

## Move of IPM plant 'painful' for workers

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer | Posted: Thursday, July 21, 2016 4:00 pm

BELOIT — For IPM employees the prospect of a move to Janesville is viewed as a disruption in their lives and a blow to Beloit. Employees interviewed by the Beloit Daily News say the business has made a positive impact in their lives and in the neighborhood.

IPM Foods, operating at 1126 Harvey St., employs up to 100 people in a challenged city neighborhood. Some employees are without transportation and walk to IPM. Owner Pawel Marciniak said starting wages are \$10 to \$15 an hour, with his more skilled workers earning \$14 to \$30 an hour.

Marciniak, a 1986 refugee from Poland who came to America in 2002, says he goes out of his way to hire people in need of work and to help them learn job skills.

"I've been here seven years, and it's done a lot for me," said Emmanuel Rivera, a team leader who lives three blocks from the plant.

Rivera explained he started in the "hot room," where he worked with the batching of soups. He animatedly explains how it's where the work "comes alive."

Rivera said his fellow employees are already worrying and scrambling to find transportation to Janesville. Rivera said co-workers lacking vehicles have talked to him about catching a ride to Janesville, but he said his vehicle can't fit them all.

"I pick up a friend of mine every day to work here, and some employees don't have a vehicle," he said.

Rivera, who worked his way up to being a machine operator and team leader, said living near work with his fiancée and three daughters allows him time to drop off his kids at school. He's worried about getting his kids to school once operations move to Janesville.



Parker

"This is really painful for us. We have to change all our schedules and family living," Rivera said. "It's a little bit hurtful for me and my kids."

Rivera believes the City of Beloit has been unreasonable.

"I'm part of the company so it's personal to me," he said. "I love IPM."

Kathy Parker, a purchaser, said she already travels to Beloit from Rockford so an extra 10 minutes won't bother her. She said the company will probably be better off out of Beloit.

"I think that there is a lot political stuff going on which isn't advantageous to our company. I think they are so focused on wanting to find something wrong," Parker said. "I'm unhappy with how Beloit has been to the business."

Parker said she's in her late 50s and is concerned about her employment options if the plant were to close.

"I like my job and what I do. I've worked here three-and-a-half years and I know Pawel has tried to do the best he can to conform to what Beloit wants, but it never seems to be enough. It's sucking so much money from our company, and it's never ending," she said.

Quality manager Alissa Hepp, even though she already lives in Janesville, said her workplace in Beloit is like family. She said Marciniak has taught her about the industry and given her an opportunity to grow her career.

But she believes, while Janesville's regulations are the same, its approach seems more workable and professional.

"I attended a meeting for the city of Beloit, and the way they talked about things was not professional," she said.