity paper business. BSPP makes heavy weight paper for a variety of uses: art and photo matte boards, notebook covers, food grade paper, and specialized packaging. They also sell paper to paper converters who purchase products from a producer and then combine them into one product. BSPP produces cap closure paper that a converter then combines with foil to make the safety seals on aspirin and other consumer products.

The company also does high quality embossing and custom work in a variety of colors according to clients' needs. In addition, BSPP produces highly specialized papers like a paper that conducts electricity which is used to wrap electronic components to protect against static electricity. They even make fire retardant paper for the auto industry and anti-tarnish paper to package silverware.

And being a smaller company has allowed BSPP to stay in business while other paper companies have merged or closed.

"At one time there were 44 paper mills operating along the Black River," Alexander says. "Today we are one of four or five still operating."

Alexander cites a variety of reasons for the state of the local paper industry: increased competition, ever-increasing operating costs and an ever-changing market place.

"Being a small company is an advantage," according to Rood. "From the time our sales people meet with a client, to evaluating their needs is much shorter compared to a larger corporation with many layers to go through."

The partners all agree that a key to the mill's success is the work force that, like Boise Cascade before it, has third-generation papermakers on the plant floor.

"Papermaking is an art. We have people who have been doing this for generations who understand the process by touch and feel as much as they do the science of it all," Alexander explains. "(They are) first-class employees - dedicated - and they know what they are doing. We have a flexible work crew that helps us adapt as a manufacturer."

"(We have) the ability to respond to the ever changing market place with quality products and service because of our people," Rood adds.

Brownville Specialty Paper Products employs 75 people today. The three partners all point out that BSPP has never had a lay-off or extended shut down, other than for maintenance, in its 14-year history.

"Through thick and thin, we have been able to keep our people employed," says Rood.

Howland, Alexander and Rood all acknowledge the volatile nature of the paper industry, but they knew that going in.

"Has it been worth it?" ponders Howland, "Yes, for the people and the community, it has been worth it."

When BSPP began making paper in Brownville again, everyone involved said with pride, "We brought it back." And no matter what the future may hold for the local paper industry, the accomplishment of bringing the plant back to life is one that no one can take away from the workers at BSPP or the three men who believed that doing what needed to be done can also be good business. ab

OGDENSBURG COMPANY MANUFACTURES AIRPORT WALKWAYS

By Wil Hansen

Chances are that if you have boarded an airline flight in the northeast in the last five years, you probably used a Dewbridge.

Dewbridge is a line of airplane boarding bridges manufactured by a division of Dew Industries, an Ottawa, Ontario-based company with a manufacturing operation in Ogdensburg. The company moved into Ogdensburg about two years ago, taking over the former International Security Printers building in the industrial park. They now employ about 60 people and plan to add more employees over the next few months.

"They are a great addition to our park, and to our community," says Joseph Tracy, Executive Director of the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority.

Dew Industries was founded in 1978 based on a philosophy of engineering and innovation, says Neil Hutton, Vice President of Business Development and Research and Development for Airport Systems.

"Our owners are innovators," he explains. "(They previously developed) one of the first systems that used fingerprint identification for security access." That operation was sold off and now the company concentrates on airport systems and defense contracts.

Dew Industries' aviation work began with mechanical service on ground support vehicles like the tow vehicles that help aircraft move to and from passenger gates. As they worked with airports, company representatives noticed that airports always seemed to be under construction but they still needed to operate and passengers still needed to get to their flights safely and easily. So Dew Industries developed a modular protected walkway system for airports and passengers to use while old terminals were being renovated or new ones were being constructed.

The walkway systems were used primarily for access to turboprop aircraft and the growing number of regional jets that were just coming into service at that time. But as Hutton says, they still weren't getting people on their planes.

"Dew Industries realized that nobody was developing a boarding bridge for these types of aircraft and we were already building these walkway systems so it was a logical step to look at developing a boarding bridge."

It wasn't simply a matter of adapting their existing walkway system to connect to the door of an airplane. The type of aircraft these bridges would be connecting to are typically low to the ground, have narrow entry doors, may have propellers and engine assemblies close to the door and may also have a set of drop-down stairs with hand rails that need to be cleared so the bridge can connect to the aircraft. The walkways might have to slope upward toward the aircraft as well, so there were engineering considerations as well as compliance issues with a variety of federal regulations.

The company tested its first "Dewbridge" for over a year. The first Dewbridge was installed in 1998 for American Eagle Airlines in a little southern boomtown called Bentonville, Arkansas - the corporate home of Wal Mart!

About two years later, Northwest Airlines had nine Dew-

bridges in place in Memphis, Tennessee, then 25 more in Detroit as part of a new terminal there, and 30 more in Minneapolis in 2002. Between 2000 and 2002, in addition to Northwest Airlines, Dewbridge installed equipment at 11 airports, including Burlington, Vermont. During that time, Dewbridge would also become the name of a whole family of products.

In 2000, Dew Industries started to make what is called an apron drive boarding bridge. This bridge is the more-commonly known type of boarding bridge. Typically extending from a second floor gate, this type of bridge can service airplanes from small regional jets all the way up to the largest passenger jet in service today, the 747. According to Hutton the market potential for this product is great, considering the number of bridges that are in use today and will need to be replaced at some point.

"In North America, there are 5,000 boarding bridges in use with a design life of 20 years," Hutton explains. "Right now in Atlanta (the nation's busiest airport) there are 100 boarding bridges that are over 25 years old."

Dew Industries isn't the only manufacturer of boarding bridges. According to Hutton there are 14 such manufacturers in the world and of those, Dew has two major competitors based in the U.S. He says that being a much smaller company than their competition helps, and being an innovator in the industry is key.

"Our owners spend a high portion of profit on research and development," he says, pointing out the company holds 15 U.S. patents. Hutton says his company now has 90 percent of the turboprop and regional jet bridge market in the U.S.

In the early days of making Dewbridges, the company's orders came from airlines, today most of its orders come from local airports. The time it takes for a customer to get a new Dewbridge varies from order to order. A single order, usually to replace an aging bridge at a local airport, can takes about three months from date of order to delivery. A major installation like a recent 27-gate installation at the Fort Myers airport in Florida had a two-year lead time.

The airline industry has been volatile for many years. From the post 9/11 downturn to low-cost competition to increasing fuel costs, it is getting harder and harder for airlines to make money. One way for air carriers to reduce the cost of flying is to manage planes on the ground better and quicker. Another solution is to fly newer, more efficient aircraft. Dominant low-cost carriers like Jet Blue and Southwest use these solutions to their advantage.

The amount of time an airplane spends on the ground between flights is known as the turn-around time. The plane of a mainline carrier might take 40 to 45 minutes to turn around. The low-cost carriers have figured out how to cut that "turn time" by 10 minutes, mostly by using the same type of aircraft for all their flights.

Hutton points out that 70 percent of all aircraft in use and production are either of the Airbus 320 family (used by Jet Blue) or the Boeing 737 family (used by Southwest).

Dew Industries saw this as yet another opportunity to respond to the changing market place. The company developed an "Over The Wing" (OTW) Dewbridge. The OTW Bridge actually connects to both the front and rear doors of narrowbody aircraft like the 320 and 737. Hutton illustrates the advantages from his own experience after a recent flight to Fort Myers, Florida.

"I was in the back of the plane. It took me 10 minutes to get off the plane through the front door. If there had been an Over The Wing Bridge at that gate, I would have been the first one off the plane, through the rear door, while the guys in first class were walking out the front. It would have cut the passenger unloading time by half."

A few minutes here and there might not seem that important, but Hutton makes the point that with the cost savings from reducing the turn-around time by just 10 minutes, the airline could pay for the OTW Bridge in two years. He also points out that this would improve an airline's on-time performance and would allow more flights to use the same gates, thus reducing the need for new gates.

So far the OTW Bridge installations have only been at two airports in Canada but that will be changing in the not too distant future. There is a major installation with a major U.S. carrier at a major U.S. hub in the works. Hutton won't say who it is but he will say that in general, Dew expects the market to be "huge."

All this is good news for the Dew Industries plant in Ogdensburg. In addition to parts inventory and warehousing at the plant, OTW Bridge production will be done there.

"We have been very happy with the caliber of the workforce in Ogdensburg," says Hutton. "I think we have been a great employer in a growing market."

He says that Ogdensburg made sense for Dew Industries for a variety of reasons: proximity to their corporate headquarters and production facilities in Ottawa, the change in the U.S./Canadian dollar exchange rate and the fact that most of their orders come from the U.S. He also says the cooperation of the Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority has been terrific.

The impact of Dew Industries goes well beyond its own employees and products. Dew Industries purchases everything from electrical supplies to tire assemblies and basic construction materials in the local area. They use suppliers from around the region. The company is also working with the new Clinton County Airport in Plattsburgh on an installation.

Dew Industries is still making its established products better. They have developed an automation system that allows their bridges to be operated with the push of a button. This reduces the risk of damage to the aircraft by an inexperienced operator and again, streamlines the process of moving people on and off an airplane in an industry where time is literally money.

Dew Industries is a privately held company with 500 employees in three locations, with annual sales of over $100 million. From that first installation in Bentonville to today, Dewbridges are now in service at 56 airports across North America and the number is growing. Hutton sums it up, as you would expect an engineer to, efficiently and accurately.

"We've come a long way." ab

ABSOLUTELY abBUSINESS NEWS
NNY MONTHLY NEWS

OSTRANDER'S BED & BREAKFAST CHOSEN OUTSTANDING INN

Ostrander's Bed and Breakfast, Canton, was chosen one of the Top Outstanding Inns in the Northeast in the second annual Best of BedandBreakfast.com Awards. More than 18,000 votes were tallied over the year-long voting process and Ostrander's was recognized as one of the best overall inns from Maine to Maryland.

BedandBreakfast.com is the leading online bed and breakfast reservation network, listing inns throughout the U.S. and internationally. Travelers can make reservations online, purchase gift certificates accepted at 3,700 inns, subscribe to a free newsletter and ask questions on expert-hosted message boards.

Owned by Al and Rita Ostrander, the award-winning inn offers two guest rooms in the main house and two guest cottages overlooking an acre pond, plus a gift shop with sheepskin and woolen clothing, slippers and rugs.

Ostrander's Inn is on State Highway 68 in Canton, 386-2126, www.ostranders.com.

Let's Talk a Little BUSINESS

THE GOLDEN TICKET

By Marc Compeau

I RECENTLY READ AN ARTICLE IN OUR local newspaper about Peter Ostrum. Peter played the role of Charlie in the original movie Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. The article tells about Peter's life as a large animal veterinarian in Lowville. When I read about Peter and saw the picture of him I instantly thought about this column. The deadline was closing in and I had no story about manufacturing yet. Peter's picture gave me an idea, not about manufacturing but an idea about goal setting.

The premise of the movie is that five lucky winners would find golden tickets inside Wonka candy bars. The lucky children who found them possessed the ticket to their wildest dreams - a visit inside the famous Wonka Chocolate factory and a chance to be given the infamous factory, Oompa Loompas and all. We all know the story and I am certain that each of us has seen the movie more than once. Charlie's family thinks he is chasing an unattainable dream (goal) in his pursuit of the golden ticket, everyone except Grandpa who encourages young Charlie to "go for it." As four of the tickets are found, each of the lucky children seems to come from successful families. As the movie progresses it seems more and more unlikely that Charlie, a young boy from an extremely poor, unsuccessful family would achieve his dream of finding the last ticket. Of course Charlie finds the final ticket and is the one chosen by Willy Wonka at the end to be given the Wonka Factory.

I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree and have been stuck on two words for the past 10 months. The words have become so powerful to me that I am considering writing a thesis surrounding them. The words are "success" and "happiness." The beginning of my obsession was the day that my Ph.D. advisor spent a three-hour class on the word success. What was so intriguing to me was the discovery that to really understand what makes a small business successful we first have to understand what the word success means.

It seems so simple; according to Webster's Dictionary success is defined as anyone who succeeds. To succeed means (again according to Webster's Dictionary) to obtain one's goal. Often we judge other people on whether or not they are successful. If your neighbor has a good job and a nice home then we probably would consider her to be successful. If the business across the street from you had a five-year anniversary celebration and just bought a new awning for the front of the store we would probably all agree that the business is successful. I am not sure your neighbor or the shop owner would agree. Their personal goals may not have been attained, and their "success" may still be eluding them. Furthermore, even if they do consider themselves to be successful, does success always lead to happiness?

Defining happiness is complex as well. I found an on-line reference to happiness that describes it as one goal in life, the only possible goal, or a fortunate by-product of the pursuit of other goals. So if success is defined as goal achievement and happiness is a by-product of the pursuit of goals then it appears that goal-setting in your business relates to both success and happiness.

My point is this - ask yourself if you are successful. If you answer yes, according to the dictionary you have achieved your goal. If that is true then perhaps it is time to set a new one. Complacency gets us all in trouble. Instead of chasing success perhaps we should be chasing happiness, which may be a result of the pursuit. Charlie was the least successful of the five ticket-winners, but arguably the happiest. In the end Charlie becomes the most successful as well. What is it that leads to success and happiness? In Charlie's case it appears that setting a goal and staying committed to goal achievement worked. Goals lead to success attainment and the process may actually lead to happiness, just look at what setting a simple goal got Charlie – Oompa Loompas! Does your business have goals? ab

Peter played the role of Charlie in the original movie Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.

THE BUSINESS OF JOBS

By Robert Penski, President, Penski, Inc.

THE "MAGIC" OF MANUFACTURING

It is surely magic...

- **to watch streams of common gases congeal into blocks of some of the purest glass in the world;**
- **to see bales of fragments of used paper rejuvenated into endless streams of clean paper for wrapping and paper bags;**
- **to hear chunks of slag from a steel mill ground, mixed, and then baked into fine powder that ultimately keeps refrigerator doors closed;**
- **to stand in one spot as beads of plastic are molded into exact shapes that are placed in buckets of sand into which flows molten metal and from which is removed an automobile engine part;**
- **to recall a cherry log fresh from the woods sawn at one end of the factory and coming out the other as a beautiful chest of drawers;**
- **to smell raw milk recently in a cow flow through pipes and vats and end up in one of a continuing march of little yogurt containers spewing from the assembly line and into shipping boxes.**

Among the many joys of working 30 years in the North Country, few match the "magic" that I have had the privilege of seeing when I visit customers in manufacturing operations. While it is interesting to visit schools, colleges, hospitals, banks, stores or professional offices, visits to factories and workshops invariably reveal some "magical" transformation of a simple raw material or collection of raw materials into an entirely different end product.

Sometimes the raw material and end product are commonplace – like a cherry log and a chest of drawers. But the process of making that transformation can be amazing – how the log is sawn so precisely using laser guides, how the operator uses a well-trained eye to maximize the quantity and quality of lumber that will end up in high-value furniture and to minimize the quantity of the log that ends up burned as worthless saw dust or scrap.

Other times the inputs and outputs are quite esoteric. I recall the days before computers were everywhere, standing by a machine almost as long as a basketball court. A worker at one end fed in bands of tiny electronic components like diodes and resistors, that "puffs" of pneumatic air placed accurately in holes on little computer boards that then slid on conveyors through solder and washes, exiting the other end of the line – almost ready to control our telephone or electric drill.

Some of the manufacturing facilities are huge. The ALCOA Massena Operations foundry is grander than Grand Central Station, with machines extending as far as the eye can see. The magic there is that it all seems to hum along robotically – with few humans visible.

Some manufacturing facilities are smaller than a house or garage, especially the workshops where local craftspeople continue the tradition of making products in much the same way as a century earlier, yet even then there is "magic."

Who doesn't use soap? But how many of us have seen

soap made these days? Especially soap that uses all natural ingredients, made by neighbors in a little shop, hand-wrapped, and that smells and cleans better than any soap Proctor and Gamble will ever make for its mass markets.

Or a book? Who doesn't read a book? But how many of us have held a book that has been printed and bound by a local craftsperson, often with poems or stories that are written just for local readers or readers anywhere with local interest?

Or food manufacturing on a small scale? Such as the steers that are born, grown, and processed all within one's sight? Or cheese manufactured from goats grazing our local grass? Or slippers crafted from sheep from a farm down the road?

But most of all I still enjoy visiting local shops where one or several self-taught machinist-welder-designer-maintenance mechanic-millwrights "manufacture" parts, applying combinations of experience, luck, and ingenuity, to fabricate or repair a customer's (neighbor's) critically needed piece of equipment. You can almost see the smoke rising as the mental wheels turn, trying to figure out the fastest and cheapest way to magically make a new gear to get the combine back out into the farmer's field by next morning to get the corn in, or to modify used transmission parts for a skidder to at least get the logger through to mud season when there will be time to rebuild it right.

To some extent, the "magic" of large manufacturing operations is being lost in the North Country. We have fewer large paper mills and cheese plants. We have no new vast multi-billion dollar manufacturing complexes employing thousands of workers, like the new auto manufacturing plants in the south.

But we still have lots of magic left. Find it in our industrial parks, perhaps in Watertown or Ogdensburg...or in dozens of smaller facilities in our villages...or in hundreds of workshops scattered on really rural roads in Rossie or Rensselaer Falls...or almost anywhere in the North Country. And, unlike the sprawling Saturn plant in Tennessee or the Toyota plant in Alabama, neighbors here are often welcome to stop by and share the magic. ab

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