

DECC Celebrates 50 Years of Meeting Grand Rapids' Coating Needs

4

By Jane Whittington

The DECC Company, family-owned and operated, is celebrating an anniversary. Fifty years of operating a successful business gives them reason to celebrate. DECC Company has evolved from a bicycle repair shop in the basement of Evert Mellema's home in 1964 to the 100,000 square foot facility which today is a leading industrial coating applicator providing coating excellence to a wide variety of industries. They offer a range of coating services including dry film lubricants, chemical resistant coatings, high temperature resistant coatings, rubber bonding adhesives, corrosion protection coatings, FDA approved coatings and others.

The business started when a friend of Evert's challenged him to figure out a way to prevent the selector pin in jukeboxes from sticking. His brother Don

suggested using a dry film lubricant not in widespread use and devised a method of applying the coating with a vibrating machine and a \$15 oven. Their customer base grew, and the brothers bought a facility and incorporated under the name DECC, named after brothers Don and Evert and Chet and their father, also named Chet.

Today DECC, with Don's son Fred Mellema serving as President and Owner, serves a wide variety of markets including aerospace/avionics, alternative energy/fuel cell, automotive, commercial laundry, diesel, food processing, furniture, industrial, medical, military and remanufacturing. Essentially, what they do is apply coating to other business' parts and then return them. Up to 300,000 duplicate pieces from a particular company may come in at one time.

According to Fred Mellema, "When I bought DECC ten years ago, the automo-

tive industry was 100 percent of our business. We knew that we needed to diversify, and that decision served us well during the recession when the automotive industry was so hard hit. Over the past ten years, we were able to bring in work for the military and the diesel industry. These are two strong markets for us. In fact, Caterpillar came in and helped us in the diesel industry by helping us buy a line of machines specifically for them. Other than that, we were able to modify our existing machines to do the work that needed to be done for industries other than automotive. Automotive now accounts for about 30 percent of our business."

Currently DECC has 85 full-time employees, some of whom have come in with experience and others they train onsite. Mellema says, "We like it when employees can be cross-trained in two or three different areas, as this gives us and

our employees flexibility in work assignments. Because we are a job shop, we don't know what's going to hit the dock, and we want to be ready to move our employees around different machines according to the job we're working on."

Mellema says, "Once we get a customer we keep them. We make sure quality and service are at 100 percent all the time, so customers return again and again and also refer other customers to us. We are known as problem-solvers who can work with a client's particular needs."

A mutually beneficial relationship with Hope Network started about 40 years ago. Mellema says, "A neighbor of my Uncle Evert had a special needs child, and he asked if his son could come to the shop and sweep up and do other tasks that needed to be done. Evert agreed, and the boy, Bill, came in to do his 'job'. While Bill wasn't able to perform complex tasks, they found that he was very proficient at repetitive work. Other workers didn't like the monotony of these tasks, but Bill enjoyed doing the work and liked the sense of accomplishment it gave him. At the end of the week, Bill's father said, 'Thanks so much for letting Bill do this. I owe you.' Evert said, 'No, I owe you. Your son is a great worker.' And Bill continued to work at DECC."

That's how it started. Today, DECC employs about 40 Hope Network clients. They are supervised by Hope Network professionals who come to work with them every day.

Mellema says, "It's been a great partnership for us and a win-win situation all the way around."

DECC has been at their present location at 1266 Wallen Avenue in Grand Rapids since the beginning although they have expanded from 1,200 square feet in 1964 to their current 100,000 square feet.

Mellema says, "We emphasize our problem-solving skills, open communication and team dynamics both with our clients and our employees. Despite a downturn during the recession, we are growing strongly and steadily. We do surveys with both our clients and our employees, and they indicate a high level of satisfaction."

Service, quality, open communication: it all adds up to 50 years of progress and success with many more to come.

Jane Whittington is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Grand Rapids.

Business update publication

Publisher: Gary Kralapp

Business Development

Senior Vice President: Diane LaPrze
Senior Vice President: Jim Lroy
Circulation: Aubrey Day

Contributing Writers: Jane Whittington, Remos Lenio, Timothy J. Tornga, Ron Edinger, Forest Himmelfarb, John Tschohl,

Associate Editor: Jeremy Martin
Printing/Distribution: News Web Printing
Accountant: Michael Tawney & Company
Legal: Miller Canfield Paddock & Stone

The monthly published Business Update Inc.® all rights reserved. No portion can be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. The management of Business Update Inc.® is not responsible for the opinions expressed by its writers or editors. Nor is it responsible for any information contained on any schedule or calendar. We invite editorial suggestions, reader participation, or article submissions. We reserve all rights in communications sent to our editorial staff as unconditionally assigned for publication or any other use Business Update Inc.® in its sole discretion, shall deem appropriate. All submissions are subjected to our unrestricted right to edit and comment. For further information concerning this publication, or past issues, please write or call:

8742 Bethany Dr SW
Byron Center, MI 49315

Fax: 888-728-0045
Email: prupdate@businessupdate.com

THE DECC CO.
EST. 1964

Business update
July 2014 \$2.00

THE DECC COMPANY, INC.
Designed and Engineered Custom

1266 Wallen SW

Celebrating 50 Years

Cover Story: DECC Celebrates 50 Years

Inside Features:
Automotive Dealerships
Community College
Government Living
Construction Financing

DAVID RICHMOND
PHOTOGRAPHY