



## **Across the spectrum** Area's manufacturing base is broad and multifaceted

It's difficult to imagine it all started with rockets. Efforts that led to the successful U.S. mission to land on and return from the moon in July 1969 also led to tremendous manufacturing growth. In the wake of the Apollo program, many manufacturers began to diversify. Today, Huntsville boasts a varied and diverse manufacturing base

across a broad spectrum of industry in a wide assortment of locations.

CD manufacturer Cinram is one of Huntsville's biggest employers, and PPG, which makes aircraft windshields, is one of the largest employers. Peebles Industrial Park just off I-565 at the first Mooresville Road exit houses a Bluebell Ice Cream factory and a company that makes electronic security systems for jails. From corrugated boxes to metal doors, copper extruding, air conditioning systems, and high precision machines that mint coins and make razor blades and pop tops, Huntsville and Madison County's manufacturing is alive and well. Here is just a glimpse of what the area manufactures, and where.

### **Chase Industrial Park**

Thirty-five years ago Bob Schwarze, who operated a parking lot sweeper at The Boeing Company, decided one day that he could build a better machine than the one he was operating. Today his company,

By KIMBERLY BALLARD



Glenn Baeske

**CF Flag employee Hilda Sanchez sews a flag at the company's plant in Chase Industrial Park.**

Schwarze Industries, is located in Chase Industrial Park and manufactures several varieties of high-speed street sweepers.

One, the A7000, is one of the "largest, most powerful air sweepers in existence." The company's larger machines can suck up 70 pounds of grit, sand and dirt in 1.2 seconds, according to vice president Jim Adair, and filter it down to a fine particulate to make it environmentally friendly.

Developed by the Madison County Commission, the 1,700-acre Chase Industrial Park is located in northeast Huntsville and contains more than 35 domestic and international companies. Among those are PPG Industries, Cinram and CF Flag.

Available Plastics, also located in Chase, started in the aerospace industry but today makes plastic PVC pipe and tubes. The company has reached out to the retail sector with specialty plastic products like display racks, pool and spa products, and hanging banner systems.

In the textile category, CF Flag Co., which moved to Chase Industrial Park 12 years ago, still uses a cut-and-sew method with only U.S.-made nylon, cotton and heavy polyester. Jack Houser says he moved CF Flag from Chicago because work ethics were better, and efforts by the Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County and economic development committees have always encouraged everyone to succeed. "They made it possible to expand, and even back then, I saw an opportunity to grow my business," Houser



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**CF Flag employees Saturnino Borrachando, left, and Clemensia Rosoules stretch a large flag for final prep and folding.**

says.

"Chase Industrial Park is the most diverse of Huntsville's industrial parks," says Steve Finnell, industrial development director for the Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville/Madison County. "The property is the least expensive, and they have a very organized management team."

The industrial park holds four meetings per year to discuss everything going on with the tenants, from expansion to downsizing to tenant complaints and customer service issues.

## Chelsea Industrial Park

Owned by the City of Huntsville, Chelsea Industrial Park



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**Green Mountain Soap president Richard Hamner presses a newly cut bar of soap into a shaped bar before packaging into boxes.**

is located off Triana Boulevard on the east side of Redstone Arsenal.

McAllister Tools and Machine just built a 13,000-square-foot plant to house its new facility after receiving AS 9100 certification. Having moved from a 3,500-square-foot building that was over 50 years old, Mary Ann McAllister and her husband, Wendell, chose Chelsea over several other industrial parks because it is near existing customers who often come by to check on jobs.

“We are set for exceptional growth,” Mary Ann McAllister says. “This AS 9100 certification will give us opportunities to bid on much bigger and higher precision jobs. Our office area is the size of our entire plant in the old location.”

The company has purchased 10 CNC precision machines to open new opportunities for the business.

In 2001, Richard Hamner started manufacturing pure soaps when he opened Green Mountain Soap in Chelsea Industrial Park. Green Mountain Soap became a part of Huntsville’s diverse manufacturing industry after grandma shared her homemade recipe with Hamner’s kids.



Dave Dieter

**Dwayne Black works on assembling a model 2010 13-liter prototype engine at Navistar.**

“We use a simple batch process, as opposed to a continuous flow method,” Hamner says. “But we have doubled our original production space from 2,000 to 4,000 square feet because we have a new customer who requires custom packaging and perfume ingredients made from a tea that is good

for the skin. It is almost a ministry calling, helping people who suffer from multiple chemical sensitivity due to allergies from perfumed soap.”

Hammer says he chose Chelsea because it is in the city, is dirt-free, the price was right, utilities are reasonable and it has police protection.

### Jetplex Industrial Park

“Fifty-five percent of the country’s population lives east of the Mississippi River,” says Brooks Kracke, director of

Jetplex Industrial Park, a 1,470-acre site which is owned by the Huntsville-Madison County Airport Authority. “Huntsville is a one-day drive from any city.” He says every company that comes to Huntsville prospecting for a location has a laundry list of requirements.

“We ask them to shoot straight,” Kracke says. “If they have questions or concerns, give us a chance to address those issues. Often, we can overcome them.”

He uses Navistar as the perfect example. “Originally, they were concerned about whether Huntsville could provide the skilled workforce needed, since their needs were widely variable. Today, they will tell you that has never been a problem.”

Part of the reason Navistar has not had a problem finding quality workers is because the company pulls employees from a 60-mile area. “They can do that in Huntsville because we don’t have a traffic problem,” Kracke says. “Few cities can say that.”

Navistar assembles diesel engines for the trucking industry. Kracke says Navistar’s annual purchases total \$572 million, and its capital investment in the Jetplex Industrial Park is \$423 million. “That is a significant effect on our community’s economic development.”

### I-565 Industrial Park

The 60-acre I-565 Industrial Park, located at the intersection of I-65 and I-565, is owned by I-565 Partners LLC and is zoned for commercial, industrial, warehousing and technology use.

One of its larger firms is Dura Coat Products, which opened manufacturing operations in Huntsville in September 2002 because the location puts the company within a 500-mile radius of 75 percent of its customers, says Dexter Sunderman, technical director.

“The north-to-south corridor helps us easily ship product to Miami or Toronto, and as far as Houston to the west,” Sunderman says. Dura Coat manufactures heat-cured coatings and baked powder paint for coiled wires on truck trailers, RVs, mobile homes and other uses. The company is one of the top four coil coatings providers, making 150,000 gallons of liquid coating per month.

I-565 tenants also include Clear Channel Radio, CINTAS, Makino, Pratt and Whitney and Schwann’s.

### SouthPointe

Owned by the Hollingsworth Companies of Clinton, Tenn., SouthPointe is the southernmost of Huntsville’s manufacturing parks.

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Tommy Marr, its property manager, says Joe Hollingsworth built the park to be highly diverse as long as the business meets all zoning and development restrictions. "Joe owns four industrial parks and he built SouthPointe because it is clean, and our tenants like that," Marr says.

Teledyne Brown Engineering manufactures energy-related products at SouthPointe, and DHS-DRASH is a military supplier of mobile communications and command posts. "We are definitely in growth mode," says Marr. "Right now, we have nine vacancies and 130,000 square feet available for sale or lease, but in 2009, we will have 384,000 divisible square feet of space for lease to multi-tenants."

Located in Huntsville's northeast quadrant off I-565 where it meets I-65, SouthPointe will lease, sell, or build to suit.

## Ambulances

Engineer George Epps chose the Huntsville area to set up his Excellance



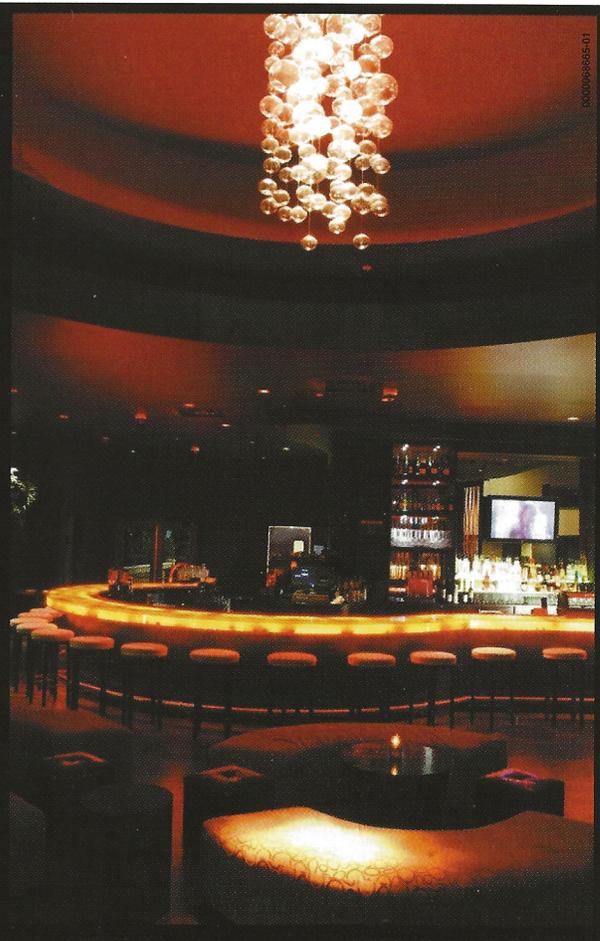
Glenn Baeske

### Workers put final touches on ambulances at Excellance, Inc.

Inc. ambulance manufacturing facility near Madison because of its business environment and friendly people. "Larger cities have problems we don't see here. Our workers have a strong work ethic and positive attitudes," says George's son, Charlie Epps, now presi-

dent of the company his father started.

Excellance employs highly skilled aluminum welders to continuously weld the outer skin and all internal and external compartments into the ambulance's frame, a process rare in manufacturing today, but significant to the

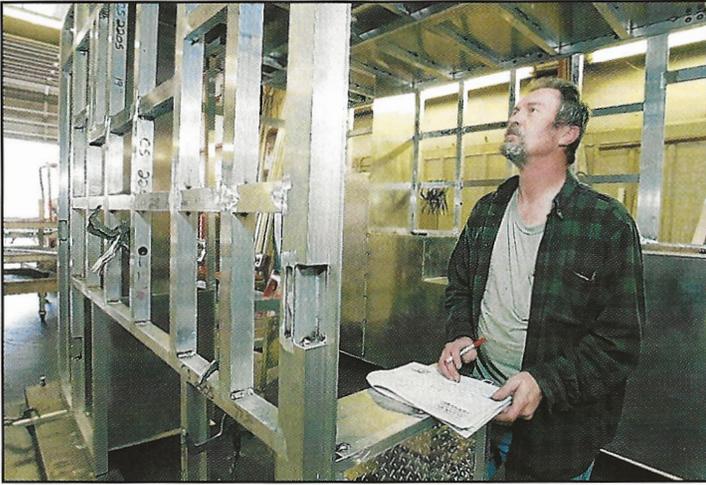


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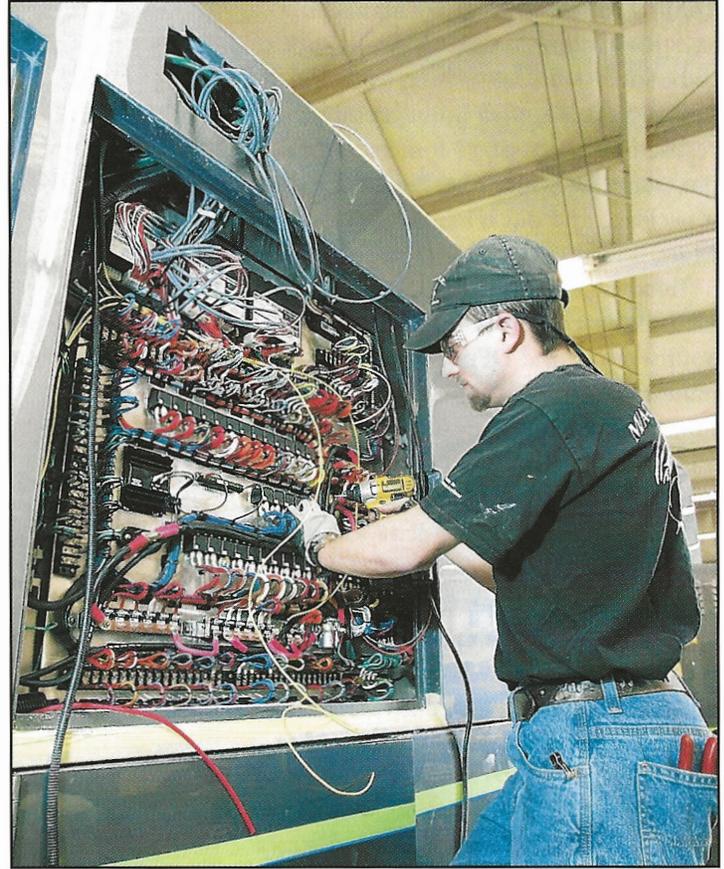


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**Welder Allen Keel checks a drawing inside the framework of an ambulance box at Excellance.**

quality. The production work is all done manually. The grinding, priming, sanding, buffing and electrical wiring requires a minimum of 93 highly skilled employees to build the most expensive but highest quality ambulance, fire rescue and emergency vehicles used today.

“The paint is better than you will see on a Lexus or a Mercedes,” Charlie says, “You can read the face of your watch in the reflection.”



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**Brent Gilbert, an electrical assembly technician, works on a panel for an Excellance ambulance.**

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