

# Kbro Metalworks The New Age Of Machine Shops

By Michael Stein

There's a couple of young area entrepreneurs who have gained a reputation as being able to fix most everything and take pretty much any metal material and turn it into something.

Those two young men, Jonah and Jacob Kletsch, have harnessed their skill and energy to start a new business in rural Rothsay.

Kbro Metalworks, which is located at 2491 180th St., rural Rothsay, combines old-fashioned know-how with 21st Century digital technology.

Whether you understand terminology like CAD, CAM, or CNC machining or not, Jonah and Jacob know the ins and outs quite well.

The brothers do machining, fabrication and design using computer integrated technology with machine tools. Those tools include a CNC plasma cutting table, which is used to quickly cut through a various thicknesses of plate style material.

Computer numerical control (CNC) refers to how the machine's motion is directed based on numerical codes that are programmed into the cutting machine. The codes are generated by computer-aided



Kbro Metalworks partners Jacob and Jonah Kletsch say their passion for metalworking runs deep in their family.

manufacturing (CAM) software.

The resulting precision is incredible, and also essential to the particular material or part they're manufacturing.

"One of our machines, a Matsuura brand VMC (vertical machining center)," Jacob said, "has been re-equipped with the latest computing

technology to keep up with our high power programming software."

"We used to program code by hand right on the machine," Jonah added. "But now we can send those codes directly to the machine from the CAM software on our desktop computer."

The origins of the business are pretty fresh only dating back to the summer of 2017 when Jacob and Jonah decided to finish off the back half of Jacob's garage. The plan was to make space available for a couple small pieces of equipment for hobby use.

As the project progressed, word had spread and other people's projects started to take priority. The brothers started to get a sense that this small addiction to making custom components was no longer a hobby.

The dream of operating such a business goes back even further for the two Kletsch brothers.

"From a very young age, we were always pretty hard on stuff at our house," Jonah said. "And when our

parents quit shelling money out to fix our toys, which was quite early on, we had no choice but to fabricate it ourselves."

Even now, Jacob said, Sunday dinners at their parents house with all four brothers at the table is "pretty much all machine talk."

After graduating from Barnesville High School, both Jacob, the older of the two, and Jonah attended Alexandria Technical College and earned machine tool degrees.

They started the business on a part-time basis in early 2018 with the goal of turning it into a self-supporting operation.

"Last February I decided I can do this full time," Jonah said. "We had the resources and the right people influencing us to make a go of it. And so far it's been going pretty well."

Jacob still works full time in Wahpeton, but puts in evenings and weekends at the Kbro shop.

For the uninitiated, understanding the nuts and bolts of the work Jacob and Jonah do for their customers could require a technical degree. But it would be safe to say that their abilities spring from their family background, a love of metalworking and their formal education.

"Our passion for metalworking runs deep in our family," Jonah said. "From a young age, Grandpa Stan (Tyrrell) introduced us to machining, teaching us how to form raw material into a precision component. We want to keep this legacy alive with this business. Our enthusiasm and craftsmanship is what sets us apart from others."

With a website and social media presence, Kbro customers come from most anywhere.

"A lot of business comes from word of mouth," Jacob said. "That person-to-person interaction still goes a long way. Sometimes you think of machine shops as being run by grumpy old men. But we take the

time to sit down and talk with our customers and work out what their needs are."

Along with direct customers, Jacob and Jonah do subcontract work for other companies. One example of that work is modifying header flanges, for GP Headers, which is located near Barnesville.

"Our goals are good work, fast turnaround and craftsmanship," Jonah said.

Their design work includes 3D modeling, which is the process of creating a mathematical model of an object using specialized software.

"Another part of our business is creating custom metal signs for businesses or individuals," Jonah said.

That design skill came in handy when creating their own business logo and sign.

Considering themselves "just a couple kids from Barnesville," the Kletsch's say they know it takes a lot of hard work and dedication to come

out on top.

"We stay involved with the community through our church with the Knights of Columbus and being involved in activities like Potato Days," Jacob said. "We'd love to be more involved. Maybe down the road we can expand the business and move it into or closer to Barnesville."

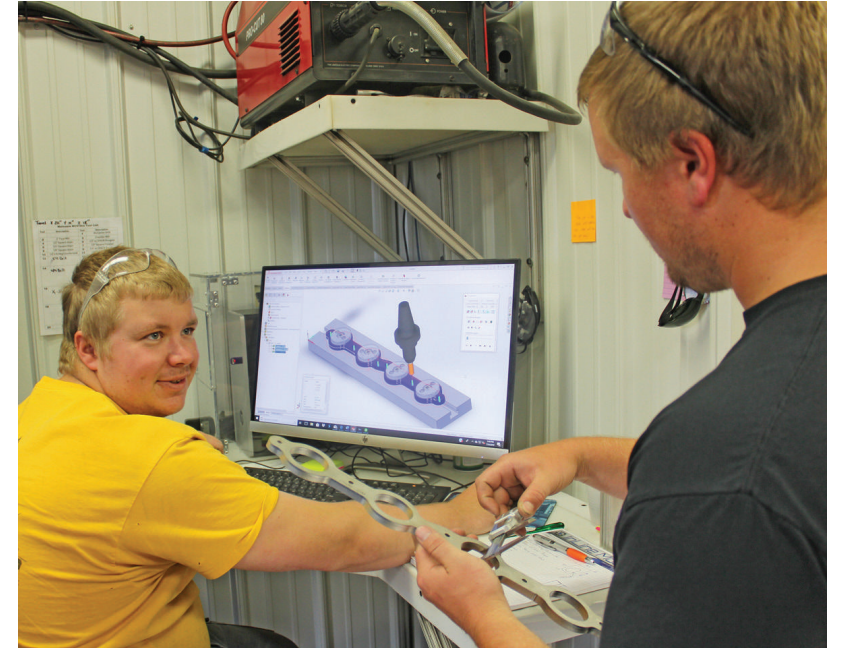
Coming from a close-knit family, Jacob and Jonah say they're not so deeply immersed in their work that they can't be home for Sunday dinner at mom and dad's house.

The four Kletsch brothers still find time to put their collective skills together for another passion.

"One of our main hobbies is snowmobile racing, building the fastest and most durable sleds for when we start up racing again this winter," Jacob said. "So instead of going out and partying, we get our hands dirty making something together and have a great time doing it."



Another service offered by Kbro is the design and creation of metal signs.



A vital part of the process in creating precision components, such as Jacob is holding, is computer-aided drafting (CAD), which Jonah demonstrates.

# A Drastic Change In The Weather...



We are enduring another phase of our changing weather here in Minnesota. After going through a summer that never was we now find ourselves faced with an early fall or even winter. This should be a delightful time of the year. Instead we are looking at quite a lot more precipitation which came down mostly as rain with some snow mixed. Much more snow west of us.

That's late November weather. Mother Nature and the TV weather forecaster should be treating us quite a lot better than this. But they aren't and now, after a cool, cloudy, wet summer we are faced with a cool, cloudy, wet autumn. Combined with a late spring and a miserable summer and fall, we have had nothing but bad weather in 2019.

One of the most awaited events of the seasonal changes is the display of colors in the hardwood trees in the fall. There is a lot of gasoline burned every fall by spectators looking at the brightly colored leaves in the Olaf Lake woods or Maplewood State Park. Those are the premier locations but there is also a very colorful display right in town and in the nearby woods.

The leaf display is occurring in stages this fall. Winds and rain pull the leaves from the trees about as fast as they change color. Many trees are bare already. But not everything is changing color at the same time this year. When you look into the deep woods, there is still a lot of green out there.

That green is from leaves still firmly attached to the white and red oak trees. Oaks traditionally change leaf color at about the same time as the rest of the trees but the dark mahogany colored leaves hang on to the branches for a long time before finally dropping.

This year the oaks remain green so far this fall. The trees are likely confused by the late spring and the abundant rainfall. They think the heat may be coming back again. That's the way to hope but it sure ain't the way to bet.

Meanwhile, the other hardwood trees around town and out in the woods are going through their color changes. Gone already and on the ground are the brilliant yellow leaves from the popple, aspen, quakes or poplar trees, whatever you care to call them, they're the same tree.

Depending upon the various species, the maple trees are still putting on a bright display of yellow, gold and brilliant red. The needles on the tamarac trees in the swamps are changing from green to golden before finally falling off. The birch trees hold on to a lot of remaining bright yellow leaves. The ash trees continue to hold some gold leaves but they will drop at the first hint of

a frost. In fact, most of the ash leaves are already on the ground,

If you have not made your annual leaf watching tour yet, you better hurry up. The leaves in the trees have already taken a real beating before high winds, rain and even snow moved in last week. There is still a small show of leaf color available out there but you better look quick.

The fall color display will soon be over as will the summer and Indian summer that we are always promised but never seem to get. What follows the leaf display is something we really don't want to think about yet, but it involves heavy coats, waterproof boots, headgear, lots of white and shovels.

Now where is that travel brochure that we had for Jamaica?



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