

The Westfield News



Serving Westfield, Southwick and surrounding Hilltowns

www.masslive.com/westfieldnews

Monday, October 3, 2022

\$1.00



Company President Susan Kasa speaks with Westfield Mayor Michael McCabe at the Sept. 22 open house at Boulevard Machine on Lockhouse Road. (MIKE LYDICK / THE WESTFIELD NEWS)

Gearing up for growth

Boulevard Machine has new, modern facility in city

BY MIKE LYDICK
mlydick@thereminder.com

WESTFIELD — With a new name, a new logo, a new focus, and a new location in Westfield, Boulevard Machine hosted an open house last month at its new, modern facility on Lockhouse Road.

The precision machine company moved its headquarters and manufacturing facility from Page Boulevard in Springfield to a new, larger space in Westfield in January 2021. The move gave the company more room for its expanding operations.

The company is now known as Boulevard Machine. It was founded in 1954 as Boulevard Machine and Gear, a gear manufacturer that catered to the paper industry and the many mills that were the area.

The company was acquired in 2006 by Susan Kasa, who is now Boulevard's president.

"We redirected our focus a few years ago to be in multi-axis machining and machining of production quantities," she said.

Her goals were to modernize the equipment, increase the number of younger workers, and move away from just making gears.

"We forged a strategic partnership with a local company that acquired some of our gear equipment, so we continue to process orders gears and splines," she added.

The company spent the last year re-branding and now has a new logo and tagline that it trademarked. The new black and white logo features an aircraft flying above the company name, with the tagline "Machining the Future" below it.

The new logo and tagline reflect its shift to cutting-edge manufacturing technologies that provide precision-machined components for aerospace, defense, outer space, and other technical markets.

The company, which has more than 20 employees, supplies parts used in Elon Musk's advanced Space X rocket and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin spacecraft. Other customers include



Kristian Kasa, vice president of operations for Boulevard Machine, right, shows off an axis-milling machine to Richard Fuller of Belchertown during the company's open house on Sept. 22. (MIKE LYDICK / THE WESTFIELD NEWS)

Growth

CONTINUES FROM PAGE 1

Boeing, Collins Aerospace, General Dynamics and Parker Aerospace.

Kasa said attracting employees — especially qualified machinists — is at the forefront of machining complex components. The Sept. 22 open house was an opportunity to increase awareness among high school and college students of the career potential of working at Boulevard.

"We wanted to show students and parents alike how different the new environments are for precision machining as opposed to where their grandfathers may have worked," she said.

Kristian Kasa, Boulevard's vice president of operations and Susan Kasa's son, works closely with company's employees make sure jobs are running as planned. He's also responsible for programming as well as purchasing tooling and new fixturing elements for machines when needed. He said one of the reasons the company is growing and attracting younger workers to grow with it is because of its new clean, state-of-the-art-facility.

"That really helps attract workers, along with staying up to date with purchasing the latest machines. It's a tough trade to learn, and it's hard to find people who currently have the experience under their belt," he said.

Another thing that differentiates Boulevard from older machine shops is that it's among a handful of women-owned companies in this area, especially in the manufacturing and precision machining field.

"They are few and far between, but women are becoming more prominent in this industry," said Susan Kasa. "We're seeing many



Christopher Footit of Springfield was still working at Boulevard Machine during its open house. He's shown programming a machine that will produce fixture plates to be used by one of the company's customers. (MIKE LYDICK / THE WESTFIELD NEWS)

more young women studying machining at the local vocational schools, with some also venturing into mechanical engineering."

Westfield Mayor Michael McCabe, who was given a tour by Susan Kasa during the open house, said he was impressed with not only the cutting-edge technology, but also with how immaculate the facility and equipment looked.

"It was a pleasure to meet Susan," the mayor said. "Her entrepreneurial spirit is evident and is impressive in a male-dominated manufacturing industry. Kudos to her."

The reason the facility and machines are so clean, said Susan Kasa, is because the work at Boulevard is completely water-based — a far cry from what it was like in older, more traditional shops.

"The entire building is climate-controlled, with mist collectors on each and every machine, bright LED lighting, and an appealing modern industrial design that attracts employees and customers as well," she

explained. The building was previously owned by Cadence Aerospace. She said the sale presented itself when her company was considering an addition to its existing building.

"It made more sense for us to move and renovate the building to our liking with the latest state-of-the-art features. Knowing that a manufacturer previously operated here meant it would be ideal for Boulevard," said Susan Kasa.

Boulevard completely renovated the building, tearing it down to the base structure. Architects were hired to help allocate space in the building and the company implemented "smart building" technology that uses hardware, software and connectivity to manage HVAC, lighting and security systems to create a comfortable and safe environment for employees.

Part of this technology included complying with new cybersecurity constraints from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC), a Department of Defense program that applies to defense industrial base contractors.

Susan Kasa added that other factors that made relocating to Westfield attractive included lower utility costs from Westfield Gas & Electric compared to what the company was paying Eversource in Springfield, as well as easy access to the Massachusetts Turnpike.

The open house was run in partnership with the Western Massachusetts chapter of the National Tooling and Machine Association. WMNTMA promotes the precision manufacturing industry and provides critical "business intelligence" to its members to help shape their marketing strategy.