

Gallatin industry wins “Excellence in Manufacturing Award”

BY KATRINA CORNWELL/STAFF • JUNE 4, 2008

ITW-CIP, of Gallatin, was recently selected as a recipient of a Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce Excellence in Manufacturing Award.

Makers of internally threaded fasteners used primarily in the automotive industry, the plant located on Steamplant Road was among nine winners who topped the list of 70 nominations of manufacturers, distributors and warehouse operations across a 10-county Middle Tennessee region.

Winners were selected based on job creation, growth of revenue, top-notch quality production and management.

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ITW-CIP, recipients of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce’s Excellence in Manufacturing Award, have been doing business in Gallatin for 20 years. The company employs 125 people and its expansion plans will create another 25 jobs.

New Jobs

ITW-CIP, which recently celebrated its 20th year in Gallatin, currently employs 125 people, but the company is planning to hire for an additional 35 jobs in the second half of 2008, Jose said.

“ITW-CIP has been a preferred employer and outstanding corporate citizen in our community for more than two decades, and to see them recognized for the quality of manufacturing they are known for within their industry is very well deserved,” Mayor JoAnn Graves said.

“Dave Jose and all of ITW’s employees should be very proud of their work and know that the city appreciates them greatly.”

More than a dozen were added to ITW-CIP’s payroll as part of a 30,000-square-foot plant expansion last year. The ongoing expansion will add another 9,000-square-feet by the first quarter of 2009, Jose said.

Most of the jobs are manufacturing-oriented. Some of the new employees will be responsible for running metal-stamping presses and the heat-treat operation, a process that hardens steel, he said.

ITW-CIP hires employees through the job services program through the Tennessee Department of Workforce and Labor Development. Anyone interested in these new jobs should check with that agency on a regular basis because even though the company is looking to hire later this year, plans could change, Jose said.

“We may start looking a little earlier than that,” he said.

Award Recognizes Expansion

Company officials have been working on training and other issues with the Gallatin Economic Development Agency, TVA, and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. In addition to the award for excellence, ITW was also recognized for its expansion.

"ITW is a first-class company and they have been very successful at their Gallatin operations," said Clay Walker, executive director of Gallatin's Economic Development Agency, who nominated the company for the award.

"Their corporate office has about 135 other plants worldwide that they could be expanding, but they continue to invest in Gallatin, which speaks highly of many aspects of our community and region, but I think it makes the strongest statement about the quality of our workforce."

Retention Aids Recruitment

Walker, whose organization works with existing companies through its Gallatin Expansion and Retention (GEAR) program, said that having companies achieve and expand also helps in recruiting new firms.

"Nothing sells your community as much as successful companies already in your community," Walker said.

"ITW and other growing companies we have here continue to make the statement on the city's behalf that Gallatin is an outstanding place to do business.

"So while its direct impact on our community is great, this award – and the ongoing expansion – impacts us positively in so many ways. I was thrilled that the judges recognized them and their contributions to the region's manufacturing reputation."

Jose was complimentary of GEAR and specifically Walker's assistance during its expansion.

"Clay has been an excellent resource for working with us on the kinds of things we want to do to expand," he said. "He nominated us for the award. We wouldn't be receiving it without Clay's nomination."

ITW-CIP says the business climate in Gallatin and access to a good work force contributed to the plant's long-term success.

"There are a number of things. There's a good economic climate in the city that is favorable to manufacturing," Jose said. "The area offers employees who are dedicated to helping the company succeed."

Nashville Chamber Of Commerce Awards

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Walker and Jose attended the awards luncheon, along with ITW Continuous Improvement/Quality Manager Kent Gimmy.

Now in its fourth year, the Excellence in Manufacturing Awards program was established to recognize the value of manufacturing in Middle Tennessee's economy.

Nominees were evaluated by a panel of seven volunteer judges with extensive public and private manufacturing experience who scored the applicants based on criteria such as productivity, processes, human capital and economic contribution to the region.

"This award program was created because we saw a need to celebrate the achievements of manufacturers in Middle Tennessee," said Christine McDonnell, director of existing business for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce. "This year's award recipients are outstanding leaders in the field of manufacturing."

Doug Ward, a judge for the awards, said ITW stood out in its ability to consistently deliver high-quality, defect-free parts to the automotive industry. "They maintain one of the cleanest, most orderly production facilities in their industry," Ward said.

Ward also praised ITW for its self-directed work teams and advanced problem solving Six Sigma techniques, saying that this type of teamwork combined with highly automated equipment and production monitoring systems make the Gallatin plant a "world-class production facility."

The manufacturing industry is one of the most important sectors in Middle Tennessee's economy, representing more than 1,500 establishments, 80,000 jobs, and \$3.3 billion annual payroll in the Nashville MSA.

“Clearly, we have seen today that the manufacturing industry is vital to the health of the region’s economy, and we are extremely proud of these exceptional performers who call Middle Tennessee home,” said Ron Samuels, chair-elect of the Chamber’s Board of Directors and chairman, president and CEO of Avenue Bank.

Other winners include: A.O. Smith Water Products Company; The Bun Companies; The Crown Group; Flexsol Packaging Corporation; General Motors, Spring Hill; Hendrickson USA; Innovative Plastics South Corporation; and Lithographics.

Along with the Nashville Chamber, Lattimore, Black, Morgan & Cain, P.C.; Waddey & Patterson, P.C.; the Nashville Business Journal; and Solveras Payment Systems sponsor the awards.