

COMPANY WITH BELOIT CORP. ROOTS LOCATES AT SOUTH BELOIT FACILITY

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Hillary Gavan/Beloit Daily News (From left): Annika Braaten, Ronna Braaten, Laurel Braaten, PMP Americas CEO Mirek Pietraszek, General Manager Rocky Matuska and his wife Ann Matuska gather for the emotional ribbon cutting in honor of PMP Americas' late co-founder and chairman of the board Aaron Braaten. Ronna is his wife and Annika and Laurel are his daughters. Aaron Braaten was known in Beloit for rising the ranks of the former Beloit Corporation. He was vice president of all European operations when Beloit Corporation filed for bankruptcy.

SOUTH BELOIT - A paper industry business made its way back home Thursday, as PMP Americas - tracing roots to the former Beloit Corporation - held a ribbon cutting to celebrate its new plant in South Beloit.

The arrival also celebrates the vision and groundwork set in motion by PMP's late leader. Company officials noted the vision and leadership of Aaron Braaten, a top Beloit Corporation executive and co-founder of PMP Americas.

An international delegation of well wishers from the company's six locations around the world - including CEO Mirek Pietraszek - descended upon South Beloit to celebrate the opening of its U.S. site at 16200 Woodmint Lane near Finnegan's RV off Interstate 39/90.

"I'm so proud that PMP Americas is part of the community. Beloit and South Beloit have a strong history of industrial growth, and this will add to its rebirth," said South Beloit Mayor Ted Rehl.

The event was a momentous day for those who fondly remembered the company's late co-founder and chairman Braaten, known for his entrepreneurial spirit.

The emotional event included Braaten's wife Ronna and two daughters Annika and Laurel and remarks from those inspired by him. The ceremony was held on the one-year anniversary of Braaten's death and the new site was dedicated to him. Wife Ronna said her husband would have been proud, pleased and humbled with the honor and then would tell everyone to get to work. She told the staff they exceeded every dream her husband had for them.

PMP Americas purchased the South Beloit building in May, started build out in June and moved in on Oct. 1. It employs 17 people.

The Polish-American company is headquartered in Jelenia Gora, Poland and is part of the PMP Group which is comprised of six facilities located in the U.S., Poland, Italy and China.

The new facility will continue to support the pulp and paper industry and provide the design and building of fixtures, gauges, tooling and quality machining services to aerospace, food and automotive markets and more.

Demand is increasing for machines which can make box board in light of more online purchases in the age of Amazon.com and other online retailers. The need for machines which can make toilet paper and paper towels also continues to be robust.

PMP Americas General Manager Rocky Matuska explained PMP Americas Inc. was previously Beloit's Corporation's subsidiary in Poland.

PMP Americas has a rich history going back 160 years. It started as German company called H. Fullner Works. After World War II, it became Fampa, a state-run Polish company. Beloit Corporation licensed Fampa in the 1960s and when communism fell in Poland in the early 1990s Beloit Corporation bought the entire company and renamed it Beloit Poland. Beloit Corporation invested in the facility for 10 years before it went out of business.

The management team in Poland along with a vice president of Beloit Corporation, Braaten, purchased it in 2000 and renamed it PMP Americas. In 2001, the team decided to re-enter the U.S market after running it in Poland with a new site in Machesney Park. However, it quickly outgrew its 6,000-square-foot location and decided to move into the 12,000 square foot site in South Beloit.

Matuska, who is a 1989 graduate of Beloit Memorial High School and resides in Roscoe, met Braaten when the two worked at Beloit Corporation together.

"He was one of the fastest rising employees of Beloit. He became a vice president within a short amount of time and when Beloit Corporation went out of business, he was the vice president of all European operations," Matuska said. Matuska said Braaten was a tremendous entrepreneur, also responsible for starting more than half a dozen healthcare companies in the Quad Cities.

"He was always moving and going somewhere," Matuska said.

Matuska said Braaten was a true friend as well as a great provider for his family and the company. The South Beloit facility is one stepping stone in Braaten's many dreams. Those at PMP Americas, he said, will have draw inspiration from Braaten and continue to expand the company for years to come.