

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation Newsletter

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GS Precision Becoming An International Player

Business is booming for GS Precision the precision production machining company. "We're in the process of establishing a facility in Central Europe," says company president Norm Schneeberger.

"Our facility in Europe will help us grow in Vermont," he adds. "Our customers are very interested in using us as a supplier because we will have a multi-national presence."

Even without the impending expansion beyond US borders, GS Precision's bottom line looks rosy. "Business is good...almost too good," says Schneeberger. "There is a very high demand for our products."

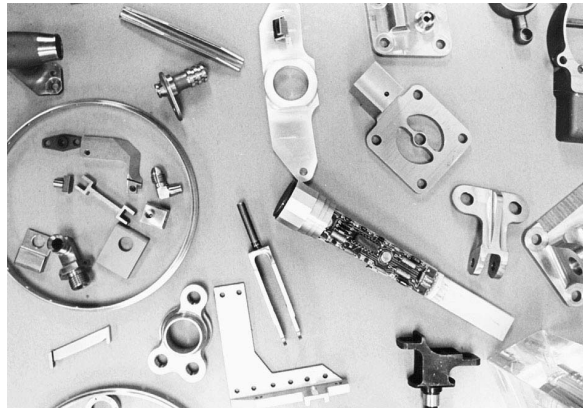
GS Precision has a business tiger by the tail. The company, which was started in 1958 by George Schneeberger in Wilmington, is one of the largest production machining facilities of its kind in the Northeast. The elder Schneeberger, a native of Switzerland, maintains a full schedule at the plant while youngest son Raymond is manufacturing supervisor.

The company makes metal parts for a variety of customers including General Electric, Pratt & Whitney, and BF Goodrich Aerospace. Its parts are found in jet engines, the gyroscopes on the space shuttle, and guided missile tracking systems.

GS produces parts for automobile

airbags and seat belts, natural gas fuel delivery systems, fiber optics and computers.

The company employs 240 working two shifts. "If I could find another 50 machinists I'd hire them," quipped



Schneeberger.

GS Precision relocated to Exit 1 Industrial Park in 1985 and has grown three times to its current 60,000 square foot size.

GS's machining room is a surprisingly quiet expanse of sophisticated CNC lathes and modern metal milling machines. Since tolerances for machine parts must be exact, GS has to have the best equipment and the best-trained machinists.

The company's dedication to quality control has been recognized many times. Recently, the Defense Supply Center in Richmond awarded GS its Best Value Gold Medalist for June 2000.

"Out of several thousand suppliers to the US military only 100 or so get this award," said Schneeberger. "It is based on quality and on time delivery."

The company was also recognized for "Outstanding Achievement" from

Chandler Evans a subsidiary of BF Goodrich Aerospace.

Schneeberger said his company currently exports 15 percent of its products overseas to companies in Sweden, England, Italy and Switzerland among many. GS advertises in international trade magazines but most contracts come by word of mouth.

He said his company's prime contractors are driving globalization and want companies like his to become global as well. The overseas facility GS is working towards "is a very big step," he admitted. "It's a risk we weighed very carefully."

"I couldn't ask for a better place for worker dedication," said Schneeberger.

continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS EDITION...

- * **News From BDCC. Page 2**
- * **2000 Legislature Good for Windham County. Page 3**
- * **Bill McGrath Attends NPE 2000. Page 4**

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Do you have news of interest to the Brattleboro area business community? Has your company expanded, introduced a new product, won an award?

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News From BDCC

By Bill McGrath

This May we at BDCC were co-sponsors of a Job Fair at the Quality Inn. The catalyst for this fair was the recent layoff of 350 people at the Quebecor Printing plant. While no area wants to have that many people lose their jobs at once, the job fair was a hopeful sign that south-eastern Vermont can weather such a large job dislocation.

Twenty-three employers from the area had booths at the fair. Three hundred and thirty prospective employees also attended. Six people left the fair with a new job while 31 people have subsequently been hired after they're meeting with employers.

Interested prospective employees came from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York State. Employers had job listings posted for easy access. While waiting their turn to talk with employers, prospectives were treated to a variety of foods and snacks.

Many companies are eager to hire and some are now offering immediate benefits and sign up bonuses.

It appears that there is pent-up demand for truck drivers in this region. A truck-driving seminar was well attended.

The employers who attended have said they were happy with the event, the number of people attending, and the quality of the prospective employees.

I expect this job fair will become an annual event. Look for one next spring. While this area has lost 550 jobs since February, overall the economy is good. Unemployment statewide is low at 2.5 percent and this is not expected to rise



significantly in the foreseeable future according to Department of Employment and Training commissioner, Steve Gold.

Those workers recently laid off should find jobs soon, albeit at lower wages initially. I expect they will reach the wage levels they had within 18 months of hiring.

I'd like to see some entrepreneurial growth from former employees. We here at BDCC can help with information about financing and other aspects of starting a business.

We will be holding a seminar about growing your business in Windham County this September. The seminar will cover financing, state permits, tax credits and government bid opportunities. Look for information in the media.

I am pleased to announce that we at BDCC have recruited a new company to our area. Benson Optical will move here in mid-July from Northampton, MA. The company makes precision optical lenses for telescopes and sophisticated cameras. Currently five people are employed by the company but plans are to grow to 25 employees.

2000 Legislature Good For Windham County

For our Winter 2000 issue we asked Senator Peter Shumlin (D-Windham) Senate Pro Tem about the upcoming legislative agenda, and what he saw as the major issues. We recently asked him to sum up the session.

"It was an unusually good session for Windham Co. In terms of pork Windham Co. did better than it has done in many years."

Shumlin said Brattleboro did well in terms of appropriations. "We completed the \$300,000 search for money to create the Robert Gibson Memorial River Garden Project."

This year the legislature appropriated \$150,000 adding to the 1999 session's appropriation in the same amount. "Building a Better Brattleboro deserves credit for helping this pass," he said.

While local taxpayers have already Okayed a \$4 million bond to build the downtown parking garage, monies were obtained from federal and state sources in an 80/10/10 ratio that will negate the bond, said Shumlin.

"It will mean that Brattleboro is get-



Sen. Peter Shumlin

ting \$4 million they weren't expecting," he said. "The local tax payer won't carry a penny of this funding."

The reconstruction of Putney Road from the roundabout to downtown is back on the map as a priority project for the Agency of Transportation," he said. "We're going to see bike paths, pedestrian walkways and more logical access to

the roads."

In the waning hours of the legislature Shumlin was able to put language into a miscellaneous tax bill that gives Northeast Cooperatives tax credits for their Phase Two and Three building projects. This bill includes tax credits on building supplies, an exemption for fuel and equipment up to five years and other tax stabilization issues.

The legislature also removed the sales tax on clothing items costing less than \$110. This is a major boon to Brattleboro, according to Shumlin. "It's having an immediate effect," he said. "You can shop for back to school clothing without paying a sales tax."

The legislature completed an overhaul of the state's banking regulations he

termed "the most comprehensive update of banking statutes."

This session also revamped the universal commercial code. "The insurance companies and banks had their best session in many years," he said.

On improvements to Act 250, Shumlin was terse. "Nothing changed."

On the controversial Gay Marriage bill, he said, "it took a lot of courage to pass. It is controversial but will serve Vermont well."

A major disappointment for him was the defeat of legislation to regulate the price of pharmaceuticals. "We're still focused on reducing the price of pharmaceuticals next session," he said. "Our legislature didn't have the courage to pass the same type of bill as in Maine. The pharmaceutical industry beat us. It's absurd we have to pay 60 to 70 percent more for prescription drugs than our neighbors in Canada."

GS Precision

continued from page 1

"Bill McGrath did a great job marketing us in Hanover at the recent Manufacturer's Show," he adds.

"BDCC is why we're in this industrial park," he said. They helped us with VEDA financing. We have a long relationship. BDCC gets high marks for their efforts."

GS Precision, 802-257-5200.



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Norman and George Schneeberger.

Bill McGrath attends NPE 2000

BDCC head Bill McGrath recently attended the National Plastics Exposition 2000 held at McCormick Place in Chicago. The five-day event, June 19-23, saw 89,000 attending. The show filled 1.1 million square feet of exposition space.

McGrath represented Windham Co interests. He is upbeat about his visit. "We got eight solid leads, (companies making a decision within 18 months) and about six I would consider lookers," he said.

In the solid lead category are companies looking to expand into another state and Vermont is in the running.

Companies said McGrath "ask about the workforce and what the unemploy-

ment rate is." (Currently 3.3 percent in the Brattleboro area.)

"We spoke to a big plant that was going to employ 300," he said.

"Companies are also asking about the cost of electricity, because six percent of their operating cost is electricity-based," said McGrath.

Building space and technology were also on the minds of those interested in a Vermont relocation or expansion. The smallest plant showing interest would need 50,000 square feet and the largest 200,000 square feet of space.

Prospective companies were pleased to learn Vermont Technical College is starting a program in plastic engineering.

They were also interested in

Vermont's tax credits for capital investment and hiring.

But problems persist for McGrath as he tries to attract business to Windham Co. "Vermont is not perceived very well by business," he admitted. They see us as not wanting industry, something I've been fighting for 15 years."

"They see the degree of difficulty getting permit approval and an unfriendly to business legislature as anti-business," said McGrath.

But not all is negative. "The workforce is well perceived as productive."

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