American Made -- at Mack

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If you, or someone you know, have been diagnosed with cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL), you might be introduced to a therapy designed to reduce the skin symptoms associated with the disorder. Called photopheresis, Mack builds the instruments that deliver the treatment.

If you are one of the million Americans who had a total knee or hip replacement last year, some of the instruments used to perform the surgery may have been made at Mack.

If you've stopped into a convenience store recently to blend your own f'real shake or smoothie, Mack made the blend-it-yourself machine that delivered that great-tasting treat.

Or maybe while walking to your car in a parking lot at night, you've been grateful for the nearby light pole -- if it's solar-powered, it could have been made at Mack.

You see, Mack doesn't have a product of its own, but builds products for many well-known companies that regularly serve your needs. It could be an automated external defibrillator in your gym, a vision screening system used at your child's school, or the uninterrupted power supply that keeps your local hospital running during a major power outage. Mack is the contract manufacturer behind the scenes that helps bring these products to fruition.

Nearing 95

With three rebuilt injection molding machines, Donald Kendall and Kenneth Macksey co-founded Mack Molding Co. in Little Falls, N.J., in 1920, nearly 95 years ago. They bought a plant in Wayne, N.J., in 1929, and then a plant in Arlington, Vt., a decade later.

Primarily a bottle cap molder, Mack switched much of its production to mortar-shell casings and related products during World War II. After the war, the product mix evolved into automotive and refrigerator components for General Motors and Frigidaire; consumer products, like Timex watch boxes and Schick razor handles during the '60s; plastic computer monitor housings for IBM during the '70s; and servers and mass storage devices for the likes of Sun Microsystems, Hewlett Packard and IBM in the '80s and '90s. Today, Mack serves multiple markets, including medical, industrial, transportation, energy/environment, computer and business equipment, and consumer-related applications.

As our markets have evolved, so have our services. Today, Mack Molding is a contract manufacturer providing product design and development, prototyping, injection molding, sheet metal fabrication, full-service machining, assembly, painting, and total product manufacturing services. Mack Molding is one of four divisions in the overall corporation, which continues to be family-owned and operated. The corporation also includes Mack Technologies, printed circuit board and electronic systems assembly; Mack Prototype, rapid prototyping and low-volume manufacturing; and Synectic Engineering, the latest addition. Mack now has 11 locations, roughly 1800 employees, and sales of approximately $300 million.

Our Most Important Asset

"While we have added technology, locations, services, markets and people, the most important, by far, are the people," says Jeff Somple, president, Mack Molding Northern Operations. "Recent studies have confirmed what we've already been seeing -- manufacturing is returning from China to the U.S.," he adds. "China is no longer the low-cost wage center it once was, which means employment in U.S. manufacturing will be on the rise. We must have an educated and well-prepared employee base from which to hire."

To assist with that effort, Mack hosts two programs directed to Vermont's youth -- the college summer internship program and "Made in Vermont" days for area high schools. Now in its fourth year, the paid internship employs about 15 area college students during the summer months. They come from colleges across the country with majors ranging from engineering, biology and physics to architecture, nursing and pharmacology. But being local, the program allows them to live at home during the summer while participating in valid internship programs. They learn about technical and engineering opportunities right here in the Northeast. And Mack develops a pipeline of future talent.

An offshoot of the college program, "Made in Vermont" days reaches into area high schools to provide students with exposure to modern manufacturing. During our first event last October, some 90 students visited Mack for a manufacturing careers workshop designed to showcase state-of-the-art manufacturing and some of the products made at Mack. Roughly 30 percent of those students returned in January for small group learning sessions in injection molding, sheet metal fabrication, machining, manufacturing, finance, marketing, purchasing and customer service. This summer, Mack will offer its first technical track internship opportunity as a follow-up to this program.

"We're trying to expose Vermont's brightest to careers right here at home that are fun, exciting and part of a growing industry," says Somple. "We're building a lot of interesting products across several markets. We're trying to get that word out to the future generation of workers, and it's succeeding. We've had successful intern programs each of the last three summers, and four graduates have now come back to Mack as full-time employees, all in different disciplines."

Julie Horst is Director of Communications at Mack.