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Business Local news coming out of the business world.

SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

50 YEARS OF SUCCESS

Rochester's Fab-Weld celebrating a half-century in the welding business

Alan Morrell

Roger Contant was working at a paper mill in his native Canada when slowdowns led to job cuts.

That turned out to be an opportunity in disguise. Contant, a welder, moved to Rochester and opened his own business, Fab-Weld, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

"It was tough on my wife for the first few years, but we're blessed to be here," said Contant, 78. "This is what God wanted us to do."

Fab-Weld started on Oak Street in 1964. Three years later, Contant moved the business to 280 Dewey Ave., between Iyell Avenue and Emerson Street, and Fab-Weld has been there since. Fab-Weld still does commercial welding, but auto-body work makes up about two-thirds of the business.

Back in the early days, Fab-Weld did a lot of work for companies who did work for local industrial plants like Xerox Corp. and Eastman Kodak Co. Another big customer was Ritter Dental, which made chairs for dentists and doctors. As those companies downsized or moved, Fab-Weld's services were no longer needed and the business had to evolve.

That's not all that's changed in the half-century since Fab-Weld started. Contant said he and his wife, Jacqueline, had to have chest X-rays and fingerprints taken to come to the U.S. "You had to have money in the bank," he said. "The financial end of doing business then also was vastly different. The bank was able to lend me the down payment and the mortgage, which is unheard of these days," Contant said.

Roger and Jacqueline became naturalized U.S. citizens 10 years ago. Not so (yet) for their son, Denis, who works with his dad and calls himself "a green-card-carrying resident



Michael Keenan of Rochester works on a vehicle at Fab-Weld on Dewey Avenue. Fab-Weld is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

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ROGER CONTANT

Denis Contant, 54, worked at Fab-Weld as a teen before trying other ventures. He went to school for tool and die, started a machine shop within Fab-Weld, later worked 25 years in precision sheet metal and started his own business. Five years ago, he folded his business in with his father's at Fab-Weld.



Roger Contant at Fab-Weld on Dewey Avenue. Contant started the business in 1964.

Asked if he might be taking over the shop soon, Denis snickered and said, "It's been represented that way. Dad still loves to come in every day. It keeps him young."

FAB-WELD

Founded: 1964. Location: 280 Dewey Ave. Executives: Roger Contant, president; Denis Contant, vice president. Employees: Seven. Website: fabweldcorp.com.

Passing the torch, literally and figuratively, won't be easy for Roger. He put an aluminum-welding job on hold to talk for this story.

"We've been very, very fortunate to do so well," Roger said. "We get a lot of referral business just because we've been here so long. We stand behind our work. I had a guy who came in the other day and said, 'My grandfather used to come here.' I used to say, 'We can weld anything but a broken heart or the crack of dawn.'"

The easy-going Fab-Weld founder delimits with the business puns. Asked how he came up with the company name, Roger Contant said, "We did fabrication and welding — or, we tell people it's because of the fabulous welding."

A 50th anniversary party is planned for September at Ellison Park. The Contants are trying to track down former employees, maybe 30 to 25 people, so they can "do it up." Denis said that dedication to employees is only part of Fab-Weld's old-school charm.

"My dad, he's kept the business's really tight," he said. "A couple of businesses I've known couldn't keep up with the large overhead. Dad's never gotten too far out there with the books."

That's likely a big reason why Fab-Weld has thrived for half a century.

Alan Morrell is a Rochester-based freelance writer.

BUSINESS BRIEFS



Ellen Crooke laura, and once worked as a producer at WOKR-TV in Rochester, along with stops in South Bend, Ind., Louisville and Albany.

Geneseo alumna named Gannett VP

An alumna of the State University College at Geneseo has been named vice president of news for Gannett Broadcasting. Gannett Co. Inc. announced that Ellen Crooke will join Mike Valentine in leading news functions for Gannett's 46 TV stations. Gannett also is the parent company of the Democrat and Chronicle Media Group.

"Ellen is a passionate and innovative leader who is committed to reinventing local journalism in this digital age. We're excited to have her on the corporate team," Dave Lougee, president of Gannett Broadcasting, said in a statement.

Crooke joined Gannett in 2002 as vice president of news at Buffalo's WGRZ-TV. During her tenure there, the station's news ratings went from last to first, according to a statement announcing the hire. She was most recently the news director at WXIA-TV in Atlanta.

Ukrainian FCU opens in Webster

The Ukrainian Federal Credit Union has opened a second local branch, located in the Wegmans Plaza on Holt Road in Webster. The credit union, started in 1953 by Ukrainian-Americans, is headquartered in Irondequoit. The financial institution serves 6,500 members locally and more than 18,000 members nationwide, focusing on the communities of Ukrainian and Slavic churches, cultural organizations, and Ukrainian language schools. Services are available in both English and Ukrainian languages, and at nine branches, ranging from Vancouver, Washington, to Boston.

"We are very pleased to add another branch office in the Rochester area in order to meet the needs of our existing members and offer services to new members," said Olga Lebedko, CEO of the credit union, in a statement. According to Ukrainian FCU, more than 1,000 of its members live in Webster.

ON THE MOVE



LAUREN VAN HORN Company: Manage Emy Spin of Rochester. New job: Operations manager. Previous job: Sales associate. Home: Rochester.



JAMES SCHEIRER Company: LeChiffre Location Services LLC. New job: Project executive. Previous job: Senior project manager. Home: Webster.



EVAN HOKI Company: The Strong. New job: Senior operations manager and chief economist. Previous job: Graduate student, Cornell University. Home: Rochester.



MICHELLE COOK Company: Buckingham Properties. New job: Assistant manager. Home: Perkiott.



MEGAN PATRICK Company: Roberts Corp. New job: Account executive. Previous job: Media manager. Home: Rochester.



TARA VACCARO Company: Manage Emy Spin of Rochester. New job: Operations manager. Previous job: Assistant case administrator. Home: Webster.



AMY PURCELL-COSGROVE Company: Buckingham Properties. New job: Property staff accountant. Previous job: Webdesign Communications. Home: Rochester.



DEBORAH KENYON Company: Mary Carole Children's Center. New job: Quality manager. Previous job: Case manager. Home: Webster.



CHRIS LENZI Company: DiMarzio Builders. New job: General manager. Previous job: Business Development. Home: Spencerport.



RYAN WEIR Company: ITF Flooring LP. New job: Staff accountant. Previous job: floor provider. Home: Webster.



JEREMY ZWIRSKI Company: Manage Emy Spin of Rochester. New job: Sales associate. Previous job: Manager. Home: Rochester.



BLAIR RAGAN Company: Buckingham Properties. New job: Human resources manager. Previous job: Sales. Home: Webster.



AMY MASTOWSKI Company: Mary Carole Children's Center. New job: Principal and director of preschool. Previous job: Rochester City School District. Home: Ontario, Wayne County.



COLLIN HAWES Company: FS Investment Services. New job: Financial consultant. Previous job: Financial services representative. Home: Greece.



GREG SIMMONS Company: ITF Flooring LP. New job: Staff accountant. Previous job: Not provided. Home: Rochester.

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