**BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS**

**JT Companies Celebrate Expansion**

That young entrepreneur who mows your lawn could be tomorrow’s CEO.

That’s the story of brothers Josh and Jake Thompson, who grew up near Chicopee. Today, Josh is the owner and CEO of JT Companies and Jake is president of JT Home and Lawn. Both are proud Southeast High School and Pittsburg State alumni. Recently, they hosted a Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce coffee and ribbon cutting to showcase 7,500 square feet of new office and shop space at their companies’ headquarters.

It began in 2013, with a simple lawn care business and 15 lawns. It thrived and in March of 2020, JT Construction Company was founded. They provide a variety of services, including concrete, earthwork, and steel buildings.

Josh looks back at starting a business just as the nation shut down in the early days of the Covid 19 pandemic with a sense of humor, joking about how he couldn’t even get a sandwich.

Their persistence paid off and growth has been rapid since. Today, JT Companies employ about 35 employees and are looking grow.

Josh is optimistic about the future of JT Companies and can’t express how much the local support they have received means to them and hopes to give back to the community by providing the best possible service.

*Ron Womble – The Morning Sun*

**Site Selection**

I attended a meeting with a group of professionals involved in helping businesses select locations for their operations. It’s important to know the total number of site selectors is small, so it was an exceptional opportunity to have a meeting with a group of them.

There is serious competition when it comes to attracting a new business. When analyzing a location, selectors work with clients to define criteria, including infrastructure, environmental consideration, workforce, and more.

Once criteria are determined and potential properties are identified, site evaluations start in earnest. Site evaluations involves assessing physical conditions, researching site history, environmental/regulatory assessments, and more.

In the final decision-making phase different elements are weighed, real estate negotiations begin, and economic incentives are explored.

One important take away is economic incentives aren’t considered until the end of the process. They have already decided where they want to be before they ask for money. Companies want to know you welcome their presence and are willing to simplify their time and effort. But, they are pressing the incentive, consider if you want them in your community. Pittsburg has what it takes to be a compelling partner.

*Jay Byers, Associate City Manager – The Morning Sun*

**Longtime Pittsburg company breaks ground on new facility**

On March 12th, a long time Pittsburg company broke ground on a new facility. The city, chamber of commerce, and construction representative all gathered to celebrate the beginning of an expansion to the Inteplast Group-Pitt Plastics’ Pittsburg facility. Pitt Plastics is part of the Inteplast Group, the largest manufacturer of integrated plastics in North America.

Chamber of Commerce President Blake Benson noted the significant investment along with the history of Inteplast Group-Pitt Plastics.

The beginning of an exciting project here at Pitt Plastics. He emphasized how synonymous Pitt Plastics has been with Pittsburg as one of the major employers for well over 50 years. Since Inteplast bought the company, it’s continued to grow.

Koehn Construction Services will oversee the project, and Lyle Koehn gave an overview. The 200,000 sq ft warehouse expansion will have 14,000 sq foot of office space, and a parking lot.

General Manager Aron Jahr noted the significance of the expansion. The project has been in the works for several years as they have faced storage problems. The original warehouse held about 5,000 pallet locations and the new facility will hold almost 14,000. The project should be completed by early 2025.

*The Morning Sun - Aaron Pyle*

**Senator Moran visits Eagle-Picher Technologies**

Kansas Senator Jerry Moran made his way to Pittsburg on March 28th as he visited Eagle-Picher Technologies to talk with city and company representatives, something he does once every four years.

Acquired by Tuthill Corporation in 2023, Eagle-Picher Technologies is a significant maker of batteries and energy devices, having built its Pittsburg site about 2006. The company has been serving the mission-critical space, defense and aviation battery markets for more than 80 years.

One of the topics discussed during a company overview was attracting and keeping local talent from Pittsburg State University. They want to focus on developing skills here in the area. They can’t find battery chemistry engineers anywhere and want to work with PSU to set up a battery curriculum for engineering technology courses.

For now, they have to hire from abroad, having people come in but eventually leave. They would rather help attract and retain local talent by paying well.

Moran talked about the positive impact the company has had through visits and conversations with his staff. Moran hopes the company will help him grow the Kansas economy like he has a dream for. He wants to make sure people who love science, mathematics, engineering, and research can not only get educated in Kansas, but they can also be employed here.

*The Morning Sun – Aaron Pyle*

**Watco earns national honors**

At the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) annual conference, Watco Executive Chairman Rick Webb was inducted into the Short Line Hall of Fame. Watco team member Sam Pederson was named Safety Person of the Year, the company received the Veterans Engagement Award, the Business Development Award, and an honorable mention for Short Line Railroad of the Year.

Webb said he was honored to be in the same hall of fame class with ‘two short line legends.’ He also thanked all of the Watco team members for all they do for the customers.

Dan Smith, Watco CEO said Webb was truly deserving of the honor. He believes the definition of a true hall of famer is consistency, and sees no greater inductee than Rick Webb. He complimented that Webb makes sure that he makes someone or something better every day.

The ASLRRA created the Short Line Railroad Industry Hall of Fame in 2020 to recognize short line railroad “visionaries and stars who through their dedication, commitment and achievement best exemplify the qualities of innovation, entrepreneurialism, perseverance and service that have advanced the short line railroad industry.”

*The Morning Sun – Staff reports*