

Sunset Manufacturing

Quiet Company, Global Reach

Written by Marilyn Salzl Brinkman

From the outside, it is a quiet, nondescript collection of beige buildings in the heart of St. Joe, just a block between County Road 75 to the south and the Lake Wobegon trailhead facility to the north.



Step inside Sunset's doors, however, and you'll discover a high-energy hub of engineering design and precision sheet metal fabrication serving customers region-wide. You'll also find one of the nation's original, well-known providers of bulk milk cooling equipment, busily meeting the ongoing demand for hard-to-find replacement parts and supplies.

One company, two divisions: Together, Sunset Manufacturing and Sunset Equipment & Supply compose Sunset Companies — a family-owned business Tom Skahen purchased in St. Paul in 1977, and moved to Saint Joseph in 1981. Today, Tom's son, Sean Skahen, leads the company, having worked in a variety of roles including CFO since coming on board

in 1997. He is now president and co-owner with his wife Jennifer. Tom, now 82, comes to the office daily to keep tabs on the operation and help out as needed.

SUNSET MANUFACTURING

Originally focused exclusively on production of its dairy equipment lines, Sunset's in-house metalworking shop evolved early on into a full-service precision sheet metal fabrication operation serving other area manufacturers. Today, Sunset Manufacturing specializes in custom fabrication of stainless and mild steel, aluminum, and occasionally exotic metals such as brass, titanium and copper. From laser cutting and forming, to welding, machining and finishing, Sunset provides turnkey production to customers' exact specifications.

Examples of Sunset-manufactured parts include a wide variety of machine guards, fender components, brackets — almost any piece imaginable that can be precision cut, bent, welded and machined in sheet steel or aluminum. Locally, Sunset customers include Park Industries, New Flyer, Arctic Cat, Electrolux, Golden Plump, Coldspring and many more. Beyond Central Minnesota, Sunset has served customers in Central and South America, Saudi Arabia, Europe and Japan.

One of the simplest applications of Sunset-produced parts can be seen right overhead on main street every summer in St. Joe; the decorative plant hangers along main street are fabricated with pride by Sunset craftsmen.

SUNSET DAIRY EQUIPMENT & SUPPLY

Ask any dairy farmer in Stearns County to name one of the original brands of bulk cooling tanks, and the Sunset name is sure to come up. In fact, "Sunset knows Dairy, and Sunset knows Tanks!" remains the company's slogan, as it has been for almost 60 years. Sunset Equipment & Supply sells entire bulk milk cooling systems, including Sunset and other top brands, as well as replacement parts, through a network of distributors and dealers nationwide and abroad.



Tim Loso came to work for Sunset immediately after retiring from military service in 2002. "He knows our customers and products, can do everything from fabricating and welding to running the machines and laser cutter, and seldom misses a day's work," says Sean. "He's rock solid."

Known for specialty and hard-to-find replacement parts, Sunset is experiencing a resurgence of interest in areas of the world where older cooling systems are being placed into service but parts are no longer available from the original manufacturers. Enter Sunset, once again carving out a unique niche to meet a growing, necessary customer demand.

Business manager Peggy (Johannes) Lahr, with Sunset over 30 years, is another key member of the Sunset team. "She's really mission control here," says operations manager Leo Wehseler. "She knows practically every part number by memory, handles everything from order processing and inventory to accounting and payroll, and makes it all look easy."

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

From its initial move to Saint Joseph in 1981 to today, the strong work ethic of Sunset's dedicated employees has remained key to the company's success.

For Sean, sponsoring Joetown Rocks is a natural response to the community's support of the family business through the years. "I've called this area home since I was 13, and once our youngest goes there in just a few years, all five of our kids will have attended All Saints Academy and eventually Saint John's Prep," says Sean. "When we needed to expand the business, the town went out of their way to work with us. I'm grateful and honored to support a celebration that highlights all of the great things this community provides for so many." ■

"In our business timing is everything. When we're under the pressure of the clock, we can call Sunset in the morning and have the deliverable in our hands that afternoon. That's a big deal for us, and why we've worked with them for well over 12 years."

- Kevin Matz, NPD design engineer, Park Industries, St. Cloud



BECOME OUR NEXT BEFORE AND AFTER!

Transform your home with a new, beautiful, dependable garage door from American Door Works. Visit our showroom today for an expert consultation – and choose the style you're after.




AmericanDoorWorks.com
 320.253.1310 / 2150 FRONTAGE RD S / WAITE PARK, MN 56387
Formerly St. Cloud Overhead Door Company



ST. JOSEPH MEAT MARKET

meats & groceries

Award Winning Quality!













175.00

MEAT & BEEF CASE

Coca-Cola

\$ 75.00

ALL SOFT DRINKS













BEST & PICKY BUNDLE

3 LB. STEAK

2 LB. CHICKEN

2 LB. BACON

2 LB. LONCHON MEAT

2 LB. HAMBURGERS

2 LB. CHICKEN WINGS

2 LB. BACON

\$185.00













"Enjoy our Joe Burgers & Sausages at the Festival"

Mon-Thurs 6am-6pm

Fridays open to 7pm

Saturdays open to 5pm

320-363-4913

www.stjosephmeatmarket.com