PLASTECH CORPORATION

Entrepreneurship in the Twenty-first Century

January 2024

Plastech Corporation's Rush City plant, fall 2023.

Aerial view of the Rush City complex, fall 2023.

PLASTECH CORPORATION

Still Meeting the Challenges, Still Making a Difference

January 2024

Production floor, 2020.

Contents

Our Mission

To provide best-in-class, complete project solutions for custom plastic injection-molded and assembled products at the best overall value.

Our Goal

To be the preferred injection-molding supplier and the employer of choice in our markets.

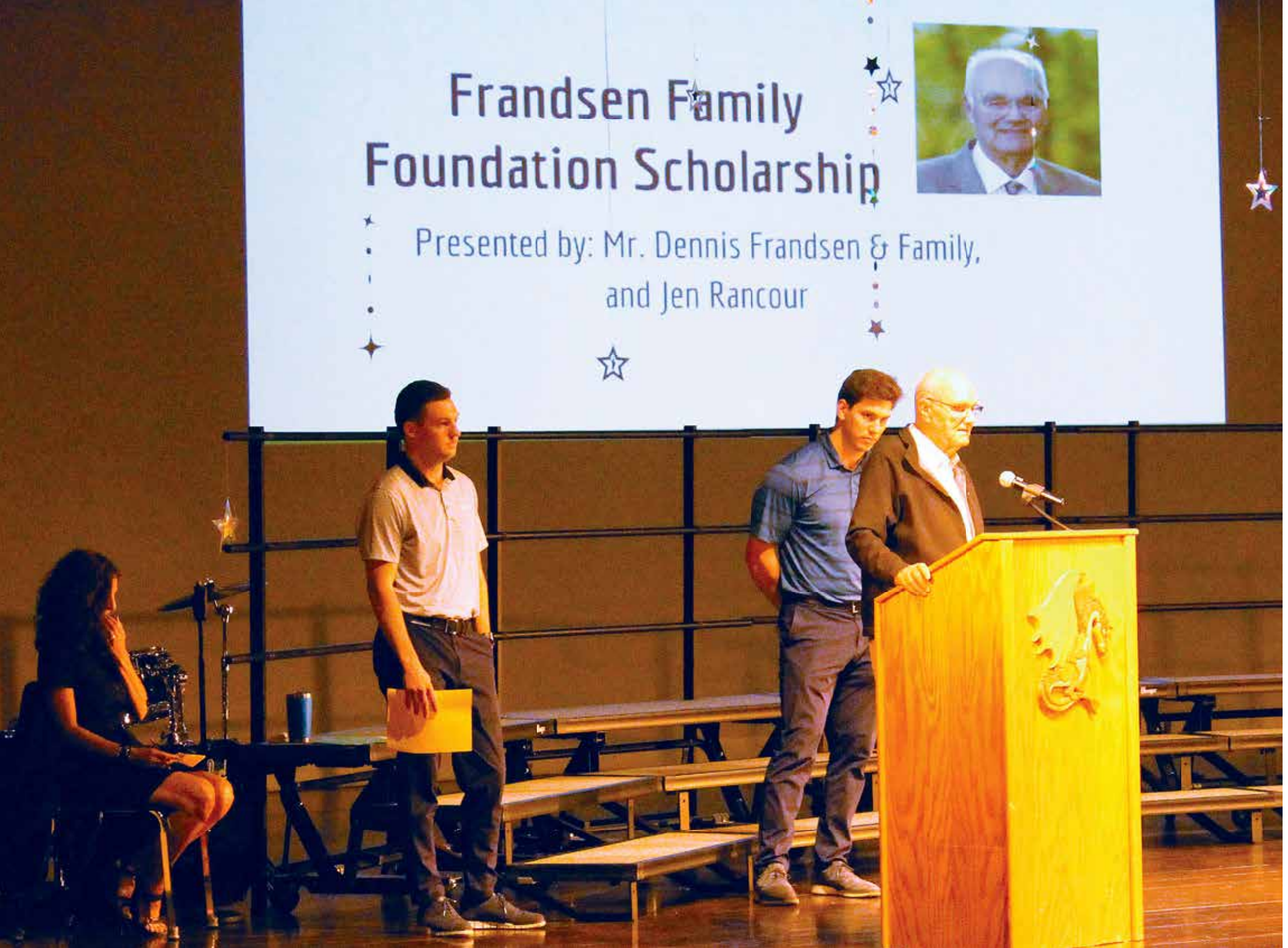
Our ROLE

- **R**espond to challenges as a team
- **O**pen, honest, and timely communication
- **L**isten to customer needs and take action
- **E**ngage, develop, and appreciate each other

Our Brand Promise

Perfect Parts, On Time, Every Time.

Left, original sculpture entitled *Confusion*, on Plastech's north lawn.



Introduction

In 2002, Plastech Corporation published the first volume of its history, entitled *PLASTECH The Spirit of Entrepreneurship,* written by longtime employee Margaret Marty. It covered the first four decades of Plastech's history, from its beginnings in Minneapolis in 1956, the move to Rush City in 1962, Dennis Frandsen's ownership beginning in 1963, and its evolution into a state-of-the-art facility.

This second volume picks up where the first one ended—with Plastech entering the twenty-first century with a well-seasoned workforce and management team and a strong community spirit. Two decades into the century and sixty-seven years after its inception, Plastech has matured into a world-class manufacturing operation providing an excellent livelihood and professional opportunities for a wide community of people.

Through the prosperity that Plastech's workers and management have created and sustained, employees and their families, customers, emergency medical patients, students, and many others throughout East Central Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin continue to benefit from the company's success and generosity.

Standing, from left: Nick Frandsen, Luca Bonvicini, and Dennis Frandsen presenting technical-college scholarships to forty-eight Pine City High School students, May 2022.

Into the 21st Century

In spite of the 2001 recession, the first year of the new millennium was a good one for Plastech. However, that success was somewhat bittersweet because the robust sales were bolstered by two tragedies—one natural and one man-made.

The first of those events occurred on the evening of June 18, 2001, when an F3 tornado with winds over 200 miles per hour tore through Siren, Wisconsin, thirty-five miles east of Plastech. Approximately 240 homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed and three people died.

One business that was decimated by the storm was the plastic injection-molding plant of Twin Cities-based North States Industries. Second-shift employees sheltered under large machines as the tornado passed. No one was hurt but production was completely halted. Plastech picked up a major part of their molding production until the Siren plant was rebuilt.

The second tragedy happened, of course, on September 11, and Plastech played a role in the cleanup that followed. Demand for face masks went through the roof as 3M pulled out all the stops to supply the firefighters of New York. Plastech employees stepped up to the plate to fill those orders, accomplishing extraordinary things in an incredibly short time.

Closer to home, at the Plastech plants in Rush City and Amery, the twenty-first century began quite the same as the previous century ended. Consumer electronics—such as Motorola and Microsoft—numbered among the

Aerial view of Rush City complex, 2001.

Plastech's Amery complex, 2002.

The North States Industries plant after the Siren tornado, 2001.

Moving in one of three sections of a new 1,500-ton press.

company's largest customers. The Amery plant featured a separate building dedicated to producing electronic parts, as well as another satellite building with a clean room for assembling electronics.

The Move Toward Bigger

Things began to change in the early years of the new millennium as rapid growth in Asian production sent some of Plastech's electronics customers overseas. The gap left by those exits began to be filled by the addition of several large-tonnage presses capable of producing larger pieces.

Getting ready for the big press.

At the turn of the century, the Rush City plant had only two presses of 1,000-ton capacity, and they were not in constant use. Just three years later, Rush City was consistently running four 1,000-ton presses and two 1,500-ton presses.

At the Amery plant, the entire electronics section was converted to a molding plant to produce buckets and feeders for Plastech's sister company Miller Manufacturing.

Millwrights from Quickway Rigging setting up the new press on its reinforced concrete floor.

The move toward bigger continued at a steady pace through the next decade, with the addition of four large-tonnage presses in 2012 alone. Some of these presses were so heavy that new, reinforced concrete flooring had to be installed to accommodate them.

The Move Toward All Electric

Along with the trend toward running more large-tonnage presses, Plastech began conversion to all-electric presses in the early 2000s. All-electric means that the moving parts of the machine are moved by electricity rather than hydraulics as the older machines were.

The move toward electric has saved the company multiple thousands of dollars in energy costs, as the all-electric machines consume about one-third the amount of electricity that the hydraulic presses do. With fewer moving parts, the all-electric presses have fewer breakdowns, are easier to maintain,

Process technician Adam Vohs setting up a brand-new, all-electric, 450-ton Toyo press in 2012.

One of the latest additions—a brand-new, all-electric press installed in 2022. Operator is Michelle Nelson.

and run cleaner and quieter than the older presses. The costs for hydraulic oil are reduced with more all-electric presses as well.

Seeking additional energy savings, in 2011 Plastech entered into a contract with East Central Energy for interruptible power. The contract provided that Plastech would cut its power consumption to at or below 1,000 kilowatts upon request from ECE during peak demand periods. This meant that, if required, there would be a partial plant shutdown at that time.

Peak months for shutdowns would be July and August, typically between 3:00 and 9:00 p.m. The contract stated that Plastech would receive a minimum of one-half hour notice before the power is interrupted, but ECE said they would try to be proactive and give as much notice as possible.

The interruptible-power contract was not fully implemented until eleven years later, when general manager Jerry Miller negotiated a new agreement with ECE. The agreement resulted in nine partial shutdowns of the plant during the summer of 2022 but ended up saving the company thousands of dollars in electricity costs throughout the year.

The transition to all-electric machines continues, with the addition of seven new presses in 2022 alone—a 1,000-ton Toyo and six Arburg machines. These machines brought the plant to about 60 percent all electric and 40 percent hydraulic. The seven new machines cost a total of about $2.5 million. The remainder of the older-style hydraulic presses will be phased out as they need replacement over time.

MINNCOR

In 2000, the Minnesota Department of Corrections opened the Rush City Correctional Facility, a high-security state prison, three miles north of Plastech. One of the features built into the new prison was a large manufacturing shop for MINNCOR Industries, a division of the DOC that provides employment, training, and income opportunities for incarcerated individuals.

The Rush City prison complex.

The CEO of MINNCOR at that time was Dan Ferrise. (He later became CEO of Frandsen subsidiary Miller Manufacturing.) As the opening of the Rush City prison approached, Ferrise sent a mailing to companies within ten miles of the facility, inviting them to make use of the prison workforce.

Plastech responded right away and Ferrise invited Plastech officials to tour the MINNCOR operation at Stillwater, Minnesota. He also took Plastech's owner, Dennis Frandsen, through the Rush City Correctional Facility before it was finished. Plastech began subcontracting for assembly work at the prison soon after it opened,

Dennis Frandsen

Dan Ferrise

A MINNCOR worker assembles a pitchfork for Miller Manufacturing.

Carl Zappa offloads a daily shipment from MINNCOR. The finished product receives its final packaging and labeling at MINNCOR and is returned to Plastech for shipment to the customer without having to be handled again.

with a starting workforce of about fifty men.

Plastech is one of about sixty Minnesota manufacturers that subcontract with MINNCOR. They pay the prevailing wage for their area and benefit from the consistent, stable workforce. The workers receive a portion of the wages after the state collects taxes, victim compensation funds, and some costs of living.

A Plastech assembly supervisor keeps an office at the prison five days a week while the MINNCOR crew is working. The office is locked but overlooks the work area. A prison officer sits on an elevated platform overlooking the crew as they work. At Rush City, the manufacturing area is shared between Plastech and in-house MINNCOR production for the state of Minnesota.

Initially Plastech ran two shifts at the prison. The original supervisors included Laurie Jorgenson, Connie Nihart, Nancy Van Dusen, and LaRayne Witte. Later supervisors included Ralph Clark, Dawn Forcier, Cindy Lofton, and Kathy Hackel.

The current MINNCOR supervisor is Kelly Sigfrid. She joined Plastech as a press operator in 2016 and quickly moved up to lead operator and then backup supervisor before being promoted to MINNCOR supervisor in 2019.

Sigfrid currently supervises up to thirty men at MINNCOR, though the number varies. They work one 7.25-hour shift Monday through Friday, assembling one or two truckloads of finished goods per day. Examples of products that are assembled at the prison include clutch covers, fuel manifolds, Indian motorcycle parts for Polaris, and incubators, heated pet bowls, pitchforks, and feeding troughs for Miller Manufacturing.

"Most of the products they assemble they have been doing forever," Sigfrid said. If a new order arrives that requires training, either Sigfrid or quality manager Ryan Hanson will get the crew started. "Most jobs are self-explanatory," she said.

Sigfrid says she has never had trouble with any of the workers. "They are the best of the best at the prison," she explained. "Plastech pays the most, and they have to behave 24/7 or they could lose their job."

Global Changes

The 911 attacks brought financial concerns across the country—but that was not the only change going on in the global economy at the turn of the century, as Asian manufacturing matured and began competing stronger than ever before in the global marketplace.

Nevertheless, Plastech sales remained stable and production was strong throughout 2002. Polaris and 3M continued as key customers. Major projects in 2003 included plastic funnels for Behrens in Winona, Minnesota, and parts for 3M overhead projectors.

Support arm for 3M overhead projector.

Behrens funnel.

However, in the face of increasing overseas competition on top of general concern about the economy, the decision was made to close the Amery plant on July 4, 2003, and bring all operations under one roof in Rush City. Though painful at the time, that decision proved to be the right one as the economic slowdown culminated in the Great Recession of 2007–09.

Allied Plastics

At the turn of the century, Plastech was operating Allied Plastics, which the company acquired in 1995, as a subsidiary in Coon Rapids, Minnesota. The primary business of Allied was point-of-purchase applications for multiple retailers; Target Stores and Kohl's were their main customers. Their primary manufacturing process was thermoforming and making signage out of plastic sheets. Allied also performed custom manufacturing for the truck aftermarket and the construction equipment market and produced such items as windshields for snowmobiles and recreational vehicles.

Because of a continuing decline in business, Allied was sold in 2006. The point-of-purchase business was sold to Immedia Retail and the thermoforming and sheet distribution portion was sold to Industrial Custom Products. Both were Minnesota companies with existing operations doing the same kind of work, so it was a compatible transaction for each.

Allied Plastics management team in 2001, from left: Jeff Kruger, Jim Gesh, Pete Paulson, and Bill Brand.

RC Company

Dennis Frandsen's sons Bob and Greg owned RC Company as a subcontractor to perform assembly functions and to market products that Plastech molded. They leased warehouse space at the Plastech plant and office space in the former Plastech building in downtown Rush City. Jim Ertz had been sales and marketing manager for both the Plastech Products Division and RC Company since 1984, in addition to running an independent assembly operation for Plastech. He developed an extensive product line of holiday lighting and other novelty items.

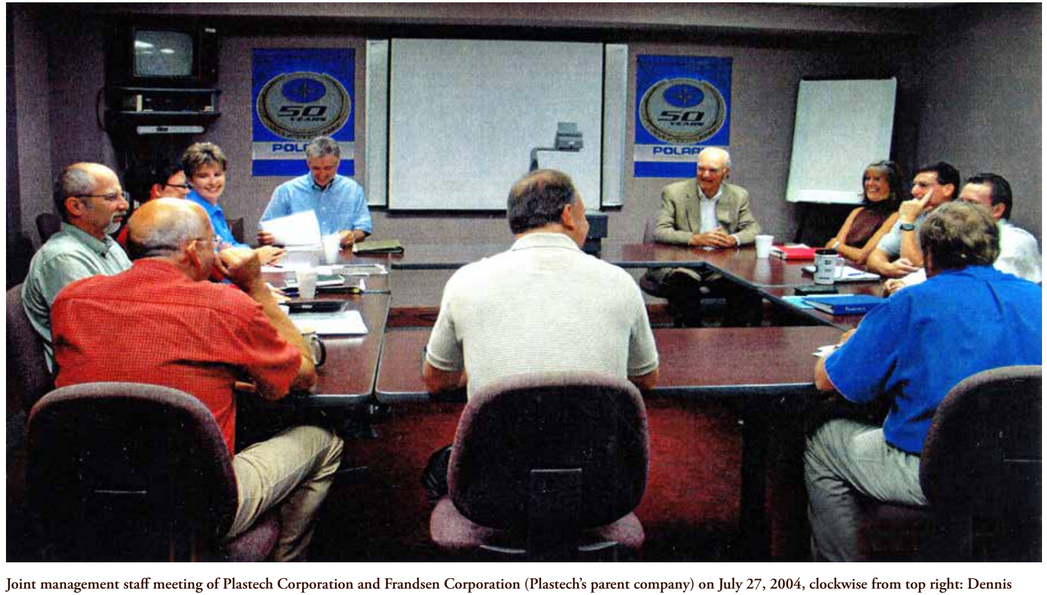
Bob Frandsen

Greg Frandsen

Jim Ertz

Plastech Corporation bought RC Company in 2003 and moved the office to the main plant, next to the assembly area in what is now the training room. Pressure from overseas competition combined with the ongoing recession prompted the decision to close the Products Division in 2006 and sell the RC Company product lines in 2008.

Jim Ertz continues his relationship with the Frandsen companies as asset manager for Frandsen Bank & Trust and vice president of real estate investments for DF & Company, an entity that manages and markets Frandsen-owned properties.



Joint management staff meeting of Plastech Corporation and Frandsen Corporation (Plastech's parent company) on July 27, 2004, clockwise from top right: Dennis Frandsen, Marcia Wegleitner, Bob Greelis, Doug Hoffbeck, Larry Nelson, Greg Frandsen, Alan Johnson, Will Moyer, Pam McClain, Kari Bauer, and Paul Pasche.

Still Meeting the Challenges

Left, tool room addition, 2016.

With seasoned leadership and no debt, Plastech was in a favorable position to weather an economic storm. But as the recession wore on, it became clear that "business as usual" was not the way to keep the company performing well going forward. The management team sat down as a group in 2009 to develop a business plan that would help the company adapt to the new financial realities.

Defining a Direction

The team first decided to simplify the business plan from some twenty pages to a one-page plan. Secondly, they developed a list of the most important things that must be done to continue the success of the company.

The process took more than six months of discussion before the group arrived at what they considered the three most important things Plastech could do as a company:

1. Serve a limited number of customers.
2. Provide exceptional performance—perfect parts, on time, every time.
3. Build only what sells.

This model kept Plastech strong and growing through the lean years, successfully navigating the economic downturn and emerging in good shape. The same principles continue to guide the company's direction today.

The second decade of the new millennium started out strong, with the first quarter of 2011 the best first quarter the company had seen in years.

In 2007, production manager Will Moyer, along with other production personnel, developed a new type of plastic material that is stronger yet lighter weight than conventional plastic. The company patented the material as Willmoy®. It is used for Polaris recreational vehicles, such as this foot well for a Polaris four-wheeler.

In addition to Miller Manufacturing, Plastech's largest customers in 2011 were Polaris, Sub-Zero, and Toro. It seemed to be feast or famine that year. Work volumes were good January through April and then became unusually slow during May.

Things turned around in June with a surge of new orders that surpassed normal output capacity. A healthy volume of Polaris ATV assembly projects and Sub-Zero refrigerator and freezer shelves and control panels contributed to an extremely busy summer.

Plastech produced approximately 300 different products for CMD Corporation in 2011 requiring molding, a huge number of purchased

> **"Seriously … just another reason why (if we had an award ceremony) Plastech would be a landslide victor for Supplier of the Year."**
>
> *— Michael Wilson, director of sales, Gulf US*

Plastech received two awards from Polaris in 2011. The Delivery Performance Award was given for Plastech's orders being delivered on schedule 99.5 percent of the time or better. The Quality Achievement Award reflected an error rate of less than 100 parts per million.

components, and assembly. Demand for 3M face masks became heavy in response to needs around the world. Several larger-than-normal Telcom orders provided molding work plus weeks of assembly work.

Lean Manufacturing

In the spring of 2011, Chuck Crone, then vice president and director of operations, attended a training event on the concept of lean manufacturing. This is a production method aimed at increasing efficiency by reducing response times and eliminating waste of time and resources. It grew out of an operational model implemented in the 1950s and '60s by the Toyota company in Japan. The training that Crone attended was given by some people who had worked for Toyota in Kentucky.

While the lean manufacturing concept is based on five principles, to start with Crone chose to focus on only three for Plastech:

1. Identify problems, fix them, and prevent them from recurring.
2. Standardize processes.
3. Get everyone to commit to the new processes.

Chuck Crone

The Kentucky instructors gave a caution about the timeline—it would take at least three to five years to see progress on the cultural shift, they said. At three years, they said, Plastech could expect to see the culture begin to shift. But Plastech employees exceeded those expectations. They embraced the concept and by 2013 it was evident that Plastech was on its way to becoming a lean manufacturing plant. Visible improvements included shadow boards for tools and stenciled lines on the production floor for locations of machines. By 2014 Plastech had grown to become one of the 100 largest injection molders in North America.

5S

A sister tenet to lean manufacturing, also developed in Japan, is the 5S concept, which involves how to organize and maintain work spaces for efficiency. This concept is based on five Japanese words that start with S:

- Sort—remove all unnecessary items from the work area.
- Set—decide on a place for everything that is needed to do the work.
- Shine—keep everything clean.
- Standardize—arrange similar work areas the same.
- Sustain—make the first four Ss the way things are done.

Plastech began implementing 5S about the same time as lean manufacturing, and later added a sixth concept—safety—to make it 6S. The main emphases are cleanliness, organization, and safety.

Scott Pechacek tooling around (no pun intended) on the brand-new floor sweeper that was purchased in 2012 as part of the 5S effort. One of the major benefits was keeping dust out of product shipping cartons.

> **"Plastech is the easiest to work with and the best supplier I have encountered in many years!"**
>
> *—James Fore, quality manager, Gulf US*

For Plastech, resin is what makes the world go 'round—nothing happens without it!

Under the direction of Crone, the company established new housekeeping and organization standards to improve Plastech's customer image and, more importantly, create a consistent discipline of safety and attention to detail. This assignment was supported by nearly every employee!

The results of their efforts were seen almost immediately, as Dennis Frandsen took a group of people through the building in the evening sometime in May 2011. He later commented that the plant was remarkably clean, well organized, and had never looked better. He never mentioned 5S or lean manufacturing to his guests, but they could see what was happening. A couple of months later a buyer for a Plastech customer visited the plant and commented on how good everything looked.

Meeting Challenges from Nature

The bad weather that affected much of the southern and eastern United States in the spring of 2011 also affected Plastech. Numerous tornadoes and storms made on-time delivery of resins a daily challenge. Most resin that Plastech purchases comes from Texas, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania. Rail cars journey north following the Mississippi River rail lines toward Minneapolis. When the river starts to rise, rail cars are diverted from that direct route to much longer routes, making delays inevitable.

Because of Plastech's long-standing relationship with resin suppliers, trucks

were dispatched to intercept the rail cars. The resin was offloaded from the rail tanks to trucks and driven directly to Plastech—but the weather once again intervened when semitrucks hauling resins from DuPont were damaged in tornadoes.

In January 2014, Miller Manufacturing acquired Allied Precision Industries (API) of Elburn, Illinois, with a product line of heated pet and livestock waterers. Prior to this acquisition, the majority of Miller products were used by consumers in the summer. Historically, distributors and retailers bought Miller products in the winter for sale at stores in the spring and summer.

Heated products changed that. They are delivered to stores in the summer for sale in late fall and winter. The addition of an entire heated product line all at once required carefully calculated logistics to be coordinated between Miller and Plastech, where much of the complicated assembly was to be done. The weather once again had its own impact on those plans.

To find space for the assembly portion of the API operation, Plastech converted 12,000 square feet in the south half of Warehouse 1. This area formerly housed Plastech subsidiary RC Company. The space was painted to brighten up the work area and new overhead lighting was installed to provide better and more cost-effective production lighting. New workstations and equipment needed to produce the API line were installed.

Assembly in the renovated space was originally scheduled to begin in late

Warehouse 1 in 2014, all cleared out and in preparation to house API assembly.

The assembly department in Warehouse 1 in 2023.

Above: API heated bucket.

Right: API assembly in progress.

April, but it had to be pushed back to June because of API's unexpected high sales volume—70 to 80 percent higher than normal—in January and February. The surge in orders, which began just days after Miller acquired the company, was caused by the unusually cold temperatures through most of the country that winter. The API plant in Illinois was far too busy filling orders to even think about moving.

Normally API's volume would have been way down in January and February, but sales to cold-hit regions spiked that year to six times the average. Normal sales volume was $7 million a year but shot up to $11 million in 2014. "There was so much demand that retailers had to split their orders between API and their competitor Farm Innovators because neither company could provide enough product," Dan Ferrise commented.

Production had to keep going in Illinois through the spring because Miller needed a cushion of stock, and they were anticipating 30 percent higher sales volume that fall because retail shelves were empty after the cold winter.

The move to Minnesota happened gradually over a three-month period. One API person from Illinois came to Rush City on a six-month contract to train the team on how to assemble the products. Two API employees from Illinois moved to Glencoe, Minnesota, to work in operations at Miller Manufacturing. Plastech produced complete assemblies of all API items that had injection-molded parts until the entire API production line was moved to the Miller plant in Glencoe in 2023.

4DX

Many management challenges were met in 2015. The leadership team revised the business plan to formalize cost-saving initiatives, efficiency, and quality improvements. As part of this effort, the company introduced new work methods called the Four Disciplines of Execution, or 4DX.

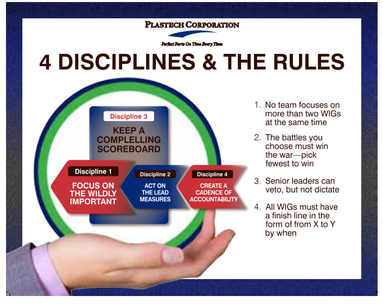
Miller Manufacturing had been using 4DX for several years, with proven results every year. The 4DX method employs a competitive team approach based on achieving set goals called Wildly Important Goals, or WIGs.

APQP

A further innovation in 2015 was the establishment of a new project-management system called Advanced Product Quality Planning, or APQP. Many OEM manufacturers use APQP to assure quality and performance through targeted planning.

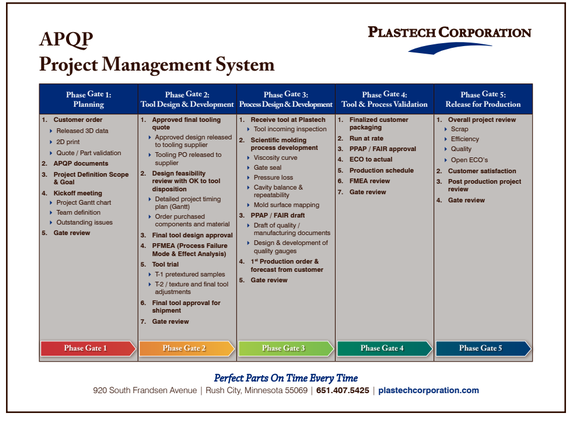
Ford Motor Company published the first advanced-planning handbook in the early 1980s to help their suppliers develop quality controls for new products. With lessons learned from Ford, the North American Automotive OEMs created the APQP process in 1994 and updated it in 2008.

Jerry Miller, engineering manager at the time, spearheaded the adaptation of APQP specifically for Plastech. It identifies five phases of manufacturing, from planning through tool design, scheduling, and production.



Left: one of a series of posters explaining the 4DX method.

Below: PowerPoint slide depicting Plastech's version of APQP.



"The move away from stand-alone fax machines, copiers, and printers has eliminated a lot of work for the IT department."

—Kevin Engstrom

Meeting Challenges with Technology

The start of the twenty-first century in 2001 was somewhat eclipsed by the Y2K problem that consumed the attention of the tech community for a good part of 1999. The Plastech IT team of Al Stender, Tom Gasperlin, and Kevin Engstrom met that challenge handily. They successfully modified the company's enterprise resource planning (ERP) software—which at that time was Business Planning and Control System (BPCS or BeePicks for short)—to accommodate the turn of the century. Thanks to their preemptive work, the company moved into the new millennium without a glitch.

Plastech had installed its first computer in 1980 and computer-aided design (CAD) shortly afterward, but those technologies really came of age in the early 2000s. Engstrom and Gasperlin had integral roles in the migration of Plastech's operations into today's digital environment.

Gasperlin started working for Plastech in 1974 as a part-time, entry-level press operator. He left the company a year later, but then returned in 1977 as a full-time press operator. He subsequently worked in quality, assembly, and warehouse before accepting a backup control position in the early '90s.

Tom Gasperlin

Sometime after the turn of the century, plant manager Dick Halbmaier urged Gasperlin to take computer classes so he could help set up the new Hunkar software system in the plant. The software had been purchased some years earlier but had never been installed. Gasperlin attended Anoka-Ramsey Community College and later attended Hunkar training in Ohio.

Hunkar was the first press-monitoring system to capture pressures, screw position, and other data as the presses run. Gasperlin worked with IT technician Chuck Lind to get Hunkar installed at the Plastech plants in Rush City, Amery, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. He created a Hunkar training manual and trained the other control personnel in Hunkar.

Gasperlin then moved into IT as a help-desk person. In addition to Plastech, he serviced Frandsen banks and other Frandsen properties. Other members of the IT department at that time included Dennis Dahlblom and Wade Dupey.

Gasperlin subsequently moved into process control, where he trained control personnel. He retired in 2022 after forty-five years with the company.

Kevin Engstrom

Engstrom joined Plastech in 1989 as a computer programmer. When Stender retired in March 2000, Engstrom was named director of IT/IS, a position he holds today.

Engstrom oversaw the implementation of bar coding at Plastech in 2004. The warehouse department was the first to implement it, followed by production. A software system called Infoscan was installed to provide real-time shop floor and warehouse data collection with the barcodes. Later that year the software provider quit supporting Infoscan so Engstrom wrote his own code to support the barcode system. He was able to successfully integrate it into the BPCS software.

Engstrom was named director of IT for all Frandsen entities in 2005 and moved his office to the Frandsen Technology Center in Arden Hills, Minnesota. He returned to Rush City in 2013 to oversee the retirement of BPCS, which had been in place for nearly twenty years and was no longer going to be supported by the manufacturer.

Knowing this was going to happen, two years earlier Plastech had made the decision to convert their ERP to a platform called M3, which had been used at Miller Manufacturing since 2009. Plastech employees completed many hours of training for M3 for well over a year—but the results were not satisfactory.

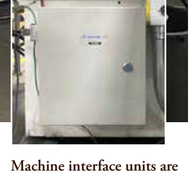
Dennis Frandsen spoke with employees who voiced their frustration with M3, and in late 2012 he reached out to colleagues at a few other manufacturing companies regarding their ERP systems. One of the companies was Steinwall, a custom injection molder in the Twin Cities with capabilities similar to Plastech. They installed IQMS manufacturing ERP software in their factory in 2009 and were very happy with its performance.

Today's barcodes can be scanned from as far as twenty-five feet away.

"Thank you for hosting our visit yesterday at your Rush City facility. You have a fantastic operation and I was very impressed with your use of IQMS. … As we seek partners in lean manufacturing, companies like yourself are considered high-value supply partners. We look forward to working closely with your team on the new business that is coming your way."

—Jenny Berns, supply chain supervisor, Renewal by Andersen

Blue cabinets at every press house a computer running IQMS ShopData that the operator uses to page for assistance and report rejects.



Machine interface units are in a gray box at each press.

IQMS

As a result of these conversations, Frandsen made the decision to abandon implementation of M3 and instead convert to IQMS, which could be tailored for plastic injection molding.

IQMS provides production monitoring, quality control, supply chain management, and customer relationship management, all in real time.

IQMS training session in 2013, from left: Beth Tatur, Sarah Chilton, Mary Carlson, Irene Moyer, Loren Olson, and Brenda Wiener Salveson.

IQMS implementation got underway in April 2013 and went live in October, replacing both BPCS and the older Elke asset-maintenance system which had been incorporated into BPCS.

Converting to IQMS was a huge change for nearly every Plastech employee. The entire conversion took nearly two years, with the final module—process monitoring at the presses—up and running in the third quarter of 2015.

The company equipped all forty-four presses with IQMS RealTime process monitoring—a significant investment in hardware and software that replaced the older Mattec system that controled the presses.

Machine interface units were installed at every press to monitor mold performance, capture cycles, calculate positions of screws and barrels, measure injection pressure, and report rejects. This data can be read either at the presses or from remote workstations.

More gains have been made by using the "runs best" feature in the IQMS software. This identifies which combinations of job, machine, and tool produce the highest quality and most efficient production.

Other improvements brought by IQMS include improved inventory control processes, streamlined purchasing and production scheduling, and direct integration with the engineering quoting tool.

Today, finished goods inventory is automatically updated to the ERP system and raw material inventory consumption is tracked and validated against physical inventory counts. Press and tooling maintenance schedules now are based upon actual run times and cycle counts as opposed to arbitrary standard day counts.

Timely upgrades have been a key to the success of IQMS for Plastech. A major upgrade was completed in 2016 and another in 2023.

The engineering department installed an interactive whiteboard in 2013. The whiteboard can be connected to a computer to display images and data which the operator can mark up and highlight for demonstrations and conferencing.

“What was unique about this is that the team that identified the curriculum also developed the curriculum and the process for monitoring, tracking, and ensuring continuous updating. The people who actually do the job were the ones who developed and built this.”

—Jerry Miller

Meeting Challenges with Efficiency

With eight percent of production not passing examination and having to be scrapped, scrap reduction was identified as a critical need in 2016. The executive team set a goal to reduce the scrap rate in half over two years.

The first year focused on getting various teams established, designing training and curriculum, identifying what was needed for real-time monitoring, and getting those items built and implemented.

Executive leadership and management stepped aside and staff-level employees made up the teams. With a little guidance from management, these employees led the projects and initiatives.

When asked to identify the battles they wanted to work on, the team decided to work on technical staff training and use of key performance indicators (KPIs). Providing trainees with the tools, support, and structure to succeed not only helped in scrap reduction, but it also helped the company support new employees.

As part of the efficiency effort, Jerry Miller and Doug Hoffbeck used resources from the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP). This University of Minnesota program provides technical assistance for businesses in preventing pollution at the source, optimizing use of resources, and reducing energy use and costs.

Emily Daniel from MnTAP with the Watt Watcher™ granulator controller installed at Plastech in 2016.

MnTAP engineers visited the Plastech plant and made recommendations regarding waste reduction and energy efficiency. They also assessed assembly operations and made recommendations for greater efficiency there.

One of MnTAP’s most helpful recommendations was the purchase of a granulator controller, which allows the granulator to run only when necessary. A photoelectric eye automatically starts the motor when the granulator is fed and a vibration detector shuts it off when the cutting chamber empties. The elimination of costly idling not only saves Plastech $40,000 per year in energy costs, but also increases the life of blades and other parts, extends service intervals, and reduces noise, heat, and dirt.

Plastech’s endless pursuit of efficiency continued with the installation of a sophisticated, new Engel press and robot dedicated to molding clear polycarbonate for applications in the appliance industry. By focusing on one type of resin, the system had quick changeover times and lower scrap, leading to lower costs for customers. Initial parts that ran on the new Engel were for Sub-Zero. While today the press runs other materials, it remains the go-to press for clear poly products.

The 500-ton Engel is a servo-controlled hydraulic machine. During the cooling phase of the molding cycle the press only uses energy in the heater bands and for controller voltage. Running alongside it is an Engel Viper 40 linear robot that is completely integrated with the press’s controller.

“The machines we’ve used in the past allowed us to provide tight-tolerance technical parts, but for the future, we are looking for technically advanced equipment that provides higher precision, repeatability, and reliability, as well as processing and economic efficiencies,” Jerry Miller explained.

In a subsequent phase of the scrap-reduction initiative, the team identified the key parameters of each molding machine to assure quality product was being made, and they purchased the equipment needed and put it in place on each machine. Two items were crucial to scrap reduction—the engineering processes for the molds and reject reporting.

For every molded part that comes out, the KPIs of the press are monitored through IQMS. If a machine runs outside the control limits, the technical

The 500-ton Engel, with its integrated linear robot, is one of the newer, high-efficiency molding machines.

staff is alerted so they can perform an analysis and investigate what changed in the process before making any modifications to the press.

In the past when a job was completed, a report would show how much scrap was made. Staff realized at the end of the run that mistakes were made, but with the new system, they can see performance as it happens. Every two hours each press reports scrap greater than standard and sends it to the managers and technical staff so it can be addressed immediately.

When a machine runs outside set controls, staff go to the machine and complete a corrective action response on the nature of the problem, and then they make the correction. A cross-functional team of members from various departments—engineering, purchasing, quality, and production—review the corrective action responses every twenty-four hours.

Gradually the rejects began to decrease and plateaued at about four percent—half of what it had been. Getting real-time lead scrap measure from the machines and operators to the technical staff quickly instead of waiting until the next run was vital to success.

By 2017 Plastech was running forty-four presses, from 30 to 1,500 tons. Seven in-house, full-time journeyman toolmakers were maintaining and repairing 800 active molds, with 450 mold changes occurring per month. On the April 2017 supplier performance report card from Toro, Plastech received an overall score of 99 percent. The scorecard includes scores for quality, delivery, and compliance.

Necessity Yields Inventions

It is sometimes necessary to remove the reciprocating screw from an injection-molding press during a job run. The screw is the auger that drives the resin pellets from the hopper into the heated barrel and creates the pressure to force the melted plastic into the mold.

Removing and transporting a piece of steel that weighs up to a thousand pounds and is heated to 500 degrees can be tricky! In the past, sheer manpower was needed to pull the screw, lift it by hand, and manually load it onto a forklift. Maintenance personnel John (Jack) Houle and Dan Siefert met that challenge in 2002 when they designed a custom-made screw puller, which Siefert fabricated in the Plastech tool shop. This critical piece of equipment is still in use today.

John Houle

The screw puller allows technicians to quickly remove a screw from a hot press, sliding it onto a custom-built portable cradle. After a screw is pulled, the tip section has to be separated from the screw. In the past, this again required blunt force to knock it off with sledgehammers.

In 2008, Paul Johnson and Marvin Monster designed a custom screw tip remover, which Johnson fabricated. It was challenging to use at first because it required a forklift and a boom, so in 2010 Johnson and Monster had a local welder, Jeremy Blazek, build a hoist for it.

Maintenance technicians Robert Palmer (left) and Keith Voigt pulling a screw from a hot press and loading it onto the transportable cradle.

A large vice attaches to the screw tip and is turned by a hydraulic hoist to remove the tip from the screw.

Fifty Years of Expansion

1973 28,800 square feet of molding production floor plus 7,200 square feet on second level for a total of 36,000 square feet in the original building

1974 21,600 square feet molding production space added

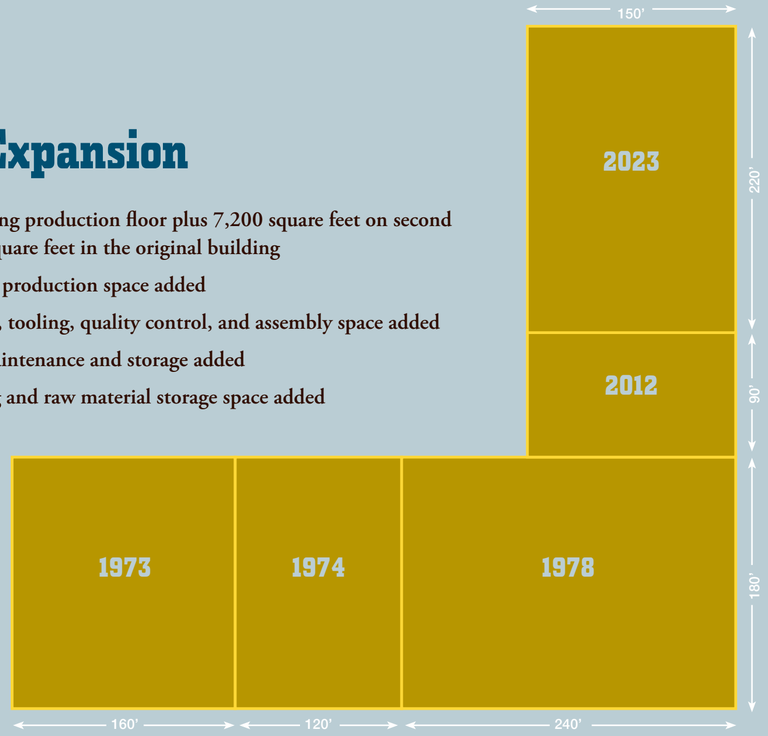
1978 43,200 square feet molding, tooling, quality control, and assembly space added

2012 13,500 square feet mold maintenance and storage added

2023 33,000 square feet receiving and raw material storage space added

Currently the plant footprint is approximately 140,000 square feet, or over three acres under one roof.

Dimensions are approximate.



Meeting Challenges with Space

After the east addition in 1978, Plastech added no square footage to the main plant for the next thirty-four years—yet the press fleet and sales volume grew significantly during those three-plus decades. The company's organic growth without expanding the physical footprint necessitated constant creativity in the use of space, culminating in a decade of nearly continuous renovation. Apart from the building additions, the interior renovation work was accomplished for the most part by the Plastech facilities team of Dan Siefert and Jeff Gelking.

Starting in 2010, the first project they tackled was revamping the shipping and receiving office to accommodate more personnel. That was followed by removal of the racquetball court—which was still in use by employees, but the need for space preempted that popular amenity. A training room was added in that space in 2011. Renovations to accommodate additional presses were completed on the production floor over the next five years.

Late in the spring of 2012, Plastech broke ground on a 13,000-square-foot addition to the tool room. The addition provided storage space for large-tonnage molds, along with a crane for moving the super-size molds. Construction was completed by the end of the year.

Next, the need for more office space necessitated major remodeling of both upper and lower office areas. The goal of the remodel was to improve

Exterior of the new addition, November 2012.

Interior of the new tool storage room with the overhead crane for moving large molds, December 2012.

Dave Brentz, former vice president of sales and marketing, presents Plastech to potential customers in the newly updated lower-level conference room in February 2018. Other Plastech personnel seated include Jerry Miller (second from left), Doug Hoffbeck (behind monitor), and Alben Mokrzycki (center right).

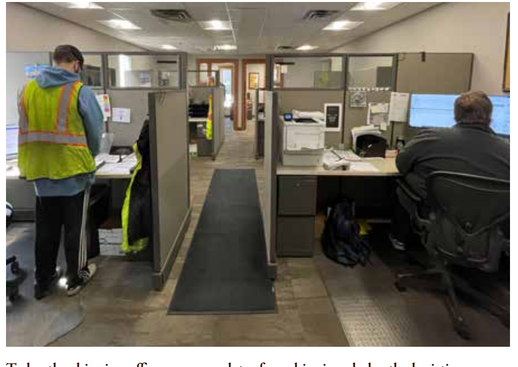
effectiveness and teamwork by locating personnel of the same department in the same area and in close proximity to other departments they frequently work with. The entire project took nearly two years to complete. Again, the majority of the work was accomplished by Siefert and Gelking, with oversight from Frandsen Corporation's real estate manager, Jim Ertz.

The team started in February 2016 by removing the fitness center—a definite loss to employees, but the space was much needed for the growing staff. The main-level conference room was enlarged into the former fitness area and was updated with a kitchenette. A second, smaller conference room was added, plus a new reception desk, restrooms, and a second kitchen counter area in the main hallway. The training room (former racquetball court) was outfitted for the accounting department, who moved from their home on the second level into the renovated space in the summer of 2016.

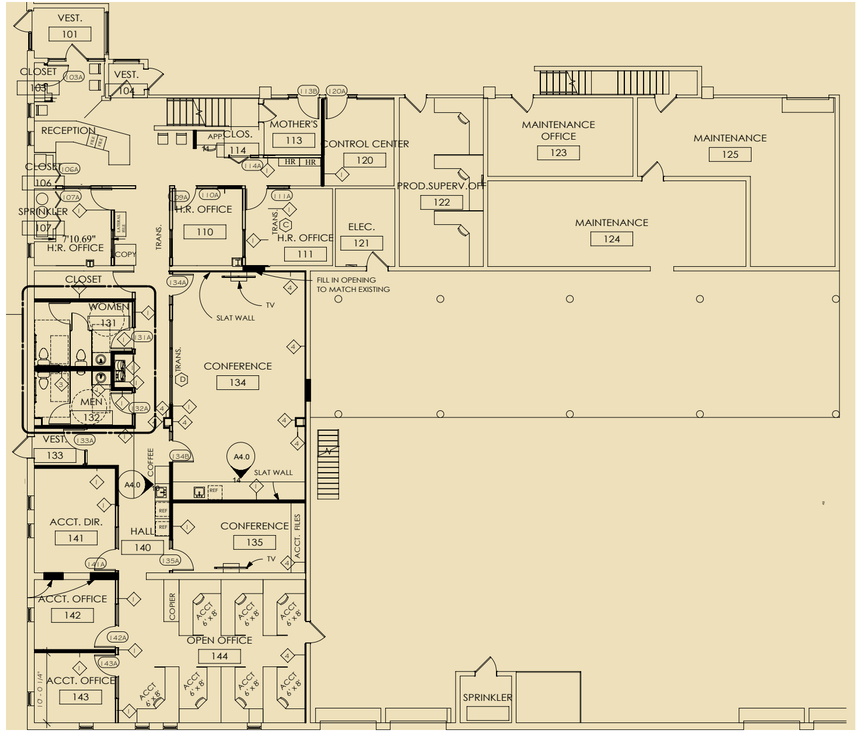
The team next turned their attention to the upper level. Cubicles were added to the main office area and the kitchen and restrooms were updated. The entire engineering department was remodeled with new offices and a conference room featuring a glass wall overlooking the plant.

By the time the engineering department upgrade was completed, both the shipping and accounting departments were already outgrowing the spaces that had been updated just a few years prior. The shipping and receiving office was originally designed for two people, but was bursting at the seams with five employees. Logistics coordinator Christine Hines recalled that she and one of the shipping clerks were seated back to back at desks. "Our chairs would literally hit each other if we moved," she said.

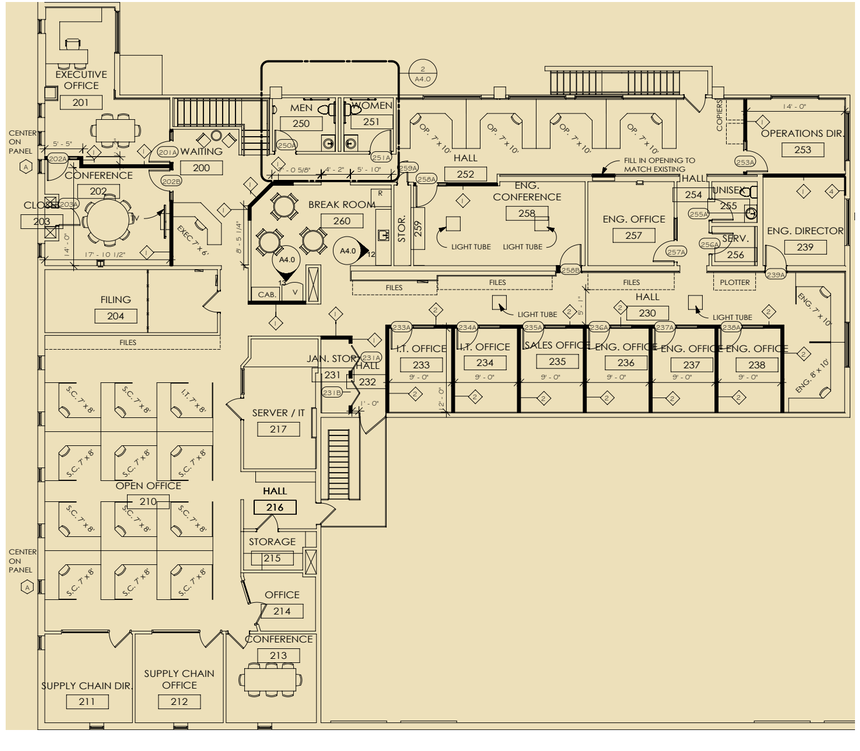
A plan was formulated to move the accounting department back upstairs and move the shipping office into the space on the lower level where accounting had been. These moves took place in the spring of 2020 during the time when many office employees were working from home due to the pandemic.



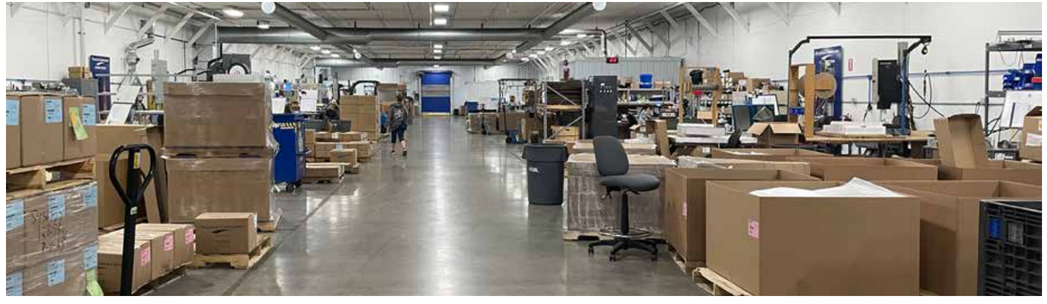
Today the shipping office accommodates four shipping clerks, the logistics coordinator, and the warehouse manager.



Layout of the lower-level office area as remodeled in 2017.



Layout of the upper-level office area as remodeled in 2017.



The assembly department in Warehouse 1, 2023.

Training coordinator Jamie Eckert in the new training room, 2021.

To create desperately needed molding space, in 2020 the entire assembly operation was moved to Warehouse 1, which had been dedicated to API assembly. Renovation began in the new assembly area in the spring and the department moved into the space later that year.

To make room for more offices, the training room was moved to the former assembly office in the northeast corner of the main plant. About the same time, renovations were completed in the maintenance office and the production supervisor's office on the south side of the production floor.

Warehouse Space

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Plastech had ten warehouses. Warehouses 1 through 7 are located in close proximity on the south side of the plant. Warehouses 10 and 11 are across the street, housing the workshop of Plastech's facilities maintenance team. (There are no warehouses dubbed 8 and 9—they are locations within the plant so named for tracking purposes.)

Anticipating future expansion, Plastech bought the former Rush City water tower property, located adjacent to Warehouses 10 and 11, in 2010. This parcel is currently leased to Dennis Kirk.

In 2011, the company purchased the former United Sprinkler building just south of the main warehouses. It was remodeled as Warehouse 12 and adapted into a shipping office and storage for Polaris. Subsequently another warehouse—dubbed Warehouse 13–14—was built next to Warehouse 12, also to house and ship Polaris items. There are four loading docks on the south end of those two buildings, all dedicated to Polaris parts.

In 2014, Plastech purchased the former Lofgren Trucking complex of three buildings. These buildings are currently leased out to other businesses.

In the fall of 2022, Plastech broke ground on a 33,000-square-foot addition to the northeast end of the plant. Construction continued through the winter, with completion in June 2023. The addition features four receiving docks and houses raw materials and packaging in high-volume pushback racking. The new section provides greater efficiency of moving materials through the plant. Raw materials arrive and are stored on the north end of the plant, converted into finished goods in the central section, and shipped out or warehoused on the south end.

The total investment for the building addition and racking was about $4.5 million, built by Derrick Building Solutions of New Richmond, Wisconsin.

Workers attach cables to a concrete wall section to be hoisted into place for Plastech's new addition on December 19, 2022. The temperature was below zero at the time and didn't get above zero all day.

The first truck to unload at the new receiving docks, June 23, 2023.

Human resources manager Kari Bauer hosting the anniversary awards party in December 2006.

Meeting Challenges with Staffing

Keeping a large fleet of presses running twenty-four hours a day year-round is always challenging, but pressures from external factors surged in the wake of the Great Recession. As the economy heated up, so did competition for workers. Plastech's human resources team—manager Kari Bauer and generalist Bonnie Stein—worked tirelessly to keep production staffed. Sign-on bonuses and job fairs became the norm.

By 2014, every department was experiencing change or growth. The need for workers brought many challenges for the HR department—the biggest coming in June when Plastech began producing product for API. HR personnel were tasked with quickly hiring over sixty new employees to keep up with demand.

Plastech regularly uses temporary employees to fill positions in assembly, but that year they turned to temp agencies for help hiring employees for molding, warehouse, tool room, and the HR departments as well. At the close of 2014, the head count looked like this:

- 317 full-time Plastech employees
- 50 part-time Plastech employees
- 100 full-time temporary employees
- 44 part-time temporary employees
- 511 employees grand total

In 2015, Plastech implemented a six-and-three schedule for production workers, comprised of A shift 7:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m., B shift 3:00 p.m.–11:30 p.m., and C shift 11:00 p.m.–7:30 a.m. The move to a six-and-three schedule helped alleviate staffing shortages by eliminating the need for weekend-only shifts. Employees work regular shifts for six days, then are off for the next three days. Besides providing a welcome three-day break each week, the schedule gives all workers the opportunity to receive overtime pay because all workers take a turn at working a Saturday and Sunday in their rotation.

The pandemic of 2020 exacerbated staffing shortages as workers nationwide received stimulus payments in lieu of going to work. In the summer of 2022, Dennis Frandsen heard of a service offered by Home and Away Ministries of Luck, Wisconsin. This nonprofit is part of the Ruby's Pantry organization. Frandsen learned that, in addition to other philanthropic efforts, Home and Away Ministries houses documented workers from Latin America who work at companies in the surrounding area.

In response to ongoing labor shortages, Plastech hired approximately thirty-five legally documented workers from Latin America in the fall of 2022. They all initially resided at the Home and Away Ministries Center in Luck. In 2023, Plastech purchased three private homes in Rush City, where twelve immigrant workers now reside. Frandsen also purchased the former Rush City Hospital and Clinic, which was renovated to house additional workers.

The former Rush City Hospital and Clinic, in the process of renovation to house Plastech production employees who are documented immigrant workers.

Sally Gibbs

Most of the immigrant workers speak only Spanish and do not have their own vehicles. Plastech provides a van to transport the workers to and from the plant for their shifts. A full-time interpreter, Sally Gibbs, assists the workers in doing their job and becoming acclimated to the community.

Frandsen explained that the immigrant workers are not taking any jobs away from local people. "I have invited them to work at Plastech because there is a huge shortage of entry-level factory workers across the entire country. If there was a large enough employee pool from our area, I would not seek outside workers, but unfortunately that has not been the case for several years," he explained.

Meeting the Challenges

Lakeland Tool

Frandsen Corporation acquired Lakeland Tool & Engineering in Anoka, Minnesota, on April 1, 2019—forty-six years to the day after Don Gross and a partner founded the company. Dennis Frandsen had been acquainted with Gross for many years. Lakeland had approximately 150 employees in two plants: a 187,000-square-foot factory in Anoka and a 50,000-square-foot facility in Frederic, Wisconsin.

Derek Gross

Dave Dickirson

Although Lakeland was a smaller company than Plastech, they had similar capabilities and served similar markets. Frandsen Corporation continued to operate Lakeland as a subsidiary for the next four years, with Derek Gross, son of founder Don Gross, as operations manager. He was succeeded by Dave Dickirson, who had been operations manager at Plastech in Rush City since 2017. In January 2020 the name of Lakeland Tool was changed to Plastech Tool & Engineering.

Early on, the Lakeland plant began to take over the molding work for Miller Manufacturing. By late 2020, Lakeland's entire press fleet was dedicated to Miller, which prompted the company to merge the Anoka plant into Miller as a satellite plant. In January 2023, the decision was made to close the Anoka plant and merge its operations into Rush City. In February the company announced the closing of the Anoka plant. All workers in good standing at the Anoka plant were offered comparable jobs at Rush City.

"Our company is growing and we are concentrating on expanding operations at our main plant in Rush City," said general manager Jerry Miller. Plastech was in the process of building the addition onto the Rush City facility at the time and had recently purchased seven high-tech molding machines—for a total investment of approximately $7 million in one year at the Rush City location.

Another primary reason for closing the Anoka plant was for better support of Lakeland's customers. The Rush City facility features better equipment, technology, and quality control than what the company could accomplish at Anoka. Lakeland customers that have benefited from this transition include Cummins, Manitowoc Ice, T.RAD, Welbilt, and several others.

The company's ongoing commitment to energy efficiency was another factor in the decision to close the Anoka facility. "We felt that we can make better use of resources, manpower, and technology by bringing all our operations under one roof," Miller said. "The goal is to reduce our energy footprint. The new machines bring our Rush City plant to slightly over half now being all electric. We would not be able to duplicate that efficiency at Anoka."

Frederic

With Miller Manufacturing sales topping $10 million per month, Plastech began preparations in mid-2023 to start molding at the Frederic location. This building was purchased as part of Lakeland Tool & Engineering. Plastech initially used it for storage and later leased it out for a short time.

Two resin silos from the Anoka plant were moved to Frederic and the company purchased six new injection molding presses, all in the summer of 2023. In addition to production space, the company built housing for workers in the upper level. Operations started there in late 2023 running one shift per day, with second and third shifts added as production ramped up. Currently the Frederic plant is dedicated to molding products for Miller Manufacturing.

Aerial view of the Frederic plant.

Making It Happen

From its roots as a struggling start-up, to its current status as a world-class manufacturer serving Fortune 500 companies, Plastech Corporation's success—hands down—has been due to talented, dedicated employees. They are the heart and soul of Plastech and the backbone of all its achievements.

One of the key elements in any workforce is longevity, and Plastech has been fortunate to maintain a well-seasoned staff at all levels, from leadership to production personnel. Currently nearly a fourth of the Plastech workforce have been with the company for ten years or more.

In addition to CEO Dennis Frandsen, who joined Plastech in 1962 and continues to lead it today, five employees who started in the 1960s continued their careers into the twenty-first century. This elite group included Gary Miller (1965–2002), Bob Oscarson (1965–2007), Eldon Olson (1967–2013), Lonnie Kruse (1969–2005), and Ray Ordner (1969–2006).

Bob Oscarson, Gary Miller, Eldon Olson, Dennis Frandsen, and Bob Bullard at Olson's retirement in 2013.

Opposite, some attendees at the Plastech holiday party in December 2022, from left:
Eldon Olson, retired as tool room supervisor after forty-seven years in 2013.
Bart Mevissen, current tool room supervisor, forty-six years with Plastech.
Loren Olson, retired as master scheduler after forty-seven years in 2020.
Tom Gasperlin, retired as control manager after forty-five years in 2022.
Alan Johnson, retired as senior account manager after forty-nine years in 2022.
John Sickler, retired as maintenance technician after forty-six years in 2023.
Nancy Gilliland, current maintenance technician, forty-five years with Plastech.
Brad Carlbom, retired as sales engineer after forty-six years in 2022.
Kenny Steltz, current mold technician, forty-five years with Plastech.
Susie Williams, current corporate payroll administrator, forty-eight years with Plastech.
Dale Anderson, current estimator, forty-three years with Plastech.
Marcia Wegleitner, retired as corporate controller after thirty-seven years in 2013.
Dennis Frandsen, CEO, sixty-one years with Plastech.
Joe Cook, retired as warehouser after forty-six years with Plastech.
Mary Carlson, current cost accountant, forty-two years with Plastech.
LaRayne Witte, current assembly supervisor, forty-four years with Plastech.
Jeri Lindgren, retired as director of accounting after forty-two years in 2021.

Management

Plastech started the twenty-first century with a management team consisting of Will Moyer, production; Bob Greelis, purchasing and control; Doug Hoffbeck, engineering; Bob Oscarson, assembly; and Kari Bauer, human resources.

Jerry Miller overlooking the production floor, 2023.

Will Moyer

Bob Greelis

Doug Hoffbeck

John Furlano

In 2010, Chuck Crone was appointed vice president of operations, a role he held until March 2014. "Chuck provided Plastech with unparalleled leadership during the four years he was with the company," Dennis Frandsen said. During Crone's tenure the company saw significant growth and improvement in operational efficiencies.

Crone was succeeded by John Furlano as director of manufacturing for the next two years.

In 2016, Jerry Miller was named director of operations. He joined Plastech in 1989 as a press operator and worked his way up through many roles—material handler, then setup and process technician, followed by master molder, project engineer, and director of engineering.

Dave Dickirson became general manager in 2017. When he became manager of the Anoka plant in 2019, Jerry Miller was named general manager of Plastech and continues in that role today.

Making It Happen

The Next Generation

In 2019, after nearly six decades as the head of Plastech, Dennis Frandsen took a major step in preserving the continuity of the company. He invited his three grandsons—each of whom had worked for Frandsen companies as college interns—to join the family of companies and learn the various businesses from the ground up.

Alexander Knox spent his college summers as a credit analyst intern for Frandsen Financial Corporation in Arden Hills. He graduated in 2019 and then joined Miller Manufacturing full time as associate buyer/planner. In 2020 Alex transferred to Plastech, where he filled the roles of mold setter, master scheduler, and later project manager.

In 2021 Alex transferred to the Anoka plant, first as assembly and materials manager and then as operations manager. When that plant closed in 2023, Alex transferred to Miller Manufacturing in Glencoe, where he continues as the distribution center manager.

Luca Bonvicini worked a couple of summers as a marketing intern for Plastech and Miller Manufacturing while in college. Part of his intern experience was traveling to Asia with Miller staff, using his Chinese language skills to translate.

After graduation from college in 2019, Luca joined Plastech full time, first as sales manager at the newly acquired Anoka location. He transferred to Plastech in Rush City in the role of master scheduler in 2020 before becoming manager of purchasing and planning. In the summer of 2023, Luca made the decision to return to his home state of California to pursue further business opportunities there.

From left: Nick Frandsen, Alexander Knox, Dennis Frandsen, Luca Bonvicini

Nick Frandsen has been working for the family companies since high school, starting out on the production floor at Plastech's sister company Industrial Netting. He later spent his college summers as a bank teller at

> **"I want to thank you for an excellent 2016 from you and your team. I appreciate the hard work everyone has put in making sure everything flows smoothly. Plastech is by far the best to work with."**
>
> *—Eric Hellner, parts, garments and accessories analyst, Polaris Industries*

Frandsen Bank & Trust in Forest Lake, Minnesota, and as a credit analyst for Frandsen Financial Corporation in Arden Hills.

After graduation, Nick worked five years in sales positions for two large publicly traded companies before returning to Frandsen Corporation in 2019. Since then, he has worked as a sales account manager.

Sales and Marketing

Ray Ordner

Ray Ordner joined Plastech in 1969 as a sales account manager handling the 3M account. He was the sales manager for that account for thirty-seven years until his retirement in 2006. He handled several other accounts concurrently, including Polaris at one point.

Alan Johnson

Alan "AJ" Johnson joined the sales department in 2014. He brought a great deal of experience working with customers to this role and specifically with Sub-Zero. He started as a press operator at Plastech in 1973, the day after graduation from Rush City High School. He held many diverse positions, growing with the company over five decades of employment.

AJ was the processing manager at Amery during all its years of operation. When that plant closed in 2003, he returned to Rush City as a project engineer and later senior account manager, retiring in 2022 after forty-nine years with Plastech. That fall he was elected mayor of Rush City.

Paul Pasche

Paul Pasche, who had been with Plastech in several different roles since 1987, became the molding and assembly manager at the Amery plant during all its years of operation. With the closure of the Amery plant, he returned to Rush City as vice president of sales and marketing, later sales account manager, and then assembly manager.

In 2014 Pasche moved into training and development to help address the growing training needs as the company ramped up employee levels. He finished his career with Plastech as training coordinator, creating and implementing an entire curriculum in plastic molding. He retired in 2015 after twenty-eight years with Plastech.

Tony Larson

Additional sales account managers over the past twenty years include Mike Tierney and Tony Larson, who is a current sales account manager, along with Nick Frandsen.

Engineering

Project/sales engineers. The project/sales engineers assist in building new molds, revisions to existing molds, sampling materials, and investigating quality issues. They also manage customer-owned tooling, work with customers to resolve quality concerns, and assist the production floor with any processing-related issues.

Lester Small

Members of the engineering team at the turn of the century included LeRoy Calander, Lester Small, Doug Hoffbeck, and Jerry Miller. Calander joined Plastech in 1975 and retired in 2002; Small joined in 1985 and retired in 2007.

Hoffbeck joined Plastech in 1999 as engineering manager and served in that role until 2014, when he was named director of automation and assembly. He returned to engineering 2016–18. Jerry Miller became engineering manager in 2014.

Brad Carlbom

Brad Carlbom joined Plastech in 1976 as a high school student running a press. He became a molding supervisor and finished his lifelong career at Plastech as a sales engineer in 2022 after forty-six years. Current sales engineers are Mike Bierl, Bailey Citterman, Paul Reger, and junior engineer Evan Peterson.

Mike Bierl

Mike Bierl started at Plastech in 2002 as a mold technician. Two years later he left to pursue other business interests but returned to Plastech in 2005. He worked his way up to a senior mold technician and later backup shift manager, reporting to Leon Lofgren and Ray Mead.

When Lofgren retired, Bierl became the full-time shift manager. In 2016 he became mold technician manager, which involved training setup technicians, process technicians, and the process engineer. When process engineer Nate Dehkes left the company in 2018, Bierl carried out those duties until Nate returned. Bierl became a project engineer in 2019 and sales engineer in 2021.

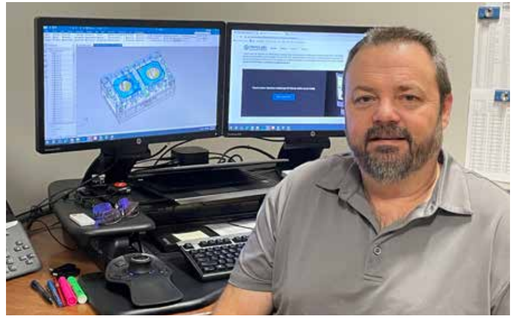
Paul Reger

Paul Reger came to Plastech in 2015 with a long history in the plastics industry. He was a project engineer and backup piece parts estimator for his first four years before becoming a sales engineer in 2019.

Bailey Citterman

Bailey Citterman started at Plastech as a press operator in 2017, looking for a summer job close to home to save money for her sophomore year of college. Two years later she took a summer intern position in the Plastech quality lab. Upon obtaining her degree in mechanical

Evan Peterson spends most of his time working on Polaris and Indian projects.



John McNally is responsible for handling the technical aspects of mold purchases, working with the sales engineers and toolmakers.

engineering in 2020, Citterman came on full time as a sales engineer. "My favorite part about the job is collaborating with my colleagues here at Plastech to find creative solutions to address our customers' requests or concerns," Citterman commented. She is currently working toward a master's degree in project and operations management.

Evan Peterson joined Plastech in 2023 following a nine-year military career and an associate degree in business management. As a junior engineer, he assists Paul Reger on Polaris projects.

Tooling Engineers. The tooling engineer's job is specialized to handling technical aspects of mold purchases and acting as liaisons between the sales engineers and the tool room. At the turn of the century, Don Daniski was in charge of mold purchasing and Ricky Miller was the in-house tooling engineer when Plastech was still building a lot of molds in house. That has changed over the years and today most molds are outsourced. Daniski retired in 2003. Ricky Miller had worked at Plastech for thirty-six years when he passed away in 2015.

Ricky Miller

Don Larson

Don Larson took on the role of tooling engineer at that time. John McNally came on as another tooling engineer in 2023 as Larson transitioned to part time.

"I have been grateful for these employment opportunities so close to home."

—Engineering service coordinator Mary Kubow

Automation Engineers. The automation engineers design and build the robots for the presses. Plastech's first automation engineer was Ron Steltz. When he left in 2006, Aaron Kaufman was hired. He came with experience and a degree in manufacturing technology. In addition to robot heads, he designs and builds related equipment and fixtures needed after the parts are molded.

Aaron Kaufman working on a robot part.

Sam Sybrant working on an automation project.

In 2023 a junior automation engineer was hired to assist Kaufman. Sam Sybrant graduated from Rush City High School in 2019 and received a scholarship from the Frandsen Family Foundation. He spent one summer as an intern at Plastech before earning his degree in mechanical engineering and coming to work full time.

Support Staff. Two positions support the management and engineering departments—administrative/executive assistant and engineering service coordinator. LuAnn Ludwig was administrative assistant when she left in 2018 after thirty-nine years with Plastech. Other administrative assistants included Kari Ross (2013–22) and Stacy Bisek (2017–20). Jeanae Welp-Lemmons is the current executive assistant; she joined Plastech in 2019.

The engineering service coordinator manages APQP for engineering projects, among other responsibilities. Mary Kubow currently holds that position. Her first experience with Plastech was during high school as a press operator in 1989 earning money for college. She went on to other career opportunities for many years before returning in 2021. Previous engineering service coordinators included Jenny Henthorn and Rebecca Winberg.

Estimating

Dale Anderson

Estimator Dale Anderson took a part-time press operator job at Plastech during high school, starting in 1980. He continued at Plastech during his college years and was promoted to weekend supervisor. After earning his accounting degree, Dale decided to stay with Plastech and became a floor supervisor in 1988.

In 1995, utilizing his accounting degree, Anderson applied for the position of estimator, which had been held by Les Small who moved into engineering at that time.

Dale has been the sole production estimator for Plastech for much of the past twenty years. He prepares price quotes for customers based on information provided by the sales department and the purchasing department.

In 2019, Carrie Bennett joined the estimating team. She was the estimator for Lakeland Tool & Engineering in Anoka when Frandsen Corporation purchased it in 2019. She remained in that role until the Anoka plant was merged into Rush City in 2023.

Samantha Haben assumed Bennett's duties in 2023. She had been the cost accountant for Lakeland since 2011. She added cost accounting for Rush City in 2020 and now does both estimating and cost accounting.

Tooling

Eldon Olson

Eldon Olson started as an apprentice mold maker in 1966. "If I remember right, I worked 60 hours my first week," he said. He spent forty-seven years in the tool room at Plastech and was the tool room supervisor from 1994 to his retirement in 2013.

Marvin Hedberg

Longtime toolmaker Bart Mevissen became tool room manager when Olson retired. He now manages a staff of seven, including journeyman toolmakers Bruce Frommader, Andy Lindman, Sam Nelson, Ben Neville, Wayne Nordrum, John Olson, and Andrew Thomas.

Former longtime tooling staff included toolmakers Bob Rosati (1975–2003), Marvin Hedberg (2005–12), and Dave Schultz (2007–16). Hedberg and Schultz had both worked for Plastech in the early 1970s. Pam Roll (1986–2016) was tool-crib attendant for many years.

Pam Roll

Alexander Dahl graduated from Rush City High School in 2020. He took welding and machining at Pine Technical and Community College on a scholarship from the Frandsen Family Foundation. He spent the summers of 2022 and 2023 as an intern in the Plastech tool room.

Journeyman toolmaker Bruce Frommader monitoring a CNC machine.

Summer intern Alex Dahl cleaning a mold.

Journeyman toolmaker Andy Lindman was a twenty-four-year veteran of Lakeland Tool & Engineering when Plastech acquired it. He transferred to the tool room at Rush City and is shown here operating the same CNC vertical mill that he ran at the Lakeland plant.

Journeyman toolmaker Sam Nelson rebuilding a mold for a livestock feeder. The broken tool is on the left and the new tool on the right.

“I’ve heard only positive comments from the purchasing group about you. As far as I’m concerned, Plastech sets the bar in being a flexible partner with our molding shop.”

—Comment from a Polaris engineer, as told to Alan Johnson

Customer Service

Plastech’s first customer service rep was Denice Anderson, who started in 1981 and was the only CSR for seven years. She was lead CSR for twenty-three years until retirement in 2004. In 2001, the CSR team was Denice Anderson, Ann Anderson, Mary Jane Dahl, and Bonnie Strike. Current CSRs are manager Shannon Johnson, Matt Grell, and Cheryl Lindgren.

Denice Anderson

Bonnie Strike

The customer service team reported to the sales department until 2019 when Chelsey Mell was named customer service manager. In 2022, Nick Frandsen assumed that role. Shannon Johnson became customer service manager in late 2023.

Mary Jane Dahl

Shannon Johnson

Cheryl Lindgren

Matt Grell

Supply Chain

The supply chain for plastic injection-molded products includes purchasing, operations, logistics, resource management, and information workflow. It is a sequence of interrelated processes that see a product through from its start as raw materials, moving through the scheduling process into a finished component that meets customer requirements.

Bob Greelis was purchasing and control manager at the turn of the century. Larry Nelson was the purchasing manager in Amery until that plant closed. He then came to Rush City as a buyer until he retired in 2012. After Bob Greelis left in 2011, Donna Larsen became the purchasing manager. Other buyers included Ann Kelash, Mike Gabrielli, Joanne Hawley, and Dan Moravec. Sheryl Pullin became purchasing and planning manager in 2016.

When Pullin left in 2017, Kevin Engstrom took over managing purchasing and customer service for a brief time. Then in 2018 Chris Skappel, director of supply chain for Miller Manufacturing, assumed that role. Luca Bonvicini joined the department as a planner in 2019 and became manager in 2021. Amy Schultz joined the department in 2020 as a buyer/planner. After Bonvicini left in 2023, Rebecca Caturia became the new manager.

Larry Nelson

Donna Larsen

Sheryl Pullin

Mike Gabrielli

Rebecca Caturia

Material Handling

Current materials manager Jake Cyrus is responsible for ensuring that the presses can keep running as scheduled with adequate supplies of raw materials. This includes keeping inventories of all plastic resin and additives, ensuring their quality and integrity, ensuring that all auxiliary equipment such as dryers and loaders are working, and staging materials for the presses.

Lonnie Kruse

Lonnie Kruse was materials manager at the turn of the century. He retired in 2005 after thirty-six years and was succeeded by Wayne Dehkes. When Wayne retired in 2020 after twenty-seven years, Cyrus took over that role. Currently he manages a staff of thirteen, including assistant Chris Trudeau, three material handlers on each shift, a grinder, and two swing personnel.

Wayne Dehkes

Materials manager Jake Cyrus in the receiving warehouse, November 2023.

Material coordinator assistant Chris Trudeau running the hurricane mixer. This machine adds colorant or additives to the resin, which is fed into it directly from the silos. It takes about twenty minutes to mix a batch.

A portion of the production floor, 2023.

Production

Scheduling. All production activities at Plastech start with the master scheduler—the person who assigns which press will run each molding job, and when. The master scheduler must be familiar with each press, its capabilities and speed, to know how many hours each job will take. The master scheduler must coordinate the schedule with supply-chain staff to make sure the raw materials are available at the proper time for each job.

Gary Miller, who had been with Plastech since 1965, handled the role of master scheduler until his retirement in 2002. Loren Olson, a 1973 veteran, took over the job at that time until his retirement in 2020. Luca Bonvicini and Alex Knox filled in the scheduler position for about a year after that. Steve Hannu worked in technology at Lakeland Tool & Engineering for over thirty years when he transferred to Rush City in July 2021 to assume the role of master scheduler.

Loren Olson

Control Center. Plastech's control center is the hub of all the activity in the plant. The office is run daily by a production control assistant, sometimes called control center operator. Rose Dehkes was a thirty-year veteran of Plastech and was A-shift control center operator for about twenty years when she retired in 2016.

Rose Dehkes

At lead stations such as this throughout the plant, supervisors and lead operators monitor molding activity in real time.

“We’re called production control assistants because we assist everyone in this building.”

—Production control assistant Dan Jiskra

Production control assistant Dan Jiskra at the control desk.

Rose was succeeded by Dan Jiskra, who started as a press operator in 1988. He soon became a lead and then a supervisor before becoming B-shift control operator in 2006. He is now the main A-shift control operator and Reba King is the main B-shift control operator. Jessie Thayer-St. Hilaire is the swing control operator, filling in three days for Jiskra and three for King during each rotation. Kristin Kilby is another backup control operator.

Ray Mead

Shift Managers. Molding shift managers oversee the entire production process—the machines, the people who run and maintain them, and the materials needed to keep them humming. They spend most of their time on the production floor monitoring processes and troubleshooting. Shift managers early in the century included Loren Olson, Ray Mead (retired 2012 after thirty-three years), and Mark Humann (retired 2018 after thirty-seven years).

Mark Humann

Current shift managers are Lenard Klar on A shift (thirty-four years with the company), Tom Ritter on B (seven years), and Tim Livingston on C (thirty-six years). Backup shift managers are Leonard Spinler (twenty-five years), Robert Ciszewski (twenty years), and Matt Cooper (sixteen years).

Lenard Klar

Process Technicians. Formerly called master molders, the process techs are responsible for mold changes, setups, and start-ups of molding. They make repairs and adjustments on the presses and auxiliary equipment, material handling systems, and robotics, to maintain quality and production.

Claire Dickson and Tim Heinrich were early master molders in this century. Dickson joined Plastech in 1972 and retired in 2013 after forty-one years. Heinrich started in 1976 and worked for forty-five years, retiring in 2021.

Kenny Steltz is currently the longest-tenured process technician. He joined Plastech as a high school student in 1978 and has been with the company for forty-five years. Scott Pearson has been with the company for thirty-five years, starting as a press operator in 1988. After being promoted to lead shortly thereafter, he became a process tech just a few years later. There are currently about fifteen additional process technicians.

Claire Dickson

Tim Heinrich

Kenny Steltz

Scott Pearson

Process technician Kyle Harrington working on a press. The process techs are easy to spot on the production floor in their blue-and-gray uniforms.

> **"Working in a factory may not sound glamorous, but as far as I'm concerned, these are the people who make it happen and make America great—turning out American-made goods every day."** *—A visitor to the Plastech plant*

Operator supervisor Judy Anderson and process technician Jacob Green take a quick moment for a smile during a busy day on the production floor.

Process Engineer. The process engineer works press-side to run initial first shots, test molds and tool functions, and oversee setup of projects. Nathan Dehkes has been Plastech's process engineer since 2014. He also works with engineers on product development. Nate started out as a material handler in 2002 and has since worked as a process technician and backup shift manager before becoming the current process engineer.

Nate Dehkes

Mold Setup Technicians. The mold setup techs are responsible for mold changes and setups in the presses. They also arrange the operator workstations and auxiliary equipment to provide optimal workflow for the operators. There are several setup techs on the floor for each shift, depending on the workload. They are assisted by a mold prep/staging person who removes the molds and robot heads from the presses and returns them to storage. This helps speed up the mold-changing process for the techs.

Press Operators. Plastech's press operator corps averages 100 to 150 at any given time. These are the workers who man the presses twenty-four seven in three shifts. Lead operators assist the operators with questions and troubleshooting in running their presses. Plastech's longest tenured press operator is Linda Neuman, who started in 1985 and has kept the same job for thirty-eight years.

Linda Neuman

Press operator Fernanda Cuatro performing a press-side finishing operation.

Other longtime operators include Bertha Bengtson, William Dahlberg, Janis Erickson, Kelly Froelke, Loretta Geisler, Doris Nelson, Angela Thomsen, and Douglas Tjomsland, each with over twenty years in their jobs. Robert Stich and Kenneth Yocum retired as press operators after over thirty years.

The lead operators report to operator supervisors, who manage the operator staff. Operator supervisor Gloria Oscarson had been with Plastech for thirty-two years when she retired in 2007. Current operator supervisors are Judy Anderson on A shift (sixteen years with Plastech), Eilene Mechtel-Klar on B (twenty-six years), and Deb Ward on C (six years).

Gloria Oscarson

Eilene Klar

Press operator Pablo Gomez manning Press 4.

Layout tech Sue Schweigert (right) operating the FaroArm, a laser device that takes precise 3D measurements from multiple angles. Chelsea Nelson also operates the FaroArm.

Quality Assurance

The QA department ensures Plastech's overall adherence to company and customer standards to fulfill the brand promise of perfect parts every time. While they use sophisticated tools and technology, their greatest asset is the human factor—experience and a keen eye.

Carl Lindgren was director of quality from 1999 to 2004. Kayla Roberts and Dan Warhol filled that role for a year until Lindgren returned 2005 to 2017. Alben Mokrzycki then became QA manager for about a year. He had a long history with the Plastech QA department but had left for a few years before returning in 2017.

Jim Sybrant was Mokrzycki's backup. Sybrant joined Plastech in 1985 as a press operator. In 1987 he became a quality inspector on the floor and later a layout technician before becoming QA supervisor about twenty years ago. He inspects plans and handles customer returns, complaints, and rework.

Mokrzycki was succeeded by Ryan Hanson, the current director of quality, in 2018. Along with Sybrant, Hanson's team includes layout technicians Sue Schweigert (thirty-two years with Plastech) and Chelsea Nelson (thirteen years); and quality specialist Beth Tatur, a thirty-year veteran of the company.

Carl Lindgren

Jim Sybrant

Ryan Hanson

In addition to the quality shop/office staff, there are two quality inspectors on the floor for each shift. One of them is Larry Laursen, who has been with Plastech for forty-five years. Other inspectors include Jessie Anderson, Marissa Lundberg, Duane Nelson, and Debra Warwick. The inspectors are responsible for providing start-up approval for each job. They also pull product from presses and bring them back to the QA office for analysis.

Training

When Paul Pasche retired in 2015, Doug Hoffbeck assumed some of the training duties. At that time Jamie Eckert, who started as a press operator in 2005, was working two jobs as a lead supervisor plus working in the engineering department putting together picture packets for training the press operators. In 2017 she stepped into the role of training coordinator and began onboarding new hires. Eckert conducts orientation for new hires two days a week, typically with three or four recruits each time. She estimates she has onboarded and trained about 1,200 Plastech employees over the past five years.

Beth Tatur

Larry Laursen

Jamie Eckert

Quality inspector Marissa Lundberg uses a caliper to measure a part press-side. For more sophisticated measurements, the parts are taken from the press to the quality lab.

Assembly

The assembly department performs many secondary functions in addition to general assembly of components. These include sonic and spin welding, bonding, drilling, milling, and kitting.

Bob Oscarson

At the turn of the century, the assembly department was headed by Bob Oscarson, who held various roles at Plastech since 1965. Oscarson retired in 2007 after forty-two years with Plastech. He was succeeded by Paul Pasche.

A typical day in the assembly department. A myriad of different machines and equipment are employed to produce the finished goods.

In 2014, Doug Hoffbeck became assembly manager and assisted with the installation of API assembly in half of Warehouse 1 south of the main plant. Jerry Miller filled the role of assembly manager from 2016 to 2018.

Ryan Hanson, manager of the QA department, added the role of assembly manager to his other duties in 2018. The secondary operations were conducted on the east end of the main plant until 2020. Since then the entire assembly department has been housed in Warehouse 1, except for what is done at the MINNCOR shop at the Rush City Correctional Facility.

LaRayne Witte

Assembly supervisor LaRayne Witte oversees day-to-day operations in the assembly department. She joined Plastech as a press operator in 1980 and was a MINNCOR supervisor from 2000 to 2009. She then took over the main assembly supervisor position from retiring Sandy Hudak, who had been supervisor since before the turn of the century. LaRayne currently manages twenty to thirty assemblers and auxiliary personnel.

Bob Welsch

Bob Welsch, who joined Plastech in 1981, was assembly scheduler at the turn of the century. When he retired in 2008, Irene Moyer took over the master scheduler position for assembly. She had been a quality inspector for assembly and had been with Plastech since 1979.

Cindy Becker, who started as a press operator in 1999, assumed the master scheduler job for assembly when Moyer left in 2017. In 2021 Becker was succeeded by Jen Overson, who had previously been a customer service rep.

Irene Moyer

Ron Simek was the assembly quality inspector at the turn of the century. He joined Plastech in 1988 and worked in the Albuquerque plant until it closed in 1997 and he returned to Rush City. Other assembly quality inspectors since then included Lindsey Fauley, Danielle Hauge, Rebecca Lasser, Tonya Spry, Tracy Stenberg, and Wendy Thomsen. The current quality inspector is Sheila Lande.

Jen Overson

Current longtime assemblers include Linda Minnick (forty-one years), Diane Steward (thirty-eight years), Diane McKnight and Betty Witte (both thirty years), and Carolyn Nybeck (twenty-five years).

Ron Simek

Linda Minnick

Diane Steward

Arlo Revier

Former longtime assembly employees included maintenance technician Arlo Revier (thirty-four years), maintenance supervisor Dennis Schwarz (thirty-one years), B-shift supervisor Esther Rands (thirty years), and assemblers Karen Rosati (thirty years), and Joanne Hawley (twenty-four years).

Dennis Schwarz

Diane McKnight (left) and Betty Witte assembling Indian motorcycle parts for Polaris.

Lonnie Nordstrom in front of Warehouse 2, 2012.

Warehouse

Brenda Salveson

In 2001, Lonnie Nordstrom was the warehouse manager, Jill Haugrud shipping clerk, and Brenda Salveson a part-time warehouse worker on the production floor. The warehouse office was what is now the UPS shipping room next to the south loading docks.

When Haugrud left the company in November 2001, Salveson took over her position and started working full time. She later became the logistics coordinator. When Nordstrom retired in 2017, Salveson was named warehouse manager. She currently is responsible for:

- Fourteen warehouses and their inventory
- Twenty loading docks
- Two shipping clerks
- A logistics coordinator
- Four lead receivers
- A crew of over twenty warehousers covering three shifts
- Eight company-owned trailers
- Upwards of twenty-five commercial haulers at any given time

Logistics coordinator Christine Hines came to Plastech in 1994 as an assembler on B shift. She became a lead assembler on A shift before transferring to assembly warehouse duty. She soon became the backup for Salveson, who was logistics coordinator at the time. Hines became the logistics coordinator in 2017 when Salveson was named warehouse manager.

Joe Cook worked for Plastech as a youngster doing at-home assembly work with his family. He started full time as a press operator in 1976. He worked many jobs over the years, including production quality inspector, managing the rework division, and running shipping and receiving for the UMCO tackle box line. When that line was sold in 1988, Cook joined the main warehouse crew and remained in that position until his retirement in 2023.

Cathy Johnson

Cathy Johnson joined Plastech in 1977. She spent most of her thirty-seven years at Plastech running a forklift, retiring in 2014. Other longtime former warehousers included Jolene Timm and Amber Witte, who both started in the 1990s and worked for over twenty years.

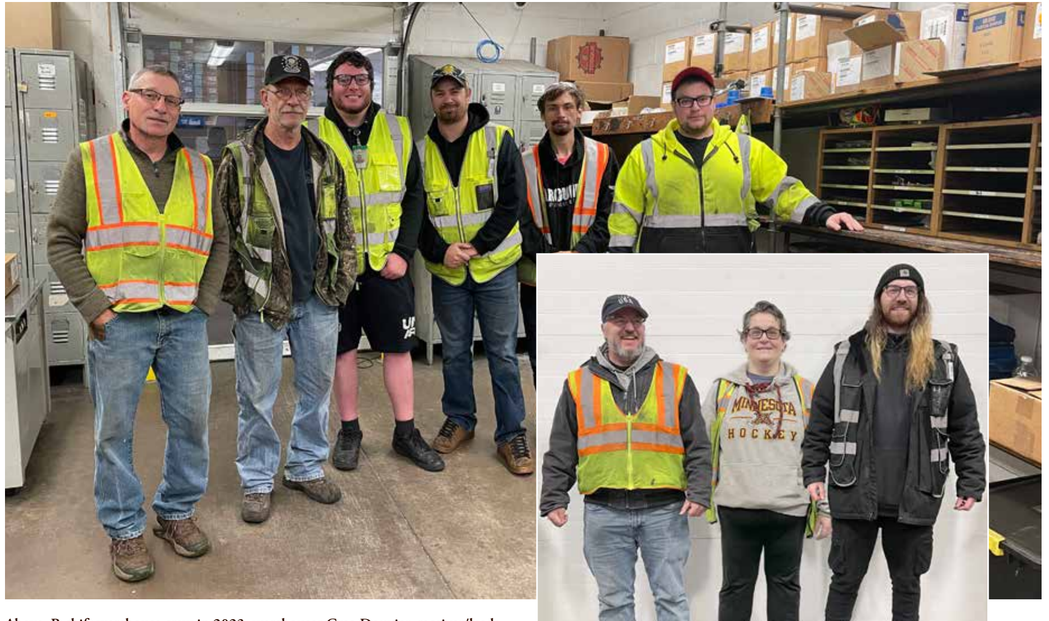
Two warehousers passed away while employed at Plastech. Jim Carlstrom, a seventeen-year veteran of Plastech, passed away July 23, 2018. Bob Schaefer had been with the company thirty-one years when he passed away on November 30, 2020.

“The hardest day I ever had at work was the day I had to tell the warehouse crew that Bob Schaefer had died.”

—Brenda Salveson

Warehouser Joe Cook on his last day of work before retirement in 2023.

A-shift warehouse crew in 2023. Seated front row: receiver/lead Scott McDowell and logistics coordinator Chris Hines. Seated second row: warehouser Fritz Heller and receiver/lead Paul Allen. Standing first row: warehousers Paul Brugler and Joe Cook, shipping clerks Greg Glaser and Michael Lundberg, and warehouse manager Brenda Salveson. Standing back row: warehousers Brent Arnt, Carl Zappa, John Christensen, Bob Cuchna, Michael Bogart, Brian Murphy, Jason McCain, Patrick Lundgren, Tyler Cuhel, and Elijah Jones; backup shipping clerk Alex Grandy; and warehouser Nathan Davis.



Above, B-shift warehouse crew in 2023: warehouser Greg Douvier, receiver/leads Paul Allen and James Gorman, and warehousers Carl Zappa, Parker Raivo, and Tyler Jiskra.

Right, C-shift warehouse crew in 2023: Warehousers Shane O'Connor, Sheila Zaske, and Tristan Strohecker. Not pictured: receiver/lead Derek Porter.

"Susie Williams has arguably the most important job in the company—she makes sure we all get paid!"

—A Plastech employee

Accounting

Plastech accounting is integrated with the Frandsen Corporation accounting department. Some of the accounting staff are employees of Frandsen Corporation, though the majority office in Rush City. They handle functions for other Frandsen entities as well as Plastech.

At the beginning of the century, the accounting department consisted of Marcia Wegleitner (employed 1976–2012), Susie Williams (1975–present), Lynn Lindstrom (1978–2001), Jeri Lindgren (1979–2021), Dianne Kirchberg (1980–2008), Mary Carlson (1983–present), Marie Angstman (1990–present), and Jean Hoffman (1994–2013).

Marcia Wegleitner

A few other accounting people came and went in the early years of the century, but the biggest changes came in 2010 through 2012 when Wegleitner stepped down from her long-standing role as controller. In 2010 Melanie Knutson, who had been investment property manager for Frandsen Corporation, was named corporate director of accounting. She resigned in 2012 and was replaced by Ryan Dahlberg, who held that position for the next five years. He named Lindgren accounting manager under him in 2013 and she also was a financial analyst during that time.

Melanie Knutson

Ryan Dahlberg

In 2016 Cari Tohm joined the accounting department as an accountant for Miller Manufacturing. When Dahlberg left the company in 2017, Lindgren assumed the role of corporate director of accounting. Tohm was promoted to assistant director of accounting in 2020 and was then named corporate director of accounting following Lindgren's resignation in 2021. In her current role, Tohm is responsible for overseeing the general accounting functions of the organization, including customer credit, accounts receivable, accounts payable, cost accounting, and internal and external financial reporting and compliance.

Susie Williams came to Plastech in 1975 as a receptionist and general office worker. A few months later the payroll coordinator left the company and Williams took over that function—a job she has continued to perform for the past forty-eight years. In 2001, she assumed management of payroll for all Frandsen companies. In 2008, she assisted the Frandsen Corporation human resources department in implementing an online time tracking and payroll system.

Lynn Lindstrom

Jeri Lindgren

Dianne Kirchberg

Jean Hoffman

Mary Carlson started out as a press operator in 1981. A year and a half later she transferred to the shipping office as an assistant to warehouse clerk Harriet Moulton. A short time later Carlson transferred to the main office, which was then in downtown Rush City, as assistant to Dean Miller and Gary Miller in production control. When production control moved to the plant in the mid 1980s, Carlson moved with that office. Sometime in the early 1990s she assumed her current position in the accounting department as cost accountant. She is responsible for maintaining the ERP database, inputting data from production and engineering and from that data producing the daily profit-and-loss statements that management uses to maintain efficiency and profitability for the company.

Marie Angstman was hired in 1990 to handle accounts receivable for Plastech along with clerical functions for the tooling department, which at that time was located in St. Paul. Once a month she would drive to St. Paul to take stock of jobs. When the Albuquerque and Amery plants were running, she handled cost accounting and accounts payable for those locations. She also performed accounting functions for Plastech and sister company Industrial Netting. In 2015 Marie was assigned accounts payable

Plastech and Frandsen Corporation's Rush City accounting team in 2018. Seated: Larissa Teich, Jeri Lindgren, and Becky Strand. Standing: Jennifer Simonetta, Becky Williams, Marie Angstman, Cari Tohm, Susie Williams, and Mary Carlson. Becky Williams passed away January 31, 2019, while employed at Plastech.

The accounting team in 2023, from left: Mary Carlson, Susie Williams, Kimberly Vradenburgh, Becky Strand, Cari Tohm, and Marie Angstman.

for Miller Manufacturing, which at that time included subsidiaries Springer Magrath and Kelley Beekeeping Company. Today she is full time for Miller.

Becky Strand, who joined Plastech in 2018, is the primary accountant for Plastech. She prepares the monthly and annual financial statements for the company. Kimberly Vradenburgh is the newest member of the accounting team, coming on board in 2019. She handles accounts payable and accounts receivable for Plastech.


Debbie Hanson

Debbie Hanson and Andrea Stream work at the Frandsen Corporation office in North Branch, Minnesota. Hanson started at Plastech in 1986 doing accounts payable. She later worked in the engineering department for a few years when it was located in Frandsen Corporation's headquarters in Forest Lake. In 1999 she was named executive assistant for Dennis Frandsen. In addition to that role, she handles some accounting duties for Frandsen Corporation.


Andrea Stream

Andrea Stream came to Frandsen Corporation as senior accountant in 2012 following the departure of Marcia Wegleitner. In her role, she handles general accounting transactions for the parent company and consolidates financial statements from all Frandsen subsidiaries—including Plastech—into one financial statement.

Human Resources

Early in this century, the Plastech human resources department became integrated with Frandsen Corporation. At the beginning of 2001, Pam McLain, HR manager at Plastech since 1997, was named corporate director of human resources for Frandsen Corporation.


Pam McLain

Each of the Frandsen companies retained its own HR team, while McLain's responsibility was to support and oversee the HR activities of all Frandsen companies. Her office was moved to Frandsen headquarters in Forest Lake.


Kay Schoeberl

McLain hired Kari Bauer as Plastech HR manager in February 2001. Bauer initially worked with Jackie Taubman, who was HR manager at the Amery plant until it closed, and Kay Schoeberl, who was Plastech's benefits coordinator at that time.

When Schoeberl retired in 2003 after twenty-five years with the company, the benefits function for all Frandsen companies was transferred to the Frandsen Technology Center in Arden Hills.


Kim McHugh

Bonnie Stein joined the HR team in 2013 and Trisha Simonson in 2016. When Bauer left the company in 2016, Plastech hired a temporary HR manager, Kim McHugh, who headed the department for the next two years. In 2017, HR generalist Christa Erdmann and HR specialist Chelsey Mell joined the team.

McHugh's temporary assignment at Plastech ended with the hiring of HR manager Julie Mattson in August 2018. However, her role at Plastech was short lived, as she transferred to Frandsen Financial Corporation in Arden Hills the following spring.

For the next year, Mattson's Plastech duties were assumed by Erdmann and Mell with remote assistance from Frandsen Corporation HR director Jeanne Glynn, who had a long history with Plastech. She is now HR manager for Miller Manufacturing.


Christa Erdmann


Chelsey Mell


Jeanne Glynn


Julie Mattson


Jessica VanElsberg


Heather Thoele

In June 2020, Plastech management made the decision to name Mell to the dual roles of customer service and human resources manager. HR specialist Jessica VanElsberg joined the team at that time.

Mell left the company in 2022 and was replaced by Heather Thoele for about a year.


Mark Foote

When Thoele decided to move on, Mark Foote became Plastech's human resources manager. He brought several decades of experience managing HR departments in the manufacturing sector.

IT/IS

In addition to Kevin Engstrom and Tom Gasperlin, who were introduced earlier in this volume, other IT technicians since 2001 include Sarah Chilton (2013–16), who worked on the IQMS installation, Alan Douglas (2013–17), Corey Mosier (2019–20), and current IT technician Darlene Mallet (2020–present).

Offsite IT personnel who assist Plastech include senior system administrator Brian Cline, who works in the Industrial Netting office in Maple Grove, Minnesota, and IT technician Grant Lensing, who works at the Miller Manufacturing plant in Glencoe.

The current maintenance crew, from left, Keith Voigt, Dave Anderson, Jamie Fleming, supervisor Paul Johnson, Travis Mariette, and Jason Thomsen.

Maintenance

The maintenance department are the people who keep the plant and all its equipment in working order. They perform preventative maintenance, troubleshooting, and repairs on everything from molding machines and assembly equipment, to light bulbs and bathroom faucets, and everything in between. Regular inspection of the presses is a big part of their job, as is ensuring compliance with OSHA regulations throughout the plant and warehouses.

Marvin Monster

Wayde Sward was Plastech's maintenance supervisor at the turn of the century. When he retired in late 2001, Marvin Monster was named maintenance supervisor. Monster started working at Plastech in 1972 as a press operator on C shift. He joined the maintenance department a few years after that. He retired in 2015 after forty-three years with the company. Following his retirement, Scott Aubert was maintenance supervisor until 2017. When he left, Sward returned to the position for about a year.

In 2018 Paul Johnson was named maintenance supervisor. He worked at Plastech for a brief time in 1988, then left for military service, returning in 1990. He worked in production, materials, and assembly until 1994, when he joined the maintenance department.

Maintenance technicians. The maintenance technicians maintain the presses, auxiliary equipment, and mechanical fixtures of the buildings. Current maintenance techs are David Anderson (joined the company in 1979), Keith Voigt (2012), James Fleming and Travis Mariette (both 2021), and Jason Thomsen (2023). Former longtime maintenance technicians in this century included John Sickler (1976–2023), John Houle (1980–2006), and Greg Reeves (2003–23).

Janitors. Three full-time janitors keep the plant and warehouses clean, tidy, and efficient for everyone. Nancy Gilliland has been a janitor for almost thirty of her forty-five years with Plastech. She started as a press operator in 1978 and later became a lead and backup supervisor before joining the maintenance department in 1994. She met her husband, former press operator Robin Gilliland, while working at Plastech.

Geno Howard and Michelle Nelson round out the janitorial staff. Howard started as a press operator in 2015 and assumed his janitorial position about four years ago. Nelson started as a press operator in 2021 and joined the maintenance department shortly thereafter. In late 2023 she decided to move on, and as of the date of publication, a replacement had not been hired.

Dawn Conklin

Former janitor Dawn Conklin joined Plastech in 2008. She passed away unexpectedly in 2019 while employed at Plastech.

Plastech janitors, from left, Geno Howard, Nancy Gilliland, and Michelle Nelson.

Carl (left) and Gary Anderson taking a break on a construction job at a Frandsen property, c. 2000.

Facilities

While the maintenance department focuses primarily on the plant and warehouses, the facilities crew is responsible for the buildings and grounds, as well as construction projects in the plant and other Frandsen properties.

Carl and Gary Anderson, two brothers from Pine City, Minnesota, both started working for Plastech in 1973. They were in charge of Plastech's buildings and grounds for nearly thirty years. They also built cabins for Dennis Frandsen's real estate enterprise in the '70s and '80s and at his farm in Wisconsin.

Gary left Plastech in 2001 to return to farming, while Carl stayed two more years with the company before he retired. Carl and Gary's replacements were already in the wings before that, though nobody knew it quite then.

In late April 2001, the Frandsen home on the St. Croix River was threatened with flooding. Plastech employees were dispatched to sandbag—which was not entirely successful.

When it was apparent that the water was going to enter the home, the crew moved furnishings and possessions out into a semi van trailer just before more than two feet of river water began to cover the main level of the house.

Two of the workers from the plant who volunteered to help sandbag and move furnishings were Dan Siefert and Gary Weiden. Siefert joined Plastech

in 1996 as a sampling technician and was a production supervisor at the time of the flood. Weiden had just recently started at Plastech as a press operator, his retirement job after a successful career with Honeywell.

As a result of the flood, Dennis learned of Siefert's expertise as a builder, carpenter, and general handyman. Dennis decided to enlist him to restore his home in the aftermath of the flood.

Weiden volunteered to come and assist Siefert with the restoration project. "Gary was always willing to help with just about anything," Siefert recalled. The pair started working on the home as soon as the flooding subsided. The renovation took six months.

Siefert and Weiden completed their work at the Frandsen home the first week in November and then returned to the plant—but not to their former jobs. They both joined the facilities department with Carl Anderson.

When Carl retired in 2003, Siefert took over the role of supervisor. When Weiden retired in 2012, Jeff Gelking left his position as a press operator to work as Siefert's assistant.

Siefert and Gelking completed many remodeling projects for Plastech over the years. They also remodeled Frandsen banks in Braham, Luck, and Tower, Minnesota, and renovated several bank-owned properties for resale. In addition, they are responsible for groundskeeping at Plastech and the Frandsen homes.

Dan Siefert (left) and Jeff Gelking take a break from a repair project in one of the Plastech warehouses, 2023.

TV host Alexa Score visited Plastech to shoot an episode of her series *Made for the Outdoors.*

Plastech on TV

Plastech customer Mission Outdoor is a Minnesota-based manufacturer and distributor of accessories and gear focused on water sports. Their flagship product is the Delta Wake Shaper, a device that attaches to a boat to produce a superior wake for wake surfing. The major components of the Delta are molded at Plastech.

Ron Schara Productions—another Minnesota-based company—featured the Delta Wake Shaper during the 2022 season of their syndicated TV series *Made for the Outdoors*. A film crew accompanied host Alexa Score to Plastech, where she interviewed senior account manager Alan Johnson and even helped press operator Amy Vang pull some of the parts from the press. The episode aired on Bally Sports and the Sportsman Channel and can still be viewed on YouTube.

Responding to the Pandemic

The challenges of 2020 provided a window into how Plastech workers "make it happen" whenever they are called to go above and beyond. Plastech was considered an essential business due to manufacturing of parts used in diesel engines, energy technology, agriculture, food services, cleaning products, medical devices, and hospital generators.

One example of the dedication of Plastech workers is Vyaire Medical. They are a global manufacturer of medical devices focused on breathing technology—ventilators, testing devices, and auxiliary equipment—based in Chicago. They had been an occasional customer in the past, and when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, they reached out to Plastech in an urgent request to take immediate delivery of a million ventilator parts.

Plastech workers flew into overdrive to fill this order, even as the staff was stretched due to the many absences, on top of other urgent customer orders. Every department was involved, as materials had to be ordered, molds prepared, presses and operators scheduled, and shipping arranged for.

As a result of their dedication, the ventilator parts were delivered in record time—a case in point highlighting Plastech's ability to maneuver resources quickly. Nick Frandsen attributes that kind of flexibility to the 24/7 operating model. "Running three weekend shifts gives us forty percent more press time than a five-day week," he noted. "We can make a lot of things happen over the weekend!"

"Plastech Corp. was able to deliver with our influx of production need due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I credit their delivery to their attention to detail, organization skills, network of resources, and creativity."

—Jerica Djapri, supply chain operations analyst, Vyaire Medical

In April 2020, Plastech announced—without any government mandate—that the company would pay employees' wages for fourteen days if they needed to quarantine because they or a household member contracted COVID-19. Many employees had to be off work that summer and were grateful for the extra help.

By September, production employees who were not contagious were required to work an extra shift in their six-and-three rotation, or seven days with two off. The company paid incentives for the extra shifts based on what day of the week the extra days were added to each employee's rotation.

The pandemic raged throughout the year, with urgent orders still coming in and staff shortages remaining a challenge, but Plastech's dedicated workforce pushed through. To recognize their efforts, in October all employees were given T-shirts that said "I Made a Difference," in recognition of their hard work during the pandemic. Nevertheless, the annual holiday and awards parties had to be canceled that year.

Left and above: Kristal Krueger was a press operator in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. She is now an operator lead and backup supervisor.

Each week one of the 26 Fundamentals is highlighted via digital message boards located throughout the plant. In this way each of the Fundamentals is reinforced twice in a year's rotation. To encourage staff engagement, employees in every department and every shift are asked to nominate coworkers who exemplify the highlighted Fundamental for that week. Pictured are customer service rep Cheryl Lindgren and press operator Charmayne Gaslin when they were nominated for 26 Fundamentals recognition, earning them a chance to play the Plinko board and win a gift or gift card compliments of Plastech.

"We have witnessed a remarkable transformation in our employees' attitudes."

—Jerry Miller

26 Fundamentals

In 2021 Plastech introduced a new concept called the 26 Fundamentals. It covers expectations that the company has for employee engagement and behavior. The 26 Fundamentals cover everything from honoring commitments and problem solving to relationships, safety, and much more.

"Fostering a positive work culture and empowering employees is paramount to achieving sustainable success," general manager Jerry Miller explained. "We have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of the 26 Fundamentals, which have not only shaped our organizational values but also served as a guiding force in propelling our company forward."

Miller believes that the 26 Fundamentals have been an impetus behind Plastech's success. "By instilling these principles into our organizational culture, we have witnessed a remarkable transformation in our employees' attitudes, behaviors, and overall performance," he observed. "From clear communication to embracing change, ownership, and continuous improvement, these fundamentals have not only empowered our employees but have also contributed to our company's growth. Moving forward, we remain committed to upholding these principles, as they continue to shape our company's journey toward excellence."

Current Employees of 40 Years or More

Dale Anderson	Estimator
David Anderson	Maintenance technician
Mary Carlson	Cost accountant
Jim Ertz	Asset manager
Nancy Gilliland	Janitor
Larry Laursen	QA inspector
Bart Mevissen	Tool room manager
Linda Minnick	Assembler
Kenneth Steltz	Process technician
Susan Williams	Payroll coordinator
LaRayne Witte	Assembly supervisor

Susie Williams is Plastech's longest-tenured current employee, with forty-eight years on her job.

Prior to his retirement, Alan Johnson was the longest-tenured employee, with forty-nine years.

30 Years or More

Marie Angstman	Accounts payable clerk
Kevin Engstrom	Corporate director of IT and IS
Steven Hannu	Master scheduler
Debra Hanson	Executive assistant
Daniel Jiskra	Process control assistant
Lenard Klar	Molding shift manager
Andrew Lindman	Journeyman toolmaker
Timothy Livingston	Molding shift manager
Jerry Miller	General manager
Linda Neuman	Press operator
Scott Pearson	Process technician
Diane Steward	Assembler
James Sybrant	QA coordinator
Beth Tatur	QA specialist

20 Years or More

Robert Ciszewski, Jr.	Backup shift manager
William Dahlberg	Press operator
Janis Erickson	Press operator
Nathan Dehkes	Process engineer
Kelly Froelke	Press operator
Christine Hines	Logistics coordinator
Diane McKnight	Assembler
Eilene Mechtel-Klar	Operator supervisor
Brenda Salveson	Warehouse manager
Sue Schweigert	QA layout technician
Daniel Siefert	Senior facilities maintenance technician
Leonard Spinler	Backup shift manager
Angela Thomsen	Press operator
Betty Witte	Assembler

10 Years or More

Paul Allen	Warehouse lead receiver
Judy Anderson	Operator supervisor
Zachary Anderson	Operator lead
Michael Bierl	Sales engineer
Paul Brugler	Warehouser
Scott Bylund	Press operator
Matthew Cooper	Backup shift manager
Jamie Eckert	Training coordinator
Linda Finley	Press operator
Jeffrey Gelking	Senior facilities maintenance technician
Richard Hampeys	Process technician
Connie Heinrich	Press operator
Todd Johnson	Press operator
Aaron Kaufman	Automation engineer
Daniel Lamprecht	Process technician
Don Larson	Tooling engineer
Michael Lewis	Operator lead
Chelsea Nelson	QA layout technician
Samuel Nelson	Journeyman toolmaker
Ben Neville	Journeyman toolmaker
Denise Olson	Investment property manager
Derek Porter	Warehouse lead receiver
Andrea Stream	Senior accountant
Jesse Thomas	Process technician
Adam Vohs	Process technician
Keith Voigt	Maintenance technician
Debra Warwick	QA inspector

Making It Happen

Enjoying the Ride

As was highlighted in the first volume of the company's history, Plastech is "more than just a place to work." Opportunities for fun, social interaction, and visual enjoyment are built into the Plastech environment.

Birds and Bees

Daryl Lindstrom, Jr., of Pine City started a purple martin colony on Plastech's north lawn in 2007. He is a science teacher at Mora High School and the founder and director of East Central Minnesota Purple Martin Recovery. In addition to Plastech, Lindstrom installed martin houses at the Frandsen home on the St. Croix River, Dennis Frandsen County Park, and several other sites throughout the area.

Purple martins are a type of swallow. They winter in South America but breed only in North America, arriving in Minnesota April through June. When the fledglings can fly and are strong enough, they start the 5,000-mile trip back south, beginning in late July. At one time they were plentiful in east-central Minnesota but started declining during the last half of the twentieth century.

Purple martin housing is important because these birds do not build their own nests. "They're the only songbird that is entirely dependent on humans to provide housing for reproduction," Lindstrom noted. He explained that, while in the past purple martins built their nests in holes in trees, nowadays they almost exclusively nest in houses provided by caring individuals.

Plastech employees enjoyed tending the beehive and reaping the sweet harvest. From left, Alan Douglas, Cari Tohm, and Becky Williams.

The bee factor became part of the Plastech experience starting in 2014 when Miller Manufacturing introduced a line of beekeeping supplies. The company outfitted the Plastech plant with a hive and all the equipment needed to care for it. The hive was located in the south warehouse area for several years.

Left, a purple martin comes in to land at the Plastech purple martin colony in the summer of 2012.

Sculpture by New York artist Jesse Bercowetz, installed in 2012.

Sculpture by Wisconsin artist Michael Route, installed in 2022.

Sculpture by Colorado artist Kevin Robb, installed in 2022.

> **"Although it has a name, I decided to call it *What the H—— Is That?*"**
>
> *—Dennis Frandsen*

Sculptures on the Grounds

In the summer of 2012, Dennis Frandsen visited Franconia Sculpture Park near Taylors Falls, Minnesota. There his eye was drawn to a gigantic sculpture entitled *They Would Walk with Outstretched Arms,* which had been created on the Franconia grounds by visiting artist Jesse Bercowetz of New York.

Dennis bought the piece, which measured twenty-seven feet high and thirty feet in diameter. He had Bercowetz himself dismantle it before it was hauled to Rush City. There the sculptor reassembled it on the front lawn of the Plastech plant, where it remained for the next decade.

"The idea is for people to determine for themselves what they think it is," Dennis quipped. "Although it has a name, I decided to call it *What the H—— Is That?* I assume that's what people driving by say or think when they see it."

Over time the sculpture began to deteriorate due to the wood and polystyrene construction. In 2022 it was replaced by a new bronze sculpture entitled *Confusion* by metal artist Michael Route of Frederic.

In addition, an original sculpture entitled *Overlooking the Garden 2021* by Kevin Robb of Wheat Ridge, Colorado, was installed near the front entrance. Crafted from stainless steel, Dennis renamed it *The Future*.

Paintings in the Offices

Dennis Frandsen's wife, Jeanette, is an accomplished visual artist whose forte is oil and acrylic painting. Now in her late eighties and with impaired eyesight, she continues to produce stunning works of art that adorn the homes and offices of family, friends, and employees. Many of her paintings are on display throughout the Plastech office areas for everyone to enjoy.

Jeanette Frandsen

Jeanette Frandsen painted the landscape above in 2019 and at right in 2020 when in her mid-eighties. Both paintings are among several on display at Plastech. Her paintings also grace the walls of many Frandsen Bank & Trust locations.

Company Sports

Plastech employees have a long tradition of team sports, with softball and bowling teams going as far back as the 1970s. Teams are not organized every single year, but here are some highlights from years past.

Jim Ertz and Debbie Hanson carving the corned beef on St. Patrick's Day 2014.

The Plastech softball teams had a so-so season in 2010. Men's team captains were Tom Towle and Ryan Furey and the women's team captain was Wayne Roll. They started the season in April with practices every week and games starting in May. Many of the players had not played softball for several years but showed great improvement as the season progressed.

The Plastech bowling team won their league tournament in the spring of 2012. Team members were Joe Cook, Matt Cooper, Doug LaBelle, Loren Olson, Emmit Petersen, Jamie Scarbrough, Ken Steltz, and Gary Weiden.

The Plastech bowling team was crowned champions of the men's bowling league at Chucker's Bowl in Rush City in the spring of 2014. Members of that team included Joe Cook, Matt Cooper, Roy Cooper, Loren Olson, Emmitt Petersen, Jamie Scarbrough, and Ken Steltz.

Holidays Throughout the Year

St. Patrick's Day. Jim Ertz can't remember how long he's been doing it, but every March for years he has cooked a sumptuous corned beef and cabbage entrée for Plastech office staff in honor of St. Patrick's Day. Jim originally teamed up with organizer Mary Jane Dahl (of true Irish descent) to provide a potluck array of Irish and otherwise "green" side dishes and desserts. "You either love it or you hate it," Jim said of his corned beef and cabbage. He cooks up twenty or more pounds of beef and five or six heads of cabbage, which are readily devoured by the Plastech crew.

Wearin' o' the green in the QA department, 2018. From left, Chelsey Mell, Jamie Eckert, Beth Tatur, Alben Mokrzycki, Sue Schweigert, and Kathy Carlstrom.

Fourth of July. Plastech employees get patriotic on Independence Day, presenting the colors throughout the plant. Auxiliary activities include a Fourth of July coloring contest with prizes for employees' children and grandchildren.

Flag wavin' in the warehouse, 2018. From left, warehouse manager Brenda Salveson, receiver/lead Paul Allen, and warehouser Robert Fast-Horse.

Halloween. What better excuse could there be for getting dressed up for work? The Plastech crew always takes advantage of Halloween to add some spice to their job. Another coloring contest brings smiles and prizes to families.

Above: 2018 coloring contest entries on display. Top right: press operators Heather Hommel, Arlyne Cardinal, and Joanie Tjomsland, Halloween 2020.

A full house at the 2013 Plastech Christmas party.

Autumn Stream, daughter of Frandsen Corporation senior accountant Andrea Stream, visits with Santa (aka Marv Hedberg) at the 2012 Christmas party.

Christmas Party. Plastech hosts a Christmas event every December. The only exception was 2020 when all events were canceled due to COVID-19. The Christmas party is for all employees and their families, complete with gifts, crafts and goodie bags for the kids, visits with Santa, and of course lots of good food. The Christmas party is a Saturday open house at a local restaurant or event venue; for the past decade or more it has taken place at Chucker's Bowl and Lounge in Rush City.

Lee Williams was the Plastech Santa for many years. He passed away in 2016.

The annual Christmas party always features plenty of good food.

Anniversary Awards Party. Plastech started hosting this invitation-only holiday event early in this century. Prior to 2001, the company hosted a similar event in the summer. The anniversary awards party provides the company an opportunity to recognize employees who have been with the company for a significant amount of time. It is held on a Friday in December and features a luncheon buffet, award presentation program, and live music.

Harriet Moulton worked at Plastech from 1968 to her retirement in 1984 at age seventy. This was the 2011 anniversary party. She passed away at age ninety-eight, just a couple of weeks before the 2012 party.

Each year, employees who have a work anniversary that is a multiple of five are invited to the event. Awards and gifts are given, starting with individuals with a five-year work anniversary all the way up to forty-five years. So far no one has earned a fifty-year award—though Dennis Frandsen has exceeded that anniversary by more than a decade! In addition to anniversary employees, past employees and retirees are also invited to the event, which becomes an annual reunion for past Plastech staff.

Music at the annual awards party is usually a country or polka band—Frandsen's favorites. Florian Chmielewski, on the accordion, is a popular polka band leader, former Minnesota state senator, and friend of Dennis. This was the 2012 party.

Retirees at the 2005 awards party, seated, clockwise from left: Louis and Agnes Wawrzyniak, Marilyn Caza, Margaret Marty, Vada Hanson, Harriet Moulton, and Cathy Johnson (who was still working at the time). Standing is Bob Bullard.

Grill-out 2018, foreground: Tonya Spry and Jerry Miller. In the background are Kevin Engstrom and Dave Dickirson, who were serving the food from the mold storage room. A drawing was held for a big-screen TV that day.

Just for Fun

In addition to holidays, Plastech provides numerous opportunities throughout the year for enjoyment both on and off the job. Here is just a small sampling of events over the years. Besides the events pictured, employees enjoyed lunches on the boss several times a year, a chili cook-off in 2019, and frequent impromptu department celebrations.

The 2018 grill-out featured a Football Friday theme. From left, Jerry Miller, Chelsey Mell, Tonya Spry, Matt Krantz, Julie Mattson, Dave Dickirson, and Christa Erdmann.

Best of the best on Ugly Sweater Day 2017, from left, press operators Connie Heinrich, Christopher Wakefield, and Carol DeDominces.

Jamie Eckert, Christa Erdmann, and Julie Kost distributed gifts for employees at the 2019 grill-out. C-shift employees enjoyed the lighted tent.

Quit-Smoking Campaign

Perhaps it wasn't exactly fun, but in June 2013, twenty-two brave Plastech employees participated in something the company had never done. They took part in the first-ever on-site corporate tobacco-cessation program. Breathe Therapy® is a Twin Cities-based company that uses small laser beams to lessen the effects of withdrawal. While there had been company-sponsored smoking-cessation incentives in the past, this was the first time that Plastech brought in an outside provider to treat employees at the plant. Jim Ertz had seen an article about it and suggested it to Dennis Frandsen. Plastech picked up the entire $499 cost of the program for each employee who participated.

Retirement Parties

Plastech has always valued the longevity of its workforce, and one way the company shows it is in the recognition of longtime employees who retire. These pages include just a few of the many retirement celebrations that have taken place over the past two decades. At their retirement, longtime employees receive a bonus equal to $100 for each year they worked for Plastech.

Left: Maintenance tech John Sickler retired in 2023 after forty-six years.
Above: Facilities worker Gary Weiden (left) retired in 2012 after eleven years, shown at his retirement party with his daughter, wife, and coworker Dan Siefert.

Project engineer Brad Carlbom retired in 2022 after forty-five years with Plastech.

IT tech Tom Gasperlin also retired in 2022 after forty-five years.

Toolmaker Marv Hedberg retired in 2012 after seven years.

Account manager Alan Johnson retired in 2022 after forty-nine years.

Press operator Carol DeDominces retired in 2018 after twenty-one years on the job. Pictured here with Dave Dickirson (left) and Jerry Miller.

Press operator Nancy Anderson retired in 2018 after ten years. Pictured with Dave Dickirson.

Warehouser Joe Cook (center) retired in 2023 after forty-six years. Pictured at his retirement party with Dennis Frandsen and Jerry Miller.

Still Making a Difference

In June 2002, after twenty inches of rain, the Roseau River rose fifteen feet in one day and crested at seven and a half feet above flood stage. The downtown business section of Roseau, Minnesota, went completely underwater very quickly.

With no hope of salvaging anything there, Roseau officials turned their attention to saving the hospital, school, waterworks, and the manufacturing plant of Polaris, one of Plastech's major customers. With 1,500 employees in a town of 2,650, losing the Polaris factory would have created more tragedy on top of the massive devastation that had already occurred in Roseau.

Several Plastech employees went to Roseau—ten miles south of the Canadian border—to assist in cleanup efforts after the worst flood in the city's history. Plastech volunteers who spent several days in Roseau included Jim Mahoney, Roxann Plummer, Lloyd Snyder, and Garry Hollister.

In the end, the efforts of hundreds of volunteers were successful in saving the Polaris plant along with the essential public installations. Roseau officials praised the Plastech volunteers, stating that they did three times more work than what was expected!

The next month after the Roseau flood, another group of Plastech employees participated in Relay for Life, an all-night walk for the American Cancer Society. The walk was held at Tanger Mall in North Branch. Plastech employees raised over $3,000 for cancer research and finished eighth in a field of fifty teams.

The Polaris plant as the flood waters were rising in 2002.

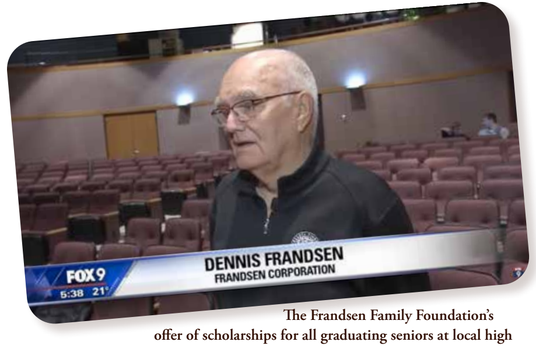
Supporting Education

The Plastech scholarship program started in 1976, with an award of $500 to any child of a Plastech employee who had successfully completed the first year at an accredited post-secondary institution. That amount was later increased to $1,000. This program continued until it was replaced with the Frandsen Family Foundation scholarship, which is currently open to every graduating senior from five local high schools.

Starting in 2018, the Frandsen Family Foundation began offering full two-year scholarships to area technical colleges for every student who graduated from Rush City High School. About half the student body accepted the scholarship that year. The scholarship offer received coverage on Twin Cities news outlets, as well as on national TV.

The following year, the high schools at Braham, Minnesota, and Luck, Wisconsin, were added. In 2020, Frederic, Wisconsin, was added, and in 2021 Pine City, Minnesota, was added—bringing the total to five high

Left, the hangar, tractor, cart, and ambulance, all donated to Lakes Region EMS's Rush City base by the Frandsen Family Foundation.



The Frandsen Family Foundation's offer of scholarships for all graduating seniors at local high schools was covered by several Twin Cities news media and NBC News.

Rush City High School students who accepted the Frandsen scholarship in 2019. Seated in front are Frandsen Family Foundation administrators and advisors Ilene Olson Holmberg and Bruce Holmberg, both former educators.

schools where every graduating senior is eligible to receive two years of technical college completely paid for by the Frandsen Family Foundation. Approximately 120 students from the five schools accept the scholarship each year.

In addition to paying for tuition, the scholarship provides up to $1,000 per year for books and supplies, along with ongoing coaching from the scholarship administrator.

One of the goals of the Frandsen scholarship is to promote and highlight technical trades—machining, welding, construction, information technology, medical services, and similar trades—which are in high demand. The Frandsen scholarships are limited to approved technical colleges in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Keeping students at home in their local area saves families thousands of dollars, plus students are much more likely to seek employment in this area when they graduate.

The initial administrator for the scholarship program was Margaret Marty of Rush City, a longtime Plastech employee. Ilene Olson Holmberg, a longtime teacher at Rush City High School, took over in 2019. The current administrator is Nancy Mach, former dean at Pine Technical College.

Margaret Marty

Nancy Mach

"While many people can say they have helped support many important and worthy causes, few can say their gift will help save lives. Your gift will have a lasting impact on critically ill and injured people throughout central Minnesota and specifically Chisago County."

—Aarron Reinert, executive director, Lakes Region EMS

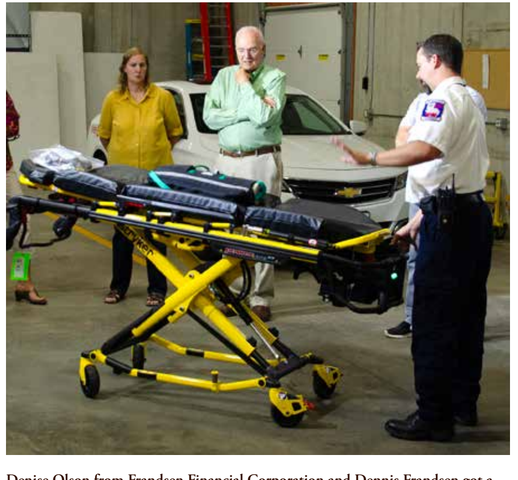
Lakes Region EMS

In 2015, Dennis Frandsen initiated a beneficent relationship with Lakes Region EMS, the ambulance service that serves portions of east-central Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin.

The first contribution was when he gave his hangar, located at the Rush City Regional Airport, to the ambulance service. This enabled Lakes Region EMS to stage a life-support helicopter year-round in its coverage area for the first time.

Along with the hangar, Frandsen provided an emergency generator and a cart and tractor to tug the helicopter in and out of the hangar. He also fully renovated the rest of the space in the hangar for use as a base for the ambulance crew, complete with kitchen, lounge, and sleeping accommodations. Prior to this donation, the Rush City ambulance crew was based in a metal shed near the former clinic.

Additional contributions from the Frandsen Family Foundation funded substantial improvements at all of the Lakes Region EMS bases, purchased a fully equipped ambulance for Wisconsin, and equipped their entire fleet with a hydraulic ambulance cot-loading system in every ambulance.



Denise Olson from Frandsen Financial Corporation and Dennis Frandsen got a demonstration of how the hydraulic gurneys work from Ben Wasmund, director of operations at Lakes Region EMS, at their headquarters in North Branch.

A view of the Rush City Community Garden looking south.

Looking north. The picnic shelter is on the left and the garden shed on the right.

Rush City Community Garden

In the fall of 2017, Dennis Frandsen began exploring the idea of donating a plot of land in the Plastech complex for a community garden. He asked the Rush City Garden Club if they would manage the garden. Bev Anderson, who was club president at the time, agreed to take on the project. She enlisted the help of the Chisago County Master Gardeners. The city of Rush City agreed to handle administration of the individual garden plot leases.

The land covers about 30,000 square feet in front of Warehouse 12. In addition to donating the use of the land, Plastech paid for the fill and landscaping and put up a garden shed on the premises.

Other local businesses and individuals donated time and materials. Volunteers from Ardent Mills and Innovative Basement Authority installed the fencing. Jerry Webb, former manager at Bulrush Golf Course, installed the underground watering system. Schmidt Construction of Rock Creek donated solar panels and wood chips. Two local Boy Scouts made the Rush City Community Garden their Eagle Scout projects. Kyle Armstrong built the picnic shelter and Tim Thole built the picnic table and benches.

Thirty-six garden plots and ten raised beds are open to the public to rent for each growing season on a first-come, first-served basis. The garden shed holds most of the tools needed, and numerous watering stations are located throughout the gardens. A minimal fee is charged to cover ongoing expenses of the garden.

Feed My Starving Children

A group from Plastech and Miller Manufacturing volunteered at the Feed My Starving Children packing site in Coon Rapids, Minnesota, in September 2018. Plastech project engineer Mike Bierl and his son, Maverick, are shown here assisting accounting clerk Larissa Teich. Jamie Eckert and Chelsey Mell were also on the volunteer team but are not pictured.

Rough 'N Tough Mudder Against Hunger

A hardy team of Plastech employees raised $300 in the Rough 'N Tough Mudder Against Hunger 5K held July 21, 2018, at New Hope Community Church in Cambridge, Minnesota. Pictured, from left, are Lisa Finley, Trevor Sonterre, Mike Bierl, Jamie Eckert, James Kvale, Trang Gibson, Dawn Forcier, and Larissa Teich. Kiantae Haugen and Chelsey Mell also competed but are not pictured.

Twice a month Plastech employees may receive selected grocery and household items, including packaged and canned goods, frozen foods, meats, bakery items, fresh produce, beverages, and household products.

Ruby's Pantry

Dennis Frandsen became acquainted with Lyn Sahr, the CEO of Home and Away Ministries and Ruby's Pantry, when the organization leased an office in the same building as Frandsen Corporation in North Branch. Sahr had been pastor of a church when he unexpectedly received a large food donation in 2003. He started the nonprofit organization to manage distribution of the donated resources.

Lyn Sahr

Sahr's food-shelf ministry was growing exponentially at the time Frandsen got to know him. Frandsen was able to offer a measure of guidance and advice to Sahr as he navigated a course from leading a small church to managing a major food-distribution network with over seventy employees, 24,000 volunteers, a fleet of trucks, nine buildings, and eighty-five food drops each month.

Plastech began donating funds to Ruby's Pantry, and in December 2014 the ministry began bringing semi loads of food to the plant. Plastech employees can receive a large box of assorted foods and household items at no cost to them, thanks to Plastech's generous support of Ruby's Pantry. The trucks come to the plant the first and third Wednesdays of every month. About eighty-five Plastech employees take advantage of this benefit each time.

Sahr passed away unexpectedly in 2023 but the ministry is being carried on by family and employees.

Community Service

Plastech has a long and proud history of supporting the Rush City community, including ongoing support of the Rush City Food Shelf and the Chisago County Historical Society.

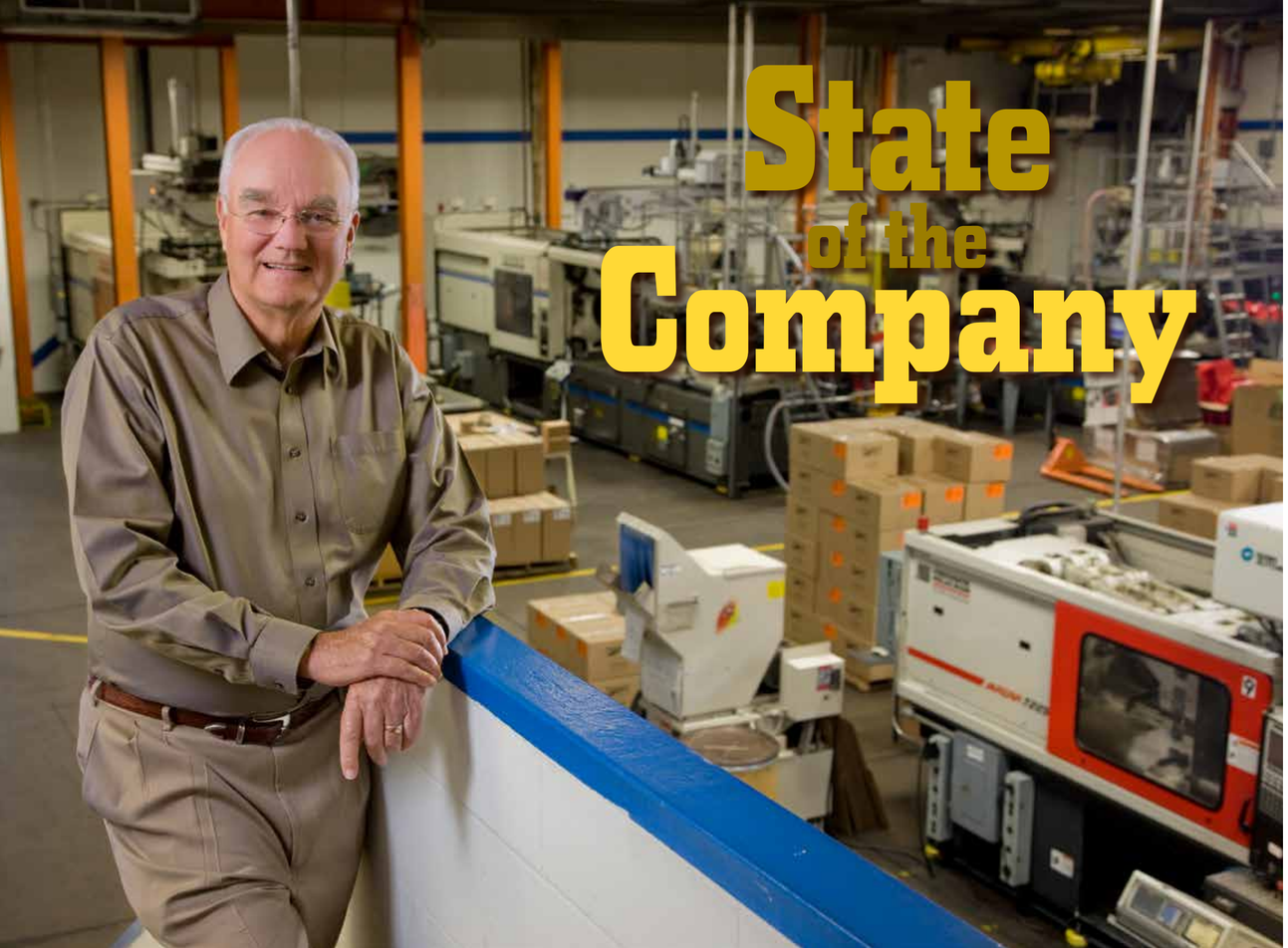
In the larger community, the Frandsen Family Foundation supports the Minnesota State High School League, Mayo Clinic, and many other causes.

A display case in the lobby highlights a few of the many awards and recognitions that Plastech and the Frandsen family have received over the years.

In the fall of 2013, some people from Rush City came up with the idea to name a street in honor of Dennis Frandsen's legacy. Jim Ertz presented the idea to the city council and on October 14, 2013, the southerly half mile of the former Field Avenue—the street that Plastech faces on—was renamed as Frandsen Avenue.

Plastech hosted a Girl Scout troop in 2018. General manager Dave Dickirson gave a tour of the plant and showed the Scouts and their leaders how Plastech makes pet products and parts for motorcycles, RVs, and snowmobiles. Each Girl Scout received a pink Miller bucket filled with additional Plastech goodies.

In October 2013, Plastech hosted Stuart Mills when he announced his candidacy for U.S. Congress from Minnesota's Eighth District. A press event was held in the new tool room. A number of local and Twin Cities media personalities attended, along with local and state officials and supporters. Pictured are Chuck Crone, Stuart Mills holding some Miller products, Dennis Frandsen, and Dan Ferrise.



State of the Company

The publication of this second volume of Plastech history comes sixty years after Dennis Frandsen assumed leadership of Plastech Research, when he was thirty years old. Six decades later, he is still actively guiding the company with expert help from a team of leaders he has groomed himself.

Dennis Frandsen in 2023 inspecting the exterior of the new addition to the Plastech plant.

It is an understatement to say that kind of continuity is rare in today's business environment. To have the same person at the helm of an enterprise the size of Plastech for that length of time is almost unheard of. In addition to Plastech, Dennis still oversees the other entities that come under the umbrella of Frandsen Corporation.

While Plastech has seen steady growth over the past twenty years, that trajectory took a sharp upward turn in 2023. Annual gross sales were about $82 million by year end—up nearly 20 percent from 2022, which was also a record-breaking year.

The Frederic plant opened in the fall of 2023 with six new injection-molding presses and plenty of room to triple capacity in the near future.

"The expansion in Frederic has been paid for by the revenue growth we have seen in recent years," Nick Frandsen noted. "We have been able to accomplish this expansion and create these new jobs without incurring any debt and while expanding job opportunities at the Rush City plant."

As Dennis Frandsen celebrated his ninetieth birthday in the fall of 2023, a natural question in many minds is what is on the horizon for Plastech and Frandsen Corporation.

"My family is committed to continuing to operate Plastech Corporation and my other companies into the future," Dennis explained.

He continued, "Jerry Miller has been with Plastech for thirty-five years and has performed nearly every job in the molding process, from press operator to general manager. He is positioned to continue to lead Plastech for many years to come."

Left, Dennis Frandsen at the Plastech plant in 2009.

Primary Industries Plastech Serves

- Powersports
- Appliances
- Telecommunications
- Power generation
- Water solutions
- Agriculture
- Restoration
- Food services
- Automotive
- Outdoor recreation
- Medical
- HVAC
- Chemical
- Retail
- Industrial engineering
- Electrical
- Security
- Industrial cleaning
- Construction

Plastech Corporation has provided American-made products and local job opportunities for over sixty years. That tradition will continue with the third generation of leadership.

"If it's the right thing to do—make it happen."

—Dennis Frandsen

With reference to other Frandsen entities, Dennis noted, "My sons, Bob and Greg Frandsen, have been on the board of directors of Frandsen Corporation for years, and Greg has had an active role in Plastech and Industrial Netting for over thirty years,"

He went on to explain, "My grandsons Alex Knox and Nick Frandsen each have several years experience with the companies and are poised to head the Frandsen enterprise as the third generation. They have forged strategic relationships with the outstanding group of executives who are currently leading the individual Frandsen companies."

Currently the Frandsen enterprise is led by:

- Frandsen Corporation—Dennis Frandsen, CEO
- Plastech Corporation—Jerry Miller, general manager
- Miller Manufacturing—Dan Ferrise, CEO
- Industrial Netting—Greg Frandsen, CEO
- Frandsen Bank & Trust—Charles Mausbach, CEO, and Rich Hoban, EVP

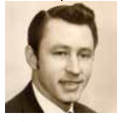
A leadership team has been formed to take a more active role when the time comes that Dennis Frandsen is no longer leading the organization.

"I am confident that I have chosen and groomed the right people to continue leadership," he said. "They will carry out the directive I have always given to myself: If it's the right thing to do—make it happen."

The future of Plastech Corporation is as bright as the sculpture entitled *The Future* on the west lawn.

Plastech Timeline

1956



Duane Stenmo starts Star Tool in Minneapolis.

1961

Star Tool is renamed Plastech Research.

1962

Plastech moves to downtown Rush City.

1963

Dennis Frandsen assumes management of Plastech.

1973

The new plant in the Rush City Industrial Park is completed. Additions follow in 1974 and 1978.

1978

Tragedy strikes as Duane Stenmo dies in a plane crash.

1980

The first computer system is installed.

1983

Plastech purchases an injection-molding company in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and moves it into a brand-new facility the following year.

1984

Plastech Research is renamed Plastech Corporation.

1987

Offices in downtown Rush City are closed and the staff moved to Forest Lake. Most return to Rush City in 1990.

1988

A fitness center and racquetball court are installed at the plant. Connie Davis is hired as fitness director.

1992

The first robotic work cells are installed. The engineering department converts to CAD.

1997

Plastech sells the Albuquerque plant and builds a new plant in Amery, Wisconsin. It was sold in 2003.

2001

Plastech contracts with MINNCOR for assembly work at the Rush City Correctional Facility.

2012

Plastech breaks ground for the first building addition in Rush City in thirty-four years.

2015

The entire plant is fully integrated into IQMS management software.

2018

The Frandsen Family Foundation begins awarding full technical-college scholarships.

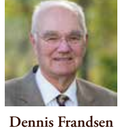
2019

Jerry Miller becomes general manager, Alex Knox and Nick Frandsen join the team.

2022

New receiving warehouse is completed.

2023



Dennis Frandsen celebrates his ninetieth birthday and sixty years owning Plastech.

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Photos

The majority of the images included in this book came from Plastech archives. Additional contributors were:

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