

Professional Plating's Commitment to Caring

Wisconsin plater celebrates 35 years by empowering employees.

It's not so much that Professional Plating celebrated its 35th anniversary in May, it's more *how* the company has used those three decades.

The husband and wife team of Bob and Pat Endries from Brillion, Wisconsin, were owners of Endries International in the 1970s and were looking for a source of plating for the fasteners they sold to OEMs, including Ariens, Brillion Iron, Harley-Davidson, Kohler and John Deere.

Instead, they decided to start their own plating line, opening a zinc plating operation first. A few years later, they expanded their plating capabilities with the purchase of a Cyclemaster rack line.

Today, they employ 175 full-time people and have 150,000 sq. ft. where they perform zinc rack plating, acrylic and epoxy ecoat and powder coating, in addition to shot blasting, sand blasting, black oxide and ceramic coating.

But what takes place inside Professional Plating isn't just finishing products. It's a culture of giving back to the community, of coming to the aide of fellow team members, and of being a model of a great workplace.

"We try very hard to be a place where people want to come to work because they enjoy being here," says Larry Dietz, the company's general manager who helped spur growth when he started there in 2001.

Dietz and his leadership team have ingrained a philosophy of accountability and superior workmanship, but also of caring about each other and their community.

During Easter, employees donated items for the Harbor House in Appleton, a safe haven for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. Because many families are forced to leave with little more than the clothes on their backs, the employees collected daily hygiene needs, diapers, formula,

socks and underwear, as well as money used to buy food gift cards.

When employees learned that the 16-year-old niece of powder department team member Jill Trochta was running in

a "Team in Training" event after beating leukemia, they raised more than \$1,300 to help her compete in the event.

After Stella Vetter from the powder department gave birth to her son, Braxton, three months early and endured unexpected travel and medical expenses, fellow employees brought in soups and baked goods to sell to each other, raising more than \$600.

This past Christmas, Professional Plating held its annual holiday food drive to help stock the shelves of the local food pantry. Employees collected more than 1,000 items this year

and the company made a significant monetary donation for purchase of meat products.

The company also hosted a Fall Fest Raffle to raise money for employee Kelly Strouf's 5-year-old great niece who was diagnosed with stage-four neuroblastoma cancer.

During Breast Cancer Awareness month, the PPI employees were encouraged to "Wear Pink" to

support breast cancer survivors. The offline ecoat team won the contest for having the most pink, and the company made a donation to Brillion High School Sting Cancer group, whose mission is to support local families dealing with cancer.

When Military Appreciation Month rolled around in May, employees showed support for PPI's own team members currently stationed in Afghanistan by collecting items for care packages, several dozen of which were sent overseas.

And it isn't all about raising money. They also invest in their own people. In 2013, Professional Plating began a new program training 60 team members in a specialized "next step" leadership training. Working with Fox Valley Technical College, they developed a customized six-week training program that included topics such as Engaging and Empowering Others, Communicating Effectively and Motivating Others.

The program builds the skills of potential leaders and prepares them to better work within current peer groups. Training was held off-site on Saturday mornings from April through the graduation ceremony in June. Upon completion, participants earned college credits.

Doing good things means that PPI has been able to keep quality employees. Gail Schuh has been with them for more than 30 years. Jane Cleary, Sheila Free, Connie McCormick, Dave Anhalt and Bob Zipperer are 20-year veterans. Kerry Behnke, Tim Bastian, Angela Bastian, Karl Bastian, Kym Rosner, Greg Lettau and Melanie Schaefer—15 years, and on and on.

"We want to grow our own leaders," says Dietz, who managed the company's \$1.2 million investment in a new rack zinc plating line last year. "We're investing capital in our operations and our people. That is how we measure our success."

The true beneficiaries are their customers and the surrounding community. Being open for 35 years is one thing; doing it with class and a commitment to caring is what sets Professional Plating apart. ■■■



TIM PENNINGTON / EDITOR
tim.pennington@pfonline.com

We try very hard to be a place where people want to come to work because they enjoy being here."