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Plane speaking Family marks 100 years at milling firm

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Back in 1921, the operators of Mechanics Planing Mill in Edwardsville could hardly be blamed if they failed to see the forest for the trees. No one could predict that one of their own employees would emerge to lead the company through the Great Depression and, with family help, for decades to come.

“It’s a tribute to people that really cared about the business,” Jeff Hanselman says, talking about the 100-year-old firm. “We’re not huge by any means, but there are not a lot of guys around who can do what we do, the same way that we do it.”

Hanselman is the third-generation owner of what is today called MPM Industries and located in Glen Carbon. At 69, he’s slowly transitioning to a fourth generation, represented by his sons, Andy, 44, and Eric, 41.

Milling lumber has been the Hanselman way since the business incorporated in 1921.

“My grandfather, William, worked here for the people that started the business,” Jeff said. “He was the plant superintendent. They built residential windows and doors and trim. He bought it when it failed in the 1930s.”

By 1954, William’s son, Bill, became president, and Bill’s own son, Jeff, was getting established.

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Above: Three generations of the Hanselman family include former company president Bill Hanselman, seated; and his son and grandsons, standing from left, Andy Hanselman, Jeff Hanselman and Eric Hanselman. Bill Hanselman was president from 1954 until he retired in 1995, at which time son Jeff over as president and remains in that position today.

BELOW: Foreman Don Oliver prepares a wood door for finishing.



Racing with the win

*Region will see boon
from NASCAR move*

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

World Wide Technology Raceway’s reputation has been on a fast track in recent years, and landing in NASCAR’s winner’s circle is expected to speed things up.

One Metro East leader called recent events the equivalent of “getting the World Series.”

NASCAR officials have awarded the Madison-based track a highly coveted date on the 2022 NASCAR schedule. The Gateway NASCAR Cup Series race will take place Sunday, June 5.

The decision means millions of dollars for the regional economy and is a feather in the cap of owner Curtis Francois, who took the track from scrap heap to national prominence in the past decade.

“I met Curtis 10 years ago, when the track was close to being sold for scrap,” said state Rep. Jay Hoffman, D-Belleville. The owner (Dover Motorsports) was closing it. (Francois) had the vision at the time, and I wasn’t sure he could do it, to rebuild the track in such a way that it would become a local economic development engine.”

Since acquiring the track in 2011, Francois, a St. Louis real estate developer and former Indy Lights driver, has spent millions of dollars of private investment to expand the facility and have it certified as one of the top racing venues in the country. The track is said to be popular with both drivers and fans because the 1.25-mile oval combines short track excitement and high-speed straightaways.

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Veterans can get free assistance establishing a businesses

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Veterans Day is a good time to remember the many contributions military members have made to this country — and to the livelihoods those vets carve out after patriotic service.

The Illinois Procurement Technical Assistance Center at Western Illinois University offers assistance, Dr. Theresa Ebeler says. She heads up the Metro Southwestern Illinois Region, one of nine PTAC centers in the state. The Metro office specializes in helping veterans trying



Ebeler

federal levels. Last fiscal year alone, Illinois businesses won nearly 400 such

contracts worth nearly \$900 million.

During that timeframe, Illinois PTAC served 1,573 clients across the state by providing counseling, instruction, bid opportunities and training. PTAC helps entrepreneurs with conducting market research, finding government opportunities, and getting to know the agencies involved. It can be a tough goal to crack without the right kind of know-how.

The Illinois PTAC at Western Illinois University is provided through cooperative agreement with the Defense

Logistics Agency. Program support is made possible by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and Western Illinois University.

Ebeler’s office is at 109 W. Legion St. (rear) in Columbia, giving it good proximity to Scott Air Force Base and many of the veterans connected to it.

Ebeler is one of seven Certified Verification Counselors working with the Veteran Administration Office of Small Disadvantaged Business Utilization Programs in Illinois.

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