



DESPITE PANDEMIC CHALLENGES, MANUFACTURING POWERS AHEAD IN LAKE COUNTY

Lake County Partners Celebrates Huge String of Wins in First Half of Year

Lincolnshire, Illinois, July 19, 2021 — The pandemic, lockdowns, and rapid re-opening have impacted nearly all aspects of life over the past 15 months, and the ripple effect now has advanced manufacturers grappling with an increase in demand for talent, logistics, space and technology. In Lake County, businesses benefit from a built-in network of support that has enabled them to capitalize on renewed needs for packaging, PPE, testing and healthcare supplies. Existing companies are expanding, new businesses are flocking in, and there is increased optimism for revenue and hiring growth. As a result, it has been a banner year for local manufacturing.

“There is no doubt that COVID-19 has impacted business, but we have seen a flurry of development activity that bodes very well for the coming months,” said Richard Korengold, Senior Managing Director at Mesirow Financial and Chair of the Lake County Partners Board of Governors. “Lake County is at the unique intersection of life sciences and manufacturing. Our companies, fueled by local talent, have quite literally led the fight against the epidemic.”

Businesses like HM Manufacturing, which just celebrated the company’s 42nd anniversary, has seen a 27% jump in sales along with a huge increase in demand for quotes from new and existing customers. As a result, the company has hired new machinists and started to pursue interns and apprentices—a move that is paying off since there is renewed interest from students at area high schools.

Nicole Wolter, HM Manufacturing’s CEO and President and a member of the National Association of Manufacturers’ Board of Directors, shared her insights, “The manufacturing industry has been booming throughout one of the hardest years that we’ve ever experienced. Our sales have grown exponentially, and orders continue to build. While it’s an exciting time, we’re facing challenges to keep up. As a result, we’ve had to add team members and new shifts. Fortunately, Lake County has the infrastructure to develop the talent that we need to build on this momentum.”

Lake County’s strong workforce will continue to set it apart when it comes to business leaders’ decision-making. “When we looked to expand and create new jobs, we weighed options in southeastern Wisconsin, but after weighing the assets and advantages, it quickly became clear that we needed to stay in Antioch, which is why we invested in building our new headquarters” said president of Fischer Paper Products Josh Fischer. “As a 3rd generation paper products manufacturer, we have benefited from the local economy. Like so many of our manufacturing peers, we know that our future success will rely on all that Lake County has to offer.”

In Grayslake, work continues on the 600-acre Cornerstone development, which includes a 1.4 million sq. ft. Medline medical-grade distribution center that will be the largest in the world. “Lake County was an easy choice for this project because we can count on the workforce to attract business,” said Richard Gatto, Executive Vice President at the Alter Group.

Other companies recently announcing big plans for Lake County include Xttrium Labs in Lake Villa, where the company is developing an additional 80,000 sq. ft. and creating 30+ new jobs. Buffalo Grove’s Vapor Bus is relocating its lift/ramp assembly lines from California to Lake County and adding 30+ new employees and filling another 30 existing positions. Las Vegas’ fast-growing plastic molding and tooling specialist Westfall Technik just refurbished and refitted a 40,000 sq. ft. facility in Antioch with three Class-8 certified clean rooms and a Good Manufacturing Practices-certified white space to meet North American medical device manufacturing capacity needs.

Mighty Hook recently relocated its headquarters to Waukegan and hired an additional 20+ employees after the company worked closely with Lake County Partners to secure state and local incentives. Nearby, Luxor Furniture is completing its build-out of a 15,000 sq. ft. warehouse space to accommodate corporate offices and 40 new jobs. AZ Polymers also benefitted from Lake County's network of partnerships when it decided to construct its new headquarters in Gurnee and hire an additional 25+ new employees. Elsewhere, the 225-acre Bridge Point North development has shaped up in Waukegan, and speculative work is underway at the \$100 million South Lake Industrial Center in Vernon Hills and the 200,000 sq. ft. Route 60 Logistics Center in Mundelein, promising a very busy back half of the year.

About Lake County Partners

Lake County Partners is a 501(c)(3) economic development corporation that works to maintain economic vitality in Lake County, Illinois by creating and retaining quality jobs, stimulating capital investment, and pursuing economic diversity. Lake County promises businesses a highly educated workforce, beautiful and diverse recreational areas, a gateway to global markets, the right balance between work and play, top-ranking schools nationwide, world-class healthcare in your backyard, global industry leaders, and a first-rate quality of life.

Press Contact:

Barbara Prusila
Director of Marketing & Communications
Lake County Partners
773-706-0057 (cell phone)

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