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THIS MONTH

SCHWARZ: SPORTS FRANCHISES HAVE A ROLE IN SUBURBAN BUSINESS SCENE

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At one time, it appeared that Cast Aluminum Solutions’ future was on the brink. But when Mike Flint and his partners with private-equity firm LV2 Equity Partners took a close look at the Batavia company, the option to close the company fell out of consideration. “A big part of it was we just ended up falling in love with the business and the people,” said Flint, whose partners are John Pollock and J.C. Stehlik. Their love for CAS has only grown as the company that might have folded instead flourished in the years since. “The company is a lot bigger, a lot stronger than we were when we bought it 10 years ago,” Flint said. Flint and his partners added a second facility just a couple of blocks away. They roughly tripled the amount of equipment. They strengthened the test and evaluation processes. Revenues have tripled. CAS manufactures precision engineered thermal components for a wide variety of industries: semiconductor, food and beverage, medical and pharmaceutical, industrial gas and oil and gas. The company has worked with NASA on the Mars Lander. CAS makes medical device heaters involved in finding a COVID-19 cure. It makes heaters that create circuitry for smartphone microchips. “Some of our stuff is very complex,” Flint said. He’s comfortable with the technical aspects of the company. He puts his degree in electrical engineering as well as his MBA to work at CAS. “I do think that my level of engineering, understanding technical abilities certainly helps in a company like CAS that’s built on engineering,” he said. Flint is especially proud of the company’s reputation for producing quality products that don’t fail. “Quality is a huge thing for us,” Flint said. “Our products are generally expensive and they’ve got to be right. And we have extremely good quality records. You can’t have that if the people aren’t caring and doing the right thing every day.” But Flint keeps coming back to the 94 employees at Cast Aluminum Solutions as a big part of the company’s success. “It’s having great people, because obviously, we’ve got strong manufacturing. We’ve got strong engineering. We’ve got good customer service, sales support. And we’ve got good systems and processes. “All of that needs to happen to do it. So it’s really working with the team, making sure everyone knows where we’re going and how we’re trying to get there,” he said. It’s a situation where there are no problems finding employees to pitch in when needed. The COVID-19 pandemic hurt sales, Flint said, but the company bounced back well after shutting down for a week, giving the facility a deep clean and instituting proper procedures. They wear masks, added hand-washing stations and divided up break and lunch times to allow for proper social distancing. “And our workforce is great. Just the greatest amount of respect for all of our employees,” he said. “They do a great job, and if they’ve been exposed, they tell us. They just do the right thing and they’re really, really great people. I can’t say enough about them.” When Flint visits the company from his home in Michigan, he enjoys the monthly town hall-style meetings with employees. He enjoys the questions and the give-and-take, making sure everyone is on the same page and feels a sense of belonging and pride in the company. And they’ve found the Chicago suburbs a great place to find well-prepared employees. “From the first day I think we’ve always enjoyed the Batavia area, the industrial park, the people,” Flint said. “It’s been extremely positive.
2020 Entrepreneurial Excellence Awards

Innovation

Andrew Macker and Jim Iverhouse
Co-owners, Copper Fiddle Distillery

Nominated by Laurie Wilhoit

Jim Iverhouse has been in the auto repair and tire business for 40 plus years and is the owner of Lake Zurich Tire and Auto for the past 23 years. In 2012 two customers were looking for space to open a distillery. Iverhouse showed them a vacant space in an adjacent building and helped to get approvals for zoning for a distillery. In 2014 Copper Fiddle distillery opened.

Fast forward to 2019 when the original owners decided to retire. With no prospective buyers Iverhouse contacted his cousin-in-law Macker. Macker had been in the hospitality industry since age 13, the past 20 years on the management side of the business, running many establishments in the Chicago area. Today, Iverhouse and Macker are co-owners of the business.

Melissa Garcia-Villanueva
CEO and Founder, Brewpoint Coffee

Nominated by DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau

The journey began with Melissa Garcia-Villanueva uprooting her corporate life to do community work in the Philippines, while her boyfriend, Angelo, was home in the United States pushing her to dream bigger. Garcia-Villanueva decided to take his advice, and with no idea what direction to go but with all the inspiration and support, the dream of Brewpoint Coffee was created.

Five and half years later, after finding that coffee shop on Craigslist, Garcia-Villanueva is the CEO, owner and founder of Brewpoint Coffee Company, which now has three coffee shops, a wholesale roastery, a premier event space and a book called, “Starting & Running a Coffee Shop.”

Mike Flint
President, Cast Aluminum Solutions, LLC

Nominated by Shirley Mott of Batavia Chamber of Commerce

Mike Flint is an engineer, an entrepreneur and a true innovator. Originally an engineer with General Motors, Flint is now the CEO of Cast Aluminum Solutions, which makes precision-engineered thermal components for the world’s most critical needs. CAS makes heated devices for NASA’s Mars Lander. CAS makes medical device heaters that are helping find a COVID-19 cure. And CAS makes heaters that create circuitry for smartphone microchips.

Flint created CAS in 2010 when he purchased a small factory that was assigned for shutdown in Batavia. Today, CAS is a three-time Inc. 5000 Winner, profitable and successful.

CAS makes products that keep our nation safe (defense industry), keep us healthy (medical devices and pharma processing heaters) and help mankind explore the universe (space exploration). And Flint is the driving force behind the products CAS offers.