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A New Opportunity For Indian Lake

By Brett Hagadorn

INDIAN LAKE — The town of Indian Lake stands on the verge of being introduced to a



Mark Sherwin

local business that promises new jobs, based on an entirely new economic opportunity for the area. MAS Composites, founded by long-time resident Mark Sherwin, will soon move into the

Route 30 Adirondack One Stop property.

The firm has applied composite technology, originally developed for the military, to a commercial marine product, while providing the region with manufacturing and engineering employment opportunities.

Following the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole in Yemen, Sherwin and his team developed a pontoon system designed to protect US Naval ships while docked in foreign ports. The pontoon system was manufactured through a revolutionary process using composites, with the resulting product passing all phases of military testing.

Sherwin's new manufacturing method allowed a composite-based product to be manufactured faster and cheaper than other processes, with the final product exceeding all military quality control checks. MAS Composites has also worked on several

other military and aerospace projects, including re-entry vehicle nose cones, protective helmets, and plates designed to protect the feet of military minesweepers.

Sherwin also recognized the civilian application for his product, and committed himself to bring military-grade technology to the commercial market.

"The product we've developed is a derivative of the pontoon system we developed to protect naval assets. It's a complete waterfront dock system, including ladders, steps and planking, all made from composite materials instead of the traditional treated lumber."

Based on some personal experience, and a good suggestion from a colleague at the Mohawk Valley Applied Technology Corporation, Sherwin developed a plan to bring his idea to reality.

"I live on Indian Lake, and I've been dealing with my personal docks for 20 years," says Sherwin. "Every year we have to take them out, tow them to a nearby cove, and put them away. They are very difficult to work with. I think the big benefit of the composite dock is that it will be a third the weight of a regular wood dock, it's virtually noiseless, and doesn't leach toxic chemicals into the water."

While new businesses to the area always garner attention, it was the anticipation of manufacturing and technical-based jobs that

recently convinced the Indian Lake Town Board to stand behind the project with a \$120,000 HUD business loan.

“Increased employment would be the greatest benefit to the town, and the generation of revenue for the town that is non-tourist, and not based on weather or any other external factors,” adds Sherwin.

MAS Composites also hopes to be a driving force in helping area kids learn practical skills desired by today’s industry.

“One of the things I was hoping for was to eventually work with the high school, to do some technical training,” noted Sherwin. “There’s a lot of need in this industry for people who can work with their hands, or technicians who can read prints and be able to do processes that would be involved with automation.”

MAS Composites plans to be open and operational by late spring of 2008.