

## **Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development**

### **From garage to industrial park: Helping businesses grow in Taylor County**

#### **Situation**

Jobs in manufacturing account for more than 30 percent of all jobs in Taylor County. Each year, about 45 entrepreneurs and small businesses seek education and specialized support from the local UW-Extension office in this north-central Wisconsin county. While Wisconsin lost 11 percent of its manufacturing jobs statewide from 1995 to 2003, Taylor County had some new successes to report. During that same time period, the four manufacturers in this report increased employment by over 94 percent, creating 332 jobs in the area.

#### **Response**

UW-Extension and its community partners help build successful businesses that continue to bring good-paying jobs to Taylor County, benefiting the economy of north-central Wisconsin.

#### **Outcomes**

##### **WADAL Plastics**

Dale Baumann and Wade Cullen stood in a rented garage one night in the early 1990s, talking with Arlen Albrecht, Taylor County UW-Extension community development agent, about starting their own company, WADAL Plastics. It was one of many conversations they had been having with acquaintances about their dream. The difference this time was, it's Albrecht's job to help people find ways to make their entrepreneurial ideas a reality. Albrecht worked out a business plan with the Small Business Development Center at UW-Eau Claire and consulted with the Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center at UW-Stout on plant design and product flow. With a loan from the Medford Development Foundation and business plan in hand, Baumann and Cullen moved their fledgling company into a new building in the Medford industrial park and good things began to happen

"At the beginning," says Cullen, Vice President of Manufacturing Operations, "Arlen gave us lots of ideas, a lot of things we could look into. He did a lot of research on our behalf. He pointed us in the right direction and showed us that resources were available to help us, things we didn't know existed." Baumann and Cullen guided their new company through a rapid expansion, hired new partners (including Bob Lange), and then put their team skills to work taking the company to the next level.

"We started from nothing," Cullen says. "Dale had a tool and die shop, which we converted to a plastic injection molding company. We now employ 50 people and two years ago opened a second facility in El Paso, Texas. We started working for Weather Shield and have broadened our market to include windows, automotive and consumer products, and appliances."

"The company is very busy, very strong," Cullen says. "We're moving forward."

##### **Parrett Manufacturing**

The garages of Taylor County must provide the right environment for new ideas to thrive. Parrett Manufacturing, making subcomponents for specialty windows, also started in a garage. The founders

struggled with year-round access to their rural location and a dusty gravel road, so Albrecht worked with the Town of Deer Creek to apply for a Transportation for Economic Development grant. Upgrading to a blacktop road allowed the company to grow. They moved to an industrial site in Dorchester and now manufacture their own line of windows.

### **Drangle Foods and Great Northern Cabinetry, Inc.**

Albrecht worked with Drangle Foods, Inc. to facilitate a partner buy-out and an Agricultural Development Zone Tax Credit application, which resulted in the company reinvesting those funds in expansion. They now employ 70 people in Gilman, a town of 450. Great Northern Cabinetry, Inc. in Rib Lake wanted to expand, but there was no “developable” land available. Albrecht worked with the Rib Lake Community Development Foundation, and Village to secure two acres of county-owned land. With local resources, they got the parcel taken off the Wisconsin wetland listing by demonstrating with aerial photos and soil proof that the site was historically a gravel hill. The company completed a \$1 million expansion and now has 90 employees.

### **Economic development successes**

These successful businesses and others are bringing good jobs to Taylor County and keeping them here, benefiting the economy of the entire region.

“In a rural area like Taylor County, UW-Extension plays a vital role in economic development,” Albrecht says. “I don’t loan out money, or make the political decisions that allow businesses to grow. I help them answer questions so sound decisions can be made; I help bring the right players to the table so collaborative resources can be shared; I do research to find new resources; and I help overcome obstacles to projects that communities want to develop.”

“In no way do I act alone,” says Albrecht. “In every case of successful economic development, it takes a community of leaders and resources. UW-Extension is a member of that team. We all work together.”

### **Contact**

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