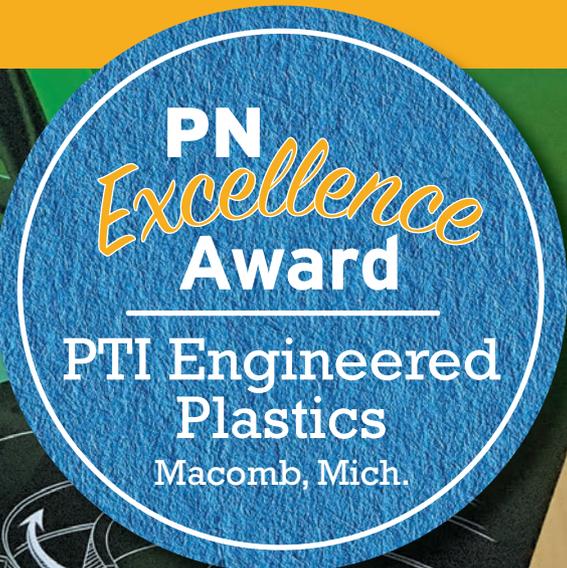


For donating face shields and many more efforts, PTI is the winner of the 2021 PN Excellence Award for Industry and Public Service. Plastics News photos by Erin Sloan



PTI Engineered Plastics honored for its positive influence on the community

By Don Loepp
Plastics News Editor

Macomb, Mich. — You'd be hard-pressed to find a plastics processor that does more for the community than PTI Engineered Plastics.

Community outreach has been difficult during the pandemic. But Kelley Riley, the custom injection molder's sales coordinator, said PTI managed to keep up with some longtime commitments and initiate some new ones.

PTI supplies plastic components and assemblies and specializes in low-volume, complex parts. The company was founded in 1984 and operates from a 160,000-square-foot advanced manufacturing plant that includes both clean room and controlled environment space.

PTI supplies a diverse mix of end markets, including medical, automotive, defense and aerospace, and commercial and consumer products.

PTI had a successful 2021 and earned a spot as a finalist in the *Plastics News* Processor of the Year awards. It posted strong marks in customer relations, employee relations and environmental performance.

"Of course, the whole world had to deal with the pandemic and the supply chain issues that



PTI CEO Mark Rathbone said "the whole world had to deal with the pandemic and the supply chain issues that came out and all the employee issues."

came out and all the employee issues," CEO Mark Rathbone said in a recent interview at the company's Macomb headquarters.

The company was considered an essential supplier and stayed open throughout the pandemic.

"It all came down in March of 2020, where we had to deal with government mandates on how to deal with people in close contact, how to deal with people who actually contracted COVID. It kind of changed our whole world," he said.

"We were not familiar with all

that as a company. We referred to it as being like building the plane as we're flying it," Rathbone said. "But we kept everybody busy."

In one project, the company made and gave away 160,000 face shields to front-line workers.

"That was kind of the glue for our employees, because they felt connected with something and they felt good about that. And it was all volunteer," Rathbone said.

The largest single donation, 19,600 shields, went to the Gleaners Community Food Bank. PTI also donated personal protective



PTI supports a wide variety of educational programs, such as the Little Inventors program. It chose to work with a fourth-grade student inventor who came up with something she called "the Ocean Snake of Doom" that could clean up ocean plastic.

PTI Engineered Plastics photo

equipment to hospitals, skilled nursing centers, dental offices, school districts, transportation services, restaurants and other community charities.

In September, Macomb County recognized PTI with a Hometown Hero Award for that project. And for donating face shields and many more efforts, PTI is the winner of the 2021 *PN* Excellence Award for Industry and Public Service.

The company supports a wide variety of educational programs. "The biggest new thing that we did was something called the Little Inventors program. It was

never here in the United States; we were the first state and the first company to be approached," Riley said.

PTI decided to participate because the program exposes young students to technical careers. The company was one of two "makers" in the United States to join the pilot program. It chose to work with a fourth-grade student inventor who came up with something she called "the Ocean Snake of Doom" that could clean up ocean plastic.

Designers at PTI held virtual meetings with the student and her teacher, then took her original



PTI employees volunteer at the annual Clinton River Cleanup every September to pick up debris, remove invasive species and stencil storm drains. PTI Engineered Plastics photo

sketch and built a prototype scale model of her invention.

“There was a lot of back-and-forth, and it was at least something we could still do virtually, which was incredible,” Riley said. “At the end, we had a virtual reveal with the school, which was really cool. All the kids were like, ‘Oh my gosh, this thing really came to life.’”

PTI is a longtime host of Manufacturing Day for local high school students, and that continued even through the pandemic. The goal of Manufacturing Day is to dispel misperceptions that manufacturing is dirty, dangerous and financially unrewarding.

“We’ve been trying to get involved in projects that are more tied to the community and into the schools,” Riley said. “We thought, ‘How can we make manufacturing look cool? How can we make this industry really exciting?’”

“All the kids think that grandpa’s factory was really gross. But then they come in here and they see that there’s a lot going on in the world of plastics,” she said.

After a year of virtual Manufacturing Day visits in 2020, the company welcomed 25 students from Eisenhower High School in person in 2021. Students were given an overview in design, tooling, manufacturing and secondary services.

From 2014-20, PTI offered a tuition-free PTI Technical Academy for Macomb County high school students interested in manufacturing and learning new skills. The program was developed jointly by PTI and local schools. Professionals employed at PTI spent their Saturday mornings teaching students about injection molding, shop safety, computer numerically controlled programming, mold making, electrical discharge machining, computer-aided design, mold maintenance, part design, mold design, process engineering and quality engineering.

In addition to technical skills, the academy emphasized workplace readiness skills by reinforcing the importance of interpersonal communication, professional networking and collaboration in the workplace setting.

In 2020, PTI paused the Technical Academy program and chose instead to provide internships for students interested in careers in manufacturing.

“When we started the academy back in 2014, trade programs were pretty few and far between in the schools. So we tried to fill that gap,” Riley said. “But as it’s developed, trades are coming back into school. We’re going to get that going again. It may be

more of a one-on-one job-shadowing experience, as opposed to having an additional class every Saturday.”

The company also supports projects aimed at protecting the environment and reducing waste of natural resources. PTI employees volunteer at the annual Clinton River Cleanup every September to pick up debris, remove invasive species and stencil storm drains.

They also collaborate with Great Lakes Recycling to host a community recycling event for Macomb County. And since they’ve started to participate with their local Watershed Council, they’ve removed 3.1 tons of garbage and debris from the local river system.

PTI received an honorable mention from the *Detroit Free Press* as a “Michigan Green Citizen” for its efforts in recycling and community environment programs.

The company also worked with its local utility on several energy-saving programs and invested \$60,000 in lighting upgrades, which reduced its lighting energy usage by more than 18 percent.

Adding closed-loop systems for water treatment and recycling cut the company’s water usage by 40 percent annually, or the equivalent of 80,500 gallons.

PTI has been named Environmental Supplier of the Year six times by a major automotive manufacturer.

In the company’s Processor of the Year submission, it noted that “by encouraging a positive give-back attitude, we know we can have a tremendous impact and influence on the quality of peoples’ lives in our community.”

Ian Nummer, maintenance manager, said PTI is close to zero-landfill on plastics and is working on reducing its paper and cardboard consumption. It’s also invested in equipment to reduce its power load.

“Our goal is basically to be carbon-free. We’re not quite there yet, but we’re getting there,” Nummer said. “We do a lot, and I think it’s all equally important. I happen to be one of the tree-huggers here at PTI, so I’ve been heavily involved for a long time.”

PTI was also nominated for the Macomb County Business Award for Trailblazer of Future Talent, which recognizes businesses that work with the next generation of talent to ensure they are ready and have the skills for the future.

The company is also a seven-time winner of the Top 100 Workplaces award sponsored by the *Detroit Free Press*.

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