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CMMA
Central Minnesota Manufacturers Association



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Associated Finishing Inc.

NEWSLETTER

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ABOUT US

Serving Minneapolis and
Greater Minnesota for
70 years

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Associated Finishing's 70th Anniversary

Associated Finishing, Inc. turns 70 years old this year! The company was founded back in 1952 by Fred W. Cords of Mankato as Associated Engineering. The company was focused on free-lance engineering and design work, which included some small paint projects.

The Klammer family took the reigns of the company from Fred by 1965 along with the facility located just two blocks from our Mallard plant today. In 1960's, the company took on a large painting project painting fishing reels for local manufacturer Johnson Reels. Painting became a new revenue stream that was taking on its own life. As the Klammer's passed the business on the next generation, their son Chuck Klammer, was very interested in progressing the painting service they provided. In the late 1970's, powder coating was introduced to the industry and Chuck Klammer jumped on board right away. By 1998, the company was only taking on painting and powder coating jobs. At this point the name Associated Engineering no longer fit the company's niche and the name was changed to Associated Finishing, Inc.

Today, AFI continues to wet paint and powder coat like we used to back in the 60's & 70's, but with improved technology. The paint lines of today have greatly improved the consistency and capacity of daily production. AFI's first conveyor paint system was built back in 1980. The first paint line with in-line washing and pretreating was built in 1997. Today we have added robotic powder coating with in-line priming to further improve our efficiencies.

Volume capacity wasn't the only thing that changed since the beginning, we have also increased our size capacity over the years. In 1960, the biggest part that we could paint and force cure in an oven was about 3' long. Today, with the addition of the Extreme Powder Coating and Litchfield facilities, we can pre-treat, powder coat, and cure up to a 40' long part. Items like trailers, railings, car frames, and snow plows are likely candidates for powder coating with the increased equipment size.

Of course, no business makes it 70 years without excellent relationships and support from their customers. We have many customers that go back 20-30, even 40 years or more that we have grown with through the ups and downs. We are thankful for those relationships and know they are the key to making it another 70 years.



Generations of Family, Opportunities, and Relationships

Highlight — Quality Manager Rachel Holt

AFI would like to introduce Rachel Holt as our new quality manager as of April 2022. She has been developing into her role since January of 2021 working as a quality technician throughout our facilities. Rachel was referred to AFI by a friend and intrigued to become a part of our team because of our family culture. Rachel has shown excellent motivation to grow and learn in her career leading her to develop strong relationships with both customers and colleagues.

Rachel is a native to Mankato, MN. She graduated from Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School in Courtland, MN. After high school, Rachel attended college at Bethany Lutheran College where she obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Her previous jobs have included managing teams and processes in customer service.

Rachel's aspirations with Associated Finishing Inc. mirror the top qualities we were looking for in a Quality Manager. Her attention to detail has been a staple to our production team. Rachel will oversee all quality issues that may arise, determine the root cause, complete corrective action cases, and also document and manage the data collection on any given issue.

Rachel will play a pivotal role in continuing our ISO 9001 certification and continually improving our quality management system. She was very involved in improving our quality system in the months leading up to the most recent ISO audit and through this process she got a in-depth look at the strengths and opportunities our quality system. While she admits she has much yet to learn, we are excited about her willingness to push for success into the future.

Rachel's goals within her position as Quality Manager are to develop new processes that will help the company as a whole improve customer quality and satisfaction. She believes Quality Managers need to be able to act on their observations and make strategic suggestions about how to uphold quality standards and improve the accuracy of outgoing shipments. They're strong leaders who can motivate and train their team with relevant feedback and helpful suggestions. Overall, Rachel believes that quality is one of the most important aspects of the industry and she is very committed to helping this department grow!



Outside of being a Quality Manager, Rachel's favorite activities include exploring nature and hiking with her dog. She also loves kayaking down the Blue Earth river and spending time with family and friends.

The Power of Powder Coating

Color holds power. Color creates, a mood, an emotion. It's a source of information. Color impacts creativity and has a strong psychological effect. Here at Associated Finishing, we with our suppliers understand the powerful influence that color can have on our surroundings and daily lives. That's why we enjoy providing color, texture, metallics, and most importantly the durability of powder coating to your products.

Color development has come a long way over the course of time. Color wasn't always an important consideration in the

coating industry, but that has dramatically changed over the past two decades. Today when evaluating color, manufacturers are forced to consider the needs of the end user. In industrial coatings we have seen a shift from blacks, grays and neutrals to a much broader color pallet – as well as the emergence of a variety of textures and metallics. All the latest trends and decisions are to create a strong physiological connection to the consumer. Within any of our facilities we are combining the functionality of our coatings and processes, along with the strength of color.

We have the ability to combine simplicity and low environmental impact with the power of color and durability to meet the needs of not only manufacturers, but for their consumers for years to come.



2021 Customer Survey Results

First, we want to thank all of our customers for their participation in the company wide survey we conducted at the end of 2021. We felt that it was an especially important year to reach out and let you all know that we are listening. There were some struggles to juggle in 2021 for Associated Finishing. We know you all struggled through many of the same battles we did as far as meeting demand, and building the staff to accomplish the goals set to meet those demands.

The results from the survey are in and we want to utilize your feedback in conjunction with how we plan to continue our strengths and build on our weaknesses. Your feedback is a very important factor to our company because when we succeed, you succeed! We are proud to be excelling in areas such as quality, pricing, sales, estimating, and flexibility. We continue to put an emphasis on improving quality as we are now ISO certified, appointed a new Quality Manager, hiring a quality inspector, and have procedures in place from the time a quote is generated to the time your product leaves our dock.

The surveys told us an area of concern that we need to improve is our communication in general. We know you need attention fast and we will do our best to accommodate your requests. Our leader in our sales team, Matt Miller, has committed to improvement in the area of communication. You will notice the theme of "communication" questions as we visit your facilities or chat on the phone. We hope to get your feedback as the year goes on, good or bad, as we try to identify where we lack the most. AFI's goal is to hit 90% positive feedback for communication on the 2022 survey. We know there are improvements to make to reach that goal, but we are committed to continually improving as this is essential to achieve great customer relations. We want to thank you all for your business and feedback.

Custom Coatings - One Customer at a Time

At Associated Finishing we have ventured into the waters of custom coatings. With the expansion of Extreme Powder Coating into the Associated Finishing family, the waters are calm, clear, and collectively rounding out our capabilities in the finishing industry.

Custom coatings are special in the fact that each and every job is unique, tailored specifically to each individual consumer's needs and desires. These projects are often one of a kind, in which the customer has a sentimental value and high expectations for the end product. Many times we see people looking for a source of professionalism in the restoration market. Associated Finishing, along with the expertise of Extreme Powder Coating can provide that professional approach to one-time projects. It takes diligence, intelligence, and high attention to detail when working with the



where work, responsibility, and accountability becomes personal. This is where we build interpersonal relationships. This is where we're the teachers and it's our job and dutiful responsibility to guide our customers and educate our customers on the abilities of powder coating. Whether it's large or small each job is considered as if it were our own.

There is much to be said about the custom coating industry. It's a niche only specific shops can handle. Extreme Powder Coating has been developing and growing in the custom coating industry for the past 20 years. They have led the way in the custom coating industry based on quality and consistency. The reputation Extreme Powder Coating has built is here to stay, and we can't wait to share it with you!

You might wonder how the production team feels about custom coatings? To be honest, they are enthusiasts when it comes to being apart of special, non-traditional, projects. These projects are where we can indulge our hearts and souls. Where the story behind the project matters to us just as much as the finish we are providing. Where we get a personal touch and attachment to the finish we provide. Where our passion for our careers is painted on a canvas.

You may wonder how our sales force feels about custom coatings? This is

