



Photo: Jeremy Saley



## WISCONSIN MOTY

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## WISCONSIN MOTY By: Ellen Klug

On February 21st, I traveled with John Freismuth, Doug Billings, Amy Bettis, and Jennifer Schloesser to the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee, WI, for the 2018 Wisconsin Manufacturer's of the Year award. This was my first time going to this event in which M3 Insurance nominated us for the large company category.

The WI MOTY awards recognize excellence and celebrates the successes of manufacturers within our state: the innovations, quality jobs, philanthropy, advances in technology and commitment to customer service. All in all, 84 companies applied for this award and 28 companies were nominated.

The Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee is an experience in itself: large paintings framed in elegant frames,

chandeliers hanging from the beautifully painted ceilings, and tall basketball players from the Boston Celtics walking around the lobby. There was never a dull moment.

Even though we did not win it was an honor to be nominated.





**MAINTAINING SAFETY WITH OSHA TRAINING** By: Amy Bettis

On January 24th, Lisa Prestwich and I attended an OSHA training hosted by the WisCon Program. This training not only provided legal compliance education, but resources to help us find and prevent future incidents as part of a hazard identification and tracking system.

It's critical to follow established protocols regarding workplace injury or illness. When an incident occurs, both the supervisors and employees need to completely fill out an accident report for HR. The safety committee will determine the root cause and possible preventive actions. Proper and timely documentation is essential for both OSHA compliance and worker's compensation benefits to prevent non-compliance issues and/or delays, accessing benefits, and improving work safety.

**3X SGIA SAFETY AWARD WINNER** By: Amy Bettis

Empire participated in Specialty Graphics and Imaging Association Safety Recognition Program for the past three years. The SGIA program is a year-long endeavor to create a safer, healthier workplace and identify OSHA compliance obligations. Program requirements encourage businesses to check their work spaces for any safety concerns or OSHA violations and identify any areas that need improvement. Key elements of the safety program are written safety programs and action items, employee involvement and education, and workplace review and maintenance.

Out of 60 companies nationwide who entered the program for 2018, only 18 companies were recognized to have successfully completed the program. Empire Screen Printing is proud to announce we have earned the SGIA Safety Recognition Award for the third year in a row. Thank you to all employees, especially those on Empire's Safety Committee. Our success is evident, with 1,065 days no lost-time accidents.

We must remain vigilant and purposeful about maintaining a safe work environment. There are NO shortcuts to safety.



**SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**SAFETY COORDINATOR**

Keith Cook.....R&D

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- Lee Veith.....Plant Manager
- John Johnson.....Operations Coordinator
- Autum Jacobs.....Human Resources
- Sheri Noble.....Insurance Agent
- Amy Bettis.....Account Manager / Marketing
- Nancy Gilbertson.....Customer Service
- Curtis Johnson.....I.T.
- Tom Donaldson.....Digital Manager
- Shane Hulbert.....Doming Supervisor
- Theresa Antony.....SVS Operator



**EMPIRE'S EMS** By: Cathy Buttell

In order to maintain our Green Tier 1 certification through the Wisconsin DNR, Empire is required to submit an annual report for our Environmental Management System (EMS). Our 2017-2018 report was submitted in February 2019 and will be available on our website (awaiting approval).

**Highlights from our 2017-2018 Annual Report:**

- We received two **awards**: The "I Am Not Afraid" award, presented by the Wisconsin Family Business Awards and "Inspiring Sustainability" from the Sustainability Institute.
- Our **2018 Biennial National Sales Meeting**, Partners in Printing, emphasized the need to work together, building strategic partnerships to help ensure a strong and sustainable industry for future generations.
- Through documenting our energy usage, we have discovered that there has been a 27% increase in the number of presses since 2012\* and an increase in sales, but our **electricity and natural gas usage has decreased 1-2% overall**. This is a positive pattern and shows our sustainable efforts have been working.  
\*Percentage reflects printing presses only and does not include support equipment.
- Our 12-color Legacy press has increased our capabilities by 25% while seeing an **84.32% energy savings** from the previous 6-color 38x50.
- By adjusting the local exhaust ventilation system in die making, we were able to achieve an approximate **66% reduction in formaldehyde levels**.
- By converting fluorescent T12 bulbs with LED T8 bulbs in the 1998 building edition, we accomplished a **41.64% decrease in kW usage**.
- An **external audit** is scheduled for May 2019 (this is a Green Tier 1 requirement).

**Future Objectives for 2018-2019 Fiscal Year:**

1. Reduce our annual landfill waste to 23.85% by 2022.
2. Implement sustainable print methods with equipment using UV LED technology:
  - » Develop a roll-to-roll screen print unit using UV LED technology (press design phase only).
  - » Create baseline metrics for the new Graphium Press.
3. Convert T8 fluorescent bulbs to T8 LED bulbs, yielding a 20-35% decrease in watt usage.
4. Re-establish external stakeholders.
5. Continue making improvements based on our 2018 internal audit.



**GREEN COMMITTEE**

- Jennifer Schloesser.....Creative Director
- Amy Bettis.....Account Manager / Marketing
- Cathy Buttell.....Project Manager
- Keith Cook.....R&D
- Jeff Gierok.....Electrical Technician

**CHRISTMAS PARTY 2018** By: Amy Bettis

Christmas spirit abounded this year at the annual Christmas party at Stoney Creek on Saturday, December 15th. It was a year of over-the-top outfits and ugly Christmas sweaters. A record turnout of 360+ people comprised of employees and their invited guests, enjoyed a holiday buffet with prime rib and rustic Italian chicken provided by Blue Moon Restaurant and Catering.

Jim Brush delivered his heartfelt thanks to employees for the amazing job they did in 2018 and predicted bigger and better things to come. He was in rare form, teasing and joking with employees during "Let's Make a Deal." Employees had the chance to win cash or prizes, like a 50" flat screen TV, Xbox One, patio firepit, and more. At the end of the night, the luckiest employee, Brad Ames (flexo, 3rd shift) won the mystery prize drawing: a vacation day and \$100 cash.

Numerous new employees commented to Jim, John Freismuth, and Christmas committee members what an awesome party this was. The spirit of togetherness and genuine camaraderie was something they had not experienced at previous employment. It's good to know we all can have a blast outside of work to connect on an entirely different level. We are one big, extended, happy Empire family. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. May we keep those positive vibes throughout 2019!



**CROCKPOT RUMBLE: GOOD THYMES** By: Ellen Klug

2019 marked Empire's 9th annual cook-off for charity. This year, the Crockpot Rumble benefited GROW La Crosse, an organization bringing gardening and healthy eating to the schools and kids in our area. This year, we raised \$1,073.46 from soup, chili, bake sale, and raffle prizes. Empire is matching this donation, making the grand total \$2,146.92 to be donated to GROW La Crosse!

Our panel of judges included Irish Fest Board of Directors President (Pat Stephens), 2018 Oktoberfest Festmaster (Mike Keil), 2018 Mrs. Oktoberfest (Mary Mikleson), 2018 Riverfest Commodore (Matt Binsfield), and three members of GROW La Crosse (Linda Vale, Judson Steinbeck, and Katie Wagoner). The judges got to taste each soup and chili and rate them on a scale of 1-5.



There were two categories this year: soup and chili. The employees that placed 3rd in each category won \$20, employees in 2nd won \$30, and the winners of each category won \$40. The overall winner won an additional \$10, bringing their grand total to \$50!

Our winners are: Ellen Klug (3rd place chili), Maria Selezneva (3rd place soup), Rhonda Peterson (2nd place chili), Jennifer Schloesser (2nd place soup), Steve Vinson (1st place chili), and Jenny Ledman (1st place soup and overall winner).

Along with the cook-off and bake sale, there was also two raffle prizes. The raffle prizes were 1 day paid vacation and an Oktoberfest package worth up to \$100. Our lucky raffle winners are Theresa Antony (small value stream, 1 day paid vacation) and Steve Limpert (accounting, Oktoberfest package). Congratulations, Theresa and Steve!

Thank you to everyone who participated, whether it be bringing in soup, chili, or baked goods, attending the event on your break, purchasing raffle tickets, or volunteering to help with the event. Each person's contribution allowed us to make a wonderful donation to a fantastic organization.





**VP of OPERATIONS** By: Doug Billings

We are thrilled to announce the promotion of Alexis Marsh to Vice President of Operations. Alexis joined Empire five years ago and has advanced progressively through more responsible positions in the customer service area, where she has played a key role as the Customer Service Manager. She has been highly influential in improving processes in customer service and has shown an exemplary commitment to her role as manager.



Alexis brings a wealth of experience to her new position, and we are excited about her new role at the company. In her new role, she is responsible for monitoring company activities to meet Empire goals for growth and profitability. She is responsible for identifying needs and developing programs and policies to support the effective execution of stated functions for the company.

Please join us in congratulating Alexis on her promotion.

**VISITING STAIRTEK** By: Jeremy Saley

In the fall of 2018, a company out of northern Kentucky did a simple Google search for a printer with a Graphium and found an article about Empire Screen Printing. That company was Stairtek. Stairtek is a major distributor of prefinished and unfinished hardwood stairs.

Wood laminate flooring has been around since the 70's, but there has been no one in the industry to help home improvers match the simple, beautiful, and convenient flooring to the staircases in their homes. Stairtek realized a huge potential in the home improvement industry by providing laminate stairs to match current and popular wood designs already being sold in stores like Lowe's and Lumber Liquidators. Their long history of working with real wood stairs and realizing how important color matching is makes them the perfect company to facilitate this niche in the industry.

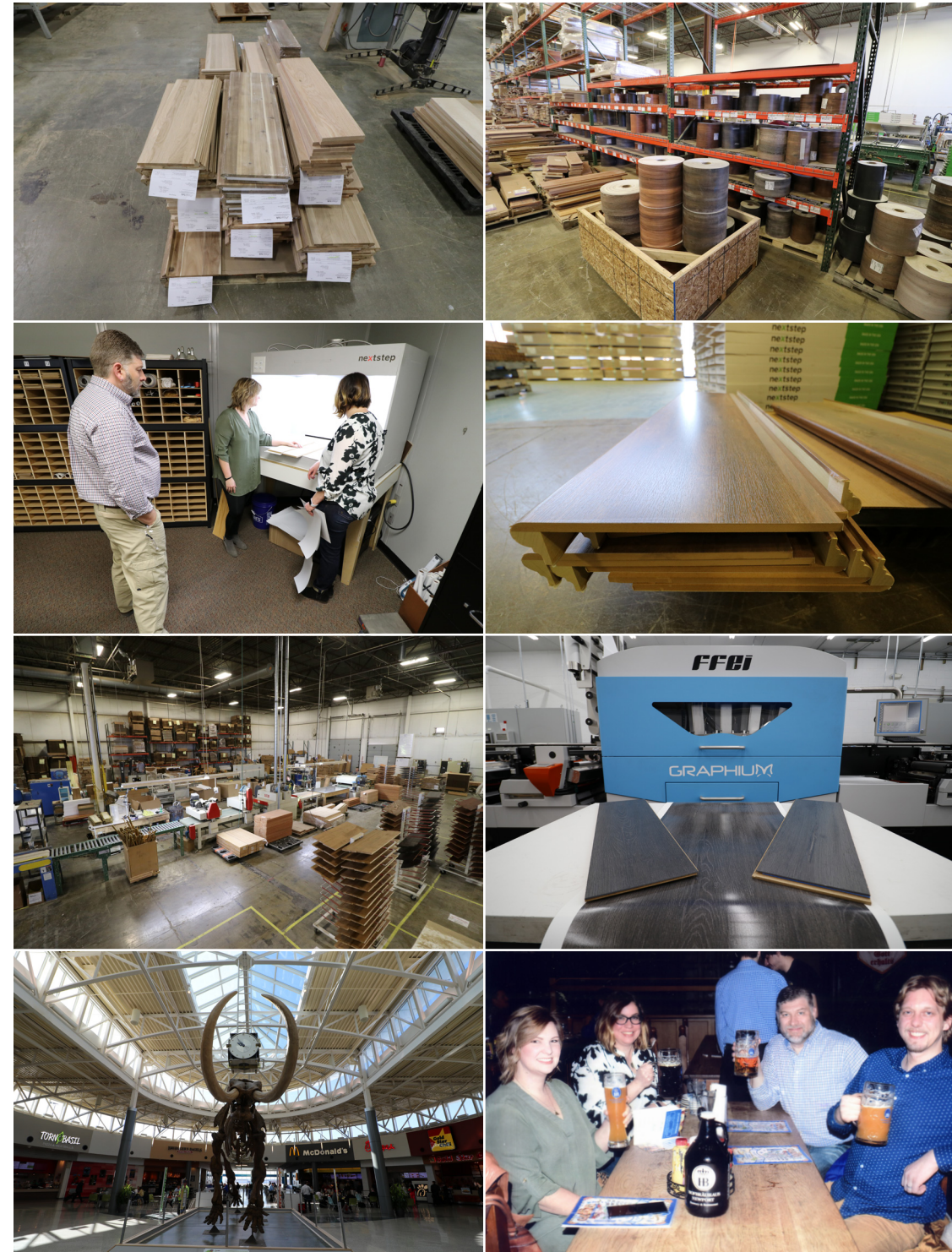
Last year, Empire purchased the Graphium from Fujifilm with every intention to stay ahead in the print industry. The Graphium allows us to work with companies, like Stairtek and their design team, to produce complex artwork like that found in intricate laminate wood flooring designs.

Stairtek was recently integrated with an investment group called AMEND Ventures. AMEND Ventures realized Stairtek is on to something big, and is helping them become a major supplier of printed laminate wood flooring.

Since November 2018, Empire has produced only a fraction of designs Stairtek plans to offer their customers. Stairtek was impressed with Empire's color matching, print quality, turn-time, and overall customer service, and they plan to extend their product offering this year. Empire will be their main printing partner.

In February, 2019, Doug Billings, Jennifer Schloesser, and I were invited to meet the team and tour Stairtek's facility in Enranger, KY, located just on the other side of the Ohio River from Cincinnati, OH. I was impressed with the company's product offerings and seeing first hand what their long term goals are. With big plans for their future and new designs on the way, we are excited to welcome Stairtek's partnership and we're grateful they have chosen Empire to help them succeed.

We're looking forward to a growing relationship between Stairtek and Empire Screen Printing, and look forward to the next opportunity waiting for Empire, just a Google search away.





## ANNIVERSARIES

### DECEMBER

John Johnson.....33 years  
 Kathy Vaughan.....30 years  
 Dave Collins.....24 years  
 Steve J. Johnson.....23 years  
 Rita Howe.....22 years  
 Steve Vinson.....19 years  
 Eric Coleman.....14 years  
 John Yehle.....13 years  
 Kathy Inglett.....13 years  
 Jackson Huus.....6 years  
 Zach Johnson.....3 years  
 Richard Cornforth.....1 year

### JANUARY

Steve Nelson.....32 years  
 Randy Hoff.....30 years  
 Fred Baures.....26 years  
 Chris Mikunda.....21 years  
 Jennifer Schloesser.....19 years  
 Mai Khang.....12 years  
 Eric Wienkes.....11 years  
 Nick Wolfe.....9 years  
 Sylvester Kendrick.....8 years  
 Allie Pedrin.....8 years  
 Richard Burg.....5 years  
 Steve Limpert.....2 years  
 Julia Low.....1 year  
 Anthony Vue.....1 year  
 Katie Larocco.....1 year  
 Jeremy Seidel.....1 year  
 Emily Syring.....1 year  
 Cody Volden.....1 year  
 Anita Valley.....1 year

### FEBRUARY

John Freismuth.....27 years  
 Shane Hulburt.....25 years  
 Guy Gregerson.....23 years  
 Jason Harnisch.....18 years  
 Doug Billings.....16 years  
 Angie Severson.....15 years  
 Scott Gates.....12 years  
 Burt Kendrick.....12 years  
 Stacie Boisen.....12 years  
 Leanna Klotz.....11 years  
 Dan Poff.....10 years  
 Josh Parr.....7 years  
 Teresa Mills.....5 years  
 Donny Weber.....3 years  
 Jacob Deschaine.....3 years  
 Bill Weber.....1 year  
 Georgina Cundy-Lalande.....1 year  
 Alissa Stenberg.....1 year

### NEW EMPLOYEES

Keegan Ryba  
 Melissa Oldenburg  
 Pamela Eddy  
 Andrew Sheffield  
 Henry Swannagan  
 Jessica Littlejohn  
 Kristen Corriveau  
 Mark Anderson  
 Marlon Hanson  
 Nenita Anderegg

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**SELECTION SUNDAY**.....March 17  
**FIRST ROUND STARTS**.....March 21  
**BRACKET DEADLINE**.....March 21 @ 10 am

Employees will play for the chance to win a traveling trophy and ultimate bragging rights. Results will be posted in the next newsletter! Good luck to all involved.

Deadline for the next newsletter: 05/24/2019

**Coordinator:** Jennifer Schloesser | **Editor:** Rebecca Burg | **Layout:** Ellen Klug  
**Contributors:** Ellen Klug, Amy Bettis, Cathy Buttell, Doug Billings, and Jeremy Saley



### FOOD TRUCKS AT EMPIRE

Tuesday, May 7.....Big Boar BBQ  
 Tuesday, May 21.....Cloudy's Gourmet Brats  
 Wednesday, June 5.....Wood Shed Pizza  
 Wednesday, June 19.....Fat Pat's BBQ  
 Wednesday, July 17.....Wood Shed Pizza  
 Thursday, August 1.....Taco Town  
 Thursday, August 15.....Apothik  
 Tuesday, August 27.....Cloudy's Gourmet Brats  
 Thursday, September 12.....Apothik  
 Tuesday, September 24.....Big Boar BBQ

\* Menus and other information will be posted before each truck arrives at Empire.