

Therma-Tron-X celebrates expansion

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Company owner Brad Andraee cuts the ribbon to Therma-Tron-X Inc.'s latest expansion Friday morning in the Sturgeon Bay Industrial Park, as Sturgeon Bay Mayor Thad Birmingham, left, and Gov. Scott Walker look on. / Ramelle Bintz/Door County Advocate

Gov. Scott Walker and several other dignitaries and community leaders commended Door County workers during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Therma-Tron-X Inc. Friday morning.

TTX is a Sturgeon Bay manufacturer that specializes in complete finishing systems for industrial customers. It was founded in 1971 as a manufacturer of custom-built industrial ovens but now custom-designs and builds water and waste water systems and paint systems for major global manufacturers that include Honda and Caterpillar.

Company owner Brad Andraee cuts the ribbon to Therma-Tron-X Inc.'s latest expansion Friday morning in the Sturgeon Bay Industrial Park, as Sturgeon Bay Mayor Thad Birmingham, left, and Gov. Scott Walker look on.

The company broke ground last fall on a 26,800-square-foot addition that now provides more inside storage for steel and other equipment for its large projects that can range from \$1 million to \$15 million. This is the fourth expansion in the last three years for the company that has added 50 jobs since 2012.

Therma-Tron-X owner Brad Andraee said he never imagined the company's growth when he first moved to Sturgeon Bay, temporarily living out of a tent.

But in the beginning, he said his family and his father, Otto Andraee, who founded the company with Rusty Sherman, had little time for anything but work.

"We were working 14 hours a day, seven days a week," Andraee said.

The company invested in developing new products and builds all pieces that go into a system at the Sturgeon Bay facility, which makes them unique in the industry.

"That makes us very competitive in a world market," he said.

The addition will enable TTX to increase its manufacturing capacity as it continues to meet the needs of manufactures and contract coaters and expand markets around the world, said owner Brad Andraee.

"Our name brand has become a standard in the industry," Andraee said. "The skilled and dedicated work force from Northeastern Wisconsin has allowed Therma-Tron-X to maintain and grow over the past 40-plus years. It has been slow and steady because we want our employees to be here for the long haul – the rest of their careers. That takes time, training, and investment."

He thanked both local government officials for their support as well as the governor and legislators for improving trade practices making the state friendly for industrial growth.

“You’ve given me the confidence to build the last three years with four additions,” he said.

Walker said family-owned businesses like TTX have helped Wisconsin turn around unemployment from 9.4 percent a little more than four years ago to the most recent rate of 5.8 percent. Those additional 50 jobs represent families added to the community that contribute to more growth, the governor said.

“This is just one of the many economic success stories that we are seeing in Northeastern Wisconsin as well as the entire state,” Walker said. “The success of our manufacturing industry is fueled by collaborative partnerships in economic development that allow us to continue to develop our talented, skilled work force.”

Robert Rock, technical director of TTX, gave tours of the plant prior to the ribbon-cutting ceremony that was shared with employees. Rock said their roughly 180 employees include 35-40 with engineering degrees. The manufacturing includes the entire process from design to installation of systems worldwide – all originating in Sturgeon Bay.

“They’ll come to us and say, ‘Here’s the part we need and this is the process we want. Can you do that?’” he said. “We do the concept, design, install and start up – we do it all.”

Large reverse-osmosis water treatment systems were one example of a product needed by other companies as clean water is needed not just for drinking water but for manufacturing other materials.

Sturgeon Bay Mayor Thad Birmingham said TTX is not only a fantastic business but a good corporate citizen. Birmingham said he would pop in at the company from time to time over the last 20-plus years and even when times were difficult due to material shortages or price increases, the management team at TTX kept the company on solid footing.

“We can’t have enough TTXs in Sturgeon Bay,” he said.

He also emphasized Sturgeon Bay was committed to help every business in the city grow.

Former TTX president and board chairman John Acker also was awarded a plaque in recognition of his design of the SST, an electro-coat powder machine which became a company trademark.

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