

# Driven by giving

## Generosity is key to Penn United's vast success

This is a banner year for Penn United Technologies in Cabot.

Fifty years ago, three partners opened a fledgling tool and die shop in a garage on a farm in Saxonburg. What began with a few tools and a whole lot of entrepreneurial spirit is now housed in 10 buildings that are filled with high-precision manufacturing machinery, employs more than 650 people and successfully participates in an international market.

Bill Jones, an employee-owner, president and son of one of the founding three, is sure of one thing: It's the generosity that he learned from his dad, Carl Jones, that is at the foundation of the company's success.

10

Buildings  
Penn  
United's  
more  
than 650  
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work in

them."

What makes Penn United unique is that it is an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) company, which means the company is owned by its employees: They call them employee-owners. When the company grows and profits, the employees profit, too,

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"Dad was never selfish," Bill said. "Anytime he looked at an opportunity, he looked at it and said, 'Why don't we do this opportunity, because it's going to help our employee-owners?' He always looked at it from the positive side. Any time we got into a new business, his thoughts were, 'We're doing this for all the employee-owners because we're going to gain value for

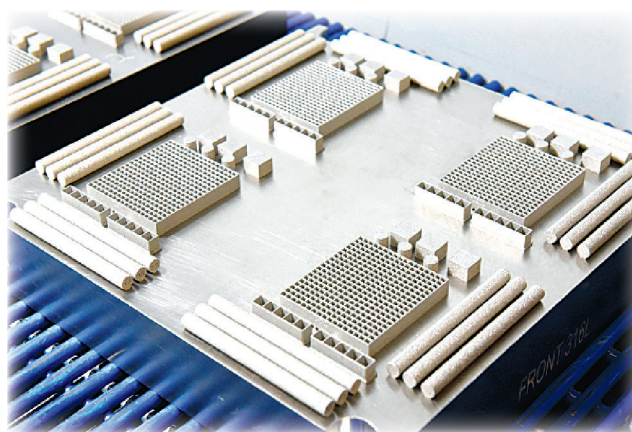
and in a very real way. They see it in their monthly bonus checks.

From Jones on down to the lowest or newest person on the ladder, they all own a piece of the company. Jones believes it's that type of investment in the employees that drives Penn United's success.

However, as head, he also is cognizant of the fact that when he wants to enlarge the company, it affects everyone's bottom line, and that can be a



Bill Jones, president of Penn United Technologies in Cabot



A test piece to measure for accuracy in 3D printing

weight on his shoulders.

"You're making decisions because it's not just my money; it's everyone's money," Jones said. "It carries a little different weight

because a decision like that could make our employee-owners money or it could take from them."

### Stay ahead of technology

Still, if a company is to succeed, leadership has to stay ahead of technology and that is exactly what you will find at Penn United.

Charlie Phillips, sales and marketing manager, is excited about what's being produced in the shops at the company.

Among those products, "we do reel-to-reel precious metal plating," Phillips said. What is that? "We make parts that go in connectors, connectors for automotive applications. Connectors are used in data transfer," Phillips said.

Continues on 10

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**David Fredley, additive manufacturer technician, Penn United**

From 8

Still confused? Parts that are metal plated with silver, gold or nickel, for example, in this particular application are used to conduct electricity.

Phillips said that has to do with communication, in which one part of a car has to communicate with another part. In this

case it might be a sensor. Another application is with computers and the cloud, with data transfer and storage. Need for such a part has increased as more people are telecommuting. For Penn United, that is good news, because it means the company is growing.

"We've been (metal plating) for decades,"

Phillips said. "We're right now moving into a much larger space with new equipment that we're purchasing, so we're pretty excited about that. That's a big event for us." The plating work will be housed in a building on Route 356 near Lernerville Speedway and the space the plating is in now will be repurposed.

Another area of growth Penn United's powdered metal division. That particular task is being performed at its main campus in Cabot.

"Basically, it's powdered metal and melting it with a laser, building a structure," Phillips said. Direct metal laser centering, a form of additive manufacturing, is what the rest of us know as 3-D printing. It's used to make high-complexity parts, Phillips said.

Also part of the company's growth is its part in developing stamping dies. Penn United has added a half-dozen new presses in the last couple of years, according to Phillips.

"Those are new technology," Phillips said. "Those are servo, which is different from the old mechanical presses people are familiar with. It allows us to do more complex,

more precise parts with the new technology that we're investing in." Servo allows the operator to control the motion of the press and provides advantages for making complex parts.

This is more than just punching out a shape from a flat piece of metal.

"We do a lot of medical device components, connectors and terminals, some defense and aerospace parts," Phillips said. "They're very complex. Higher precision, high complexity parts: It's our niche."

The company's carbide division manufactures engineered carbide components for machinery that uses parts that are high-wear, high-erosion. They call it wear applications. You might see these parts in machinery such as an oil well.

"We have plans for developing new materials for new market applications," Phillips said. About 200 people work in that plant, which is housed in Saxonburg.

When your company grows, though, you need more employees, and as with many industries in Butler County, Penn United is

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hiring. According to Phillips, there are about 50 openings and the company trains its workers with 11-state approved apprenticeship programs. There are more than 80 apprentices going through their programs.

“It shows that we’ve got a great foundation for growth when you need that many people, and we have that many opportunities in front of us,” Phillips said.

Yes, the growth is important; it’s why the company exists. What Jones thinks about a lot, however, is how to take care of the employee-owners.

“Dad never wanted to have everything for himself, because he recognized that at some point when you have too much, sometimes you get selfish,” Jones said. “Sometimes you don’t recognize how you got here and who made that for you. He taught that to me over the years. That’s why we’re an employee-



**Charlie Phillips, sales and marketing manager, Penn United**

owned company, and that’s why we’re going to continue to be. It really is unique because we have people retiring here as millionaires and it really is because of the way the founders said, ‘Hey, we want to make this an employee-owned company.’”

Jones said it’s that philosophy that got Penn United to where it is now. ■

## Hunter keeps trucks rolling

If there’s one thing Hunter Truck understands, it’s that when your commercial truck is down, you are losing money.

“If my car breaks down, it’s inconvenient and kind of painful but I’m not losing money, per se,” said Greg Angerett, manager of the Route 8 location of Hunter Truck. “When their trucks are down and sitting in the shop and we’re waiting on parts, people are losing money, and it’s never a good time when your truck’s down and you’re losing money.”

At Hunter Truck you can buy, lease or rent a new or used truck, from heavy-duty pickups to roll-off, plow and spreader trucks, to name a few types Hunter features, and it doesn’t end there. They also will service your truck. The staff at Hunter is aware of the fact that your truck is your livelihood. They’ll even come to you if your truck needs work so they work hard to get and keep you on the road. However, between a shortage of parts and a \$1 million fire at its body shop on Oneida Valley Road, things might take a bit longer than they once did. This is why

they value their customers so highly.

“We want our customers to know that it’s going to be a tough six months or so until everything comes back to somewhat normal,” Angerett said. “We just have to be able to work with each other and help each other get through it.”

Now Angerett has turned his attention to a pandemic-induced chip shortage, and he’s not talking about tubers.

“It’s been tough,” Angerett said. “The last year and a half have been a roller coaster... We are looking forward to coming out of this strong.” ■



**Greg Angerett**

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