

Hard Work Pays Off For...



A&A CONCRETE PRODUCTS, INC.

EVANS CITY, PENNSYLVANIA

By Sue Marquette Poremba

Necessity is the mother of invention, or so the saying goes. For Alma Staskiewicz and Bill Long, who along with their mother Alma Long own and operate A&A Concrete Products, Inc. in Evans City, PA, necessity led to the development of their innovative PumpCast system.

"Labor was hard to come by. Construction in western Pennsylvania is booming," says Staskiewicz. Workman's compensation, she adds, was expensive.

To combat those two issues, Staskiewicz and Long wanted to find a process that would be as efficient as possible while using a minimum number of employees.

The idea for the PumpCast came while Bill Long worked in the plant, shoveling the concrete by hand into the forms.

"We wanted to change the way concrete is processed," says Staskiewicz. Rather than loading the concrete from the top of the form and vibrating it, the PumpCast loads from the bottom through a valve. A pump raises the concrete up, pushing out the air bubbles and eliminating the need to vibrate. Utilizing a closed form also eliminates

the need to finish the concrete. The final result is a consistent, quality concrete.

"The air is pushed out at the top so no air is in the mix," says Staskiewicz. "You can't over-vibrate and you can't under-vibrate."

After two years of research and development and the patent application process, the brother and sister were able to put their invention on the production line. They've been using the PumpCast system for nine years and have been operating from their current facility for nine years.

The company itself will celebrate its

"Necessity led to the development of their innovative PumpCast system."

20th anniversary in February 2007. It is a woman-owned company, founded by the siblings and their mother. The family started in the stone business. Alma Long and her husband owned a company that sold decorative stone. That business grew to include stepping stones, flat slabs, and structural concrete. As that business expanded, Alma Long saw the need to develop sewer system products. She branched off to start her own company with her

son & daughter.

Today, A&A Concrete Products employs 16 employees year round. While Alma Long is semi-retired, Bill Long is in charge of the production end and Alma Staskiewicz runs the office and business side of the company. Including the plant crew, they employ a production manager. Family always comes first, Staskiewicz says, explaining that until this year, a daycare was provided on site. (The daycare ended when Staskiewicz's twins began first grade.)

Thanks to the PumpCast system, A&A Concrete Products is able to produce between 105-125 products a day. The company produces precast manholes and catch basins. Staskiewicz says

they are expanding to include retaining walls and new business will likely require hiring additional employees.

The Mixer System batch plant is on a 15-acre site north of Pittsburgh. They batch their own concrete with a 1-yard mixer, producing 90 yards of concrete a day.

"People often think larger is better," Staskiewicz says, but she says her company shows that you can go smaller and still produce at a high volume

and provide a quality product.

The PumpCast system is the reason why A&A Concrete Products can stay small but produce big. The system works in an efficient assembly line manner. According to Long and Staskiewicz the daily production utilizes one man who cuts the wire and one man who prepares the wire to go into the form. Four men are on the production line to turn the forms. A driver uses a fork lift to take the form to the pump area and then to the kiln, two men are in charge of batching and mixing the concrete. Every person has his specific task, which keeps the operation running smoothly.

“We can produce more concrete,” Long says. “We use the form two times a day, and that means we’re making more money.”

“The PumpCast system has kept our labor costs down, too,” says Staskiewicz. “And our workman’s comp costs have dropped. Workman’s comp is very expensive in Pennsylvania, and keeping that cost under control was a main reason for coming up with the PumpCast.”

Along with the efficiency and production of a top-quality product, the PumpCast system allows for a clean and healthy plant environment.

“We had a few employees develop allergies to the cement “Staskiewicz



This view shows the large inventory of product at A&A Concrete Products

says. “The PumpCast eliminates contact with wet concrete, and it keeps our employees healthy.”

With A&A Concrete Products success using the PumpCast system, they engaged the Hawkeye Group, who has a licensing agreement with A&A Concrete Products to market and sell the system to other companies.

The selling point of the PumpCast system is its ability to streamline precast production. Staskiewicz says her company has seen an increase in its

business since using the PumpCast. “Business has tripled,” she says.

A&A Concrete Products does all of its business in Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio, and West Virginia. “Our products don’t travel more than four hours from the plant,” says Staskiewicz.

They work almost exclusively with contractors, excavators, and developers for housing. The company does very little government work.

“There has been a building boom in our area,” Staskiewicz says. “Most of our work is with the new housing developments and industrial parks being built around here.”

“We also do new sewer systems for existing local towns,” Long adds.

Staskiewicz and Long are rightfully proud of their invention. “Everything seems to be made in China these days,” Staskiewicz says. “Of course, you can’t import manholes or catch basins from China, but you can import the equipment.” The brother and sister duo want to show that good old American ingenuity is alive and well, and their innovative PumpCast system is proof of that.

For more information about Pump Cast see Hawkeye Group ad on page 30 of this month’s Concrete Today.

