



SPM Gaskets changes owners

New owner to bring more jobs to Spencer

SPENCER – Ryan Hunter purchased the business assets of SPM International Inc., a gasket manufacturer in Spencer, in October of 2011, and has been working hard to get the facility up to his standards. Hunter, a self-proclaimed “gasket geek,” believes SPM can do things that are in high demand in the United States.

Hunter couldn't say enough good things about the employees at SPM Gaskets. “The people here are tremendously productive.” The compliments didn't stop with just the employees. “Everyone is so nice here. The typical look in California is a scowl. Here, when you drive down the street, everyone waves, people open doors for you. People like each other here,” said Hunter.

Hunter began SCE Gaskets in Lancaster, Calif., in 1989. SCE Gaskets quickly became the biggest name in copper gaskets, and now offers cutting edge engine gaskets of all types. SCE Gaskets, Inc. is the world leader in racing and hard core engine gaskets. Several gasket categories, such as embossed copper exhaust gaskets, self sealing copper head gaskets, and integral combustion seals, are the result of SCE Gaskets' racetrack-to-roadway innovations.

Hunter is bringing two-thirds of the jobs in California to the Spencer facility. There are currently eight full-time employees at SPM, and Hunter believes he can have approximately 35 in the building. The 30,000 square foot building could be expanded to three times that size; the lot allows for the space, but Hunter isn't rushing into anything. “There's definite potential here,” he said.

Kathy Evert, president and CEO of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, said, “This is great news for the Spencer community and surrounding area. This is an acquisition that will keep jobs and investment in the region, add new jobs and likely introduce the Spencer area to other businesses in this industry that may not otherwise learn about the area.”

SPM Gaskets' original owner had run the company for 36 years. Hunter has plans for the facility, including upgrading some die cutting machines and stamping presses to increase efficiency and reduce waste while maintaining safety. “Fortunately, it's a buyer's market for machinery right now,” said Hunter. A bay door is planned on the south side of the building, including a conveyor belt for delivery trucks.

Hunter's son Aaron is the manager of the Spencer facility. Aaron, his wife Ashley and their children made the transition from California to Spencer. Due to the education system in California, Aaron and Ashley pulled their children out of school, and she was homeschooling them. After seeing the Spencer schools, the couple felt confident their children would receive an excellent education in the public school.

The gaskets produced at SPM aren't a typical gasket; these have fire ring armor inserted into the body. The SPM facility is unique in that they do their own silicone beading on the gaskets. Not many companies do beading, so SPM does it for them.

SPM produces private label brands. Customers won't see an SPM gasket in the store, but they will see SPM products other under other brand names. Finished products are combined into kits which can be found in auto supply stores.

Evert said it has been fun working with Ryan and Aaron Hunter, helping them get settled in the area and meeting others in the community. “It has been refreshing to hear their experience, which so far, has been a great testimonial to doing business in the Spencer community.”

SPM Gaskets is located at 618 East 10th Street in Spencer.

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The Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation is the regional economic development agency for Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson and Emmet counties. Its mission is to foster, encourage, aid, promote or otherwise assist in the economic growth and development of the region. For more information about the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, call 712-264-3474 or visit www.lakescorridor.com.