

Southern Stretch Forming at home in Wausau

Strategic partnership with Linetec benefits both companies

By Jim Servi

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Southern Stretch Forming has a long history of excellence in the extremely specialized art of forming curved metal. Founded in 1991 and headquartered in Denton, Texas, the company since has expanded to Pennsylvania and California. Most recently, they've added to their expansion when they set up operations at 7555 Stewart Ave in the Wausau West Business District right across the road from Linetec. The proximity to Linetec is notable because it was this partnership that led Southern Stretch to cross the Great Plains and set up operations in Northcentral Wisconsin.

David Arthur started Southern Stretch Forming in 1991 along with a partner and at the time became the first curved-metal provider in Texas. Naturally, there was a lot of interest from the architectural and construction fields as they always try to customize windows, walls, doors, arches, skylights and even signs for their customers.

Curved metal allows designers to truly see the sky as the limit for architectural



David Arthur, founder and president of Southern Stretch Forming, displays some of his company's curved-metal work.

designs. With Linetec heavily involved in the architectural industry, it wanted to be able to add this level of customization to its offerings as well. Linetec originally thought that they could simply add metal specialists to their

company and be able to form curved metal, but quickly realized it wasn't that easy. So, the search began for a strategic partnership. They quickly realized that wasn't going to be as easy as they first thought either with

limited companies that specialize in metal stretch forming. When Linetec started its search for a stretch forming partner, they found that Southern Stretch Forming matched the capabilities and the company values that they were looking for.

Just over two years ago, Southern Stretch Forming and Linetec formalized their partnership with a plan to start small. Equipment arrived in December 2013 and they were operational halfway through January 2014. According to Arthur, "we thought we'd get by with 3-4 people, just like in California, with that same level of sales, but sales doubled, so we had to double our staff and are now up to nine full time employees in Wausau."

Their employment levels in Wausau are quickly approaching their level of employment in Texas where they employ 15 full-time people.

The relationship that emerged between Linetec and Southern Stretch has been clearly beneficial for both parties. Arthur said that "the relationship has worked well for both of us and it has been a great two years."

Rick Marshall, Linetec President adds, "For customers, dealing with curved metal is historically a big challenge — there often is more cost in freight shipping parts between extruder, stretch former, and finisher than

See Stretch, PAGE 7

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to launch this initiative include Saint Mary's Hospital, Rhinelander; Sacred Heart Hospital, Tomahawk; Eagle River Memorial Hospital and Howard Young Medical Center, Woodruff, and its clinics in Crandon, Eagle River, Laona, Rhinelander, Tomahawk, Woodruff, Owen, Thorpe and Stanley.

Additional work is under way to expand this program to other Ministry locations.

Veterans can determine eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program at www.va.gov/opa/choiceact or by calling the number on their Choice Card at (866) 606-8198.

Upon graduation, students will then complete an additional three to four terms of UIW coursework online, earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) in as little as eight months.

ThedaCare hospitals implement Pulsara

ThedaCare has implemented Pulsara — a standardized communication protocol that performs like an app — to simplify the response for ST-Segment Myocardial

Stretch/Partnership reduces costs

From Page 5

the cost of the parts themselves. Having stretch forming and finishing done at the same location saves customers significant time and costs in shipping and crating. It becomes a very easy sourcing decision for them — more importantly, it can give our customers a competitive advantage on projects with a lot of curved material."

When asked what the future holds for the Wausau division of Southern Stretch Forming, Arthur said, "the third and fourth years should be performing like we expected since the first two years are often difficult — with putting resources into tooling, inventory, hiring and training." According to Arthur this is the "fifth location we've opened up, so we're familiar with process." Being surrounded by multiple windows manufacturers has been a blessing for Southern Stretch Forming and they've expanded beyond their relationship with Linetec since they've moved to the area.

Arthur said "the local window companies have been good to us and we now have several loyal customers."

Even the customers they had worked with

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— David Arthur, president, Southern Stretch Forming, Wausau

previously from the area are happy now with the reduced shipping costs and extra service from a local provider.

Southern Stretch Forming describes their metal curving process as The Fine Art of Stretching Metal Without Making it Scream on their website. Stretch forming really came about with the need of the aeronautic industry to maintain precise dimensions throughout the curved metal process. This meant trying to eliminate any wrinkling on the inside of the curved arc.

First, aluminum, the most common metal,

Ascension Wisconsin

Bernie Sherry was named senior vice president of Ascension Health/Wisconsin Ministry market executive.

He will lead Ascension Wisconsin which includes Ministry Health Care and Affinity Health Care in Wisconsin.

Previously, Sherry served as chief operating



Sherry

• The Aspirus Health Foundation grant applications on a quarterly basis supports community-based efforts. Its mission is to advance the health of area residents. The next quarter is April 22. The Aspirus Health recently awarded \$12,500 to help community initiatives. See www.aspirus.org.

Nancy Barthel covers healthcare news at nbarthel@thebusinessnewsonline.com

CoVantage goes to development

CoVantage Credit Union has been awarded a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Treasury's Community Development Financial Institution Fund (CDFI). The grant is as a result of CoVantage being selected for the Community Development Financial Institution Fund.

The CDFI grant award will be used to help existing businesses and start-up businesses with the cost of expanding, or creating a business.

The CoVantage Credit Union will be combined with \$13 million in funds to make an even larger grant available to partner with businesses and them access to this special source.

Steve Wilder, senior vice president of commercial lending, said the grants "will give businesses the opportunity to grow and be successful." He looks forward to creating long-term relationships with them.

To qualify for a loan through the CoVantage Credit Union, borrowers must meet certain income limitations and other lending criteria. For more information on the grant or to apply, contact CoVantage at 715-261-398-2667.