

BUSINESS



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↓ DOW 17,807.06 -31.50 ↓ NASDAQ 4,942.52 -28.84 ↓ S&P 500 2,099.13 -6.13 ↓ 10-YR T-NOTE 1.70% -10 ↓ 30-YR T-BOND 2.51% -07 ↓



Howard Protain stacks the new line of rocking chairs Friday at the Adams Manufacturing plant in Portersville.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN GUIDO/BUTLER EAGLE

40th anniversary

Vietnam veteran turns \$10,000 into multi-million-dollar company

By Phillip Rau, Eagle Staff Writer

PORTERSVILLE — It was in the late 1970s when Bill Adams, a Vietnam veteran who had returned from the war and was hired by Pittsburgh Public Schools, made a huge decision.

With \$10,000 to his name, he quit his teaching job and started making “window blankets” — a product people could hang against their attic windows to keep heat from escaping. Window blankets didn’t catch on, but the plastic suction cups used to affix the product to windows proved a hit with hardware, craft store and office store suppliers across the region — and proved to be Adams’ key to business success.

In the face of growing demand, the business’ founder decided to establish the early stages of a manufacturing operation in Portersville.

Using that \$10,000, he has gone on to build Adams Manufacturing into a multi-million-dollar manufacturing company focused on injection-molded products.

“Everyone talks about the American Dream. It’s kind of funny. Adams has epitomized the American Dream,” said Dan Stainer, the company’s director of marketing. “Mr. Adams started out literally selling suction cups out of the back of his Chevy Chevette, door-to-door.”

His first breakthrough was the



Bill Adams has built Adams Manufacturing into a multi-million-dollar company employing between 250 and 300 workers. The company is celebrating its 40th anniversary.

realization that making suction cups wasn’t as simple as most people think. Adams redesigned the suction cups to disperse, rather than focus, light that passes through them.

Since then, the company has gone on to pioneer resin-based product manufacturing.

Not forgetting its roots, Adams’ company is also the world’s leading supplier of PVC and phthalate-free suction cups.

And the rest, as they say, is history, said Stainer. Today the com-

pany is valued at just under \$100 million, and employs between 250 and 300 workers, depending on seasonal demand for its products. And the appetite for Adams’ resin furniture stretches worldwide, Stainer said. The products can be found at any number of “big box” retailers like Wal-Mart, Ace, Lowe’s and more.

And Stainer said that Adams itself continues to be one of the region’s best-kept secrets when it

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comes to manufacturing.

"People don't realize that one of the largest manufacturers of resin furniture in the country is right here in Butler County," Stainer said. "You name (the store), they have our products. And you go anywhere in the country — whether it's a beach or anywhere else — and you're going to see our chairs."

Many of Adams' top employees spent about a week last month kicking off the company's 40th anniversary celebration at the National Hardware Show in Las Vegas. The

event is one of the largest home improvement trade shows in the world.

Despite the milestone, Adams continues to search for new innovations and directions with its products. In the last year, Stainer said, the company has debuted its latest big product: a stackable resin rocking chair that won the American Manufacturing Award for best new product.

He said the chair proved to be a hit with people nationwide, including one family whose autistic son had worn out a series of wooden rockers. The family, Stainer said, told Adams that its resin rocker was the first chair capable

of keeping up with their son. He called the message motivating for people at the company.

"It kind of makes you realize why you're in the business," Stainer said. "You don't always realize that your furniture and what you sell enhances peoples' lives."

This year Adams Manufacturing is busy creating a smaller version of their full-size rocker, which can hold up to 350 pounds, Stainer said. The "Lil' Easy" is still in development, while the "Big Easy" line of oversized resin furniture has been tailored to fit an American population that has grown larger in recent decades.