

Iowa business rises after fire

By DARIN LEACH

THE beginning of 2014 got off to a rough start for Joel and Deann Jansen along with their 48 employees at Janco Industries Inc. A devastating fire destroyed half of the company's manufacturing space just after employees arrived the morning of Jan. 30. The business is in the town of Sully in central Iowa.

"Amazingly and thankfully, no employees or firefighters from the five communities that were called to help control the dangerous blaze suffered any injuries," says Joel Jansen, Janco's president. "Inside the building were various welders, gas lines and explosive materials that made fighting the fire a challenge."

While the fire caused significant damage to equipment and the facilities, the Jansens were not going to let this setback disrupt a family business that was started more than 40 years ago by Jansen's father, Ron. "From day one after the fire, I've been telling our team we will come back even stronger," Joel Jansen says. "They all stepped up to the plate when we needed them."

Temporary digs

It only took a couple days for the office and production staff to operate in temporary locations. "If employees weren't able to go back to work on their machines after the fire, they were outside enduring the cold weather and assisting in the cleanup efforts," Jansen notes.



RECOVERY: A devastating fire in January destroyed a large part of Janco Industries' manufacturing space in Sully. Business owners Joel and Deann Jansen say rebuilding efforts are going well and the company will be even stronger in the future.

"I can't thank our family and friends and the community enough for helping us as we moved into temporary locations.

Everyone's support has been amazing."

Within one month after the fire, the company was self-sufficient again and had replaced all the equipment necessary to produce its own parts again. "Our biggest challenge through all this has been communicating between all of our locations, both temporary and existing," he adds. "We have made it work and know it's a challenge that will only make us stronger when the new building is done, and we can all be together again."

B&I program to rescue

As part of the rebuilding process, Jansen turned to USDA Rural Development's Business and Industry guaranteed loan program to help build back the company. The B&I program provides loan guarantees to lenders who work with rural businesses, such as Janco, to help grow job opportunities through expansion projects, or in this case, rebuilding.

USDA Rural Development is guaranteeing a \$4.5 million loan Janco has with First Newton National Bank to help in financing the construction of a new 73,100-square-foot manufacturing facility and buy a new powder-coating paint system that will eliminate the need to ship unfinished products to a Marshalltown location to be painted, assembled and packaged.

"We knew time would be an issue and a quick turnaround would be necessary," says Robert Claypool, senior vice president, First Newton National Bank. "Other options were considered, but based on our past experiences, we were confident USDA's B&I program was the right choice."

In 2014, lenders received loan guarantees totaling more than \$40 million through USDA Rural Development's B&I guaranteed loan program to assist eight rural businesses in Iowa with a variety of job-creation efforts. The funding amount

awarded in this program in 2014 represents a threefold increase over what was provided as a state allocation.

Helps rural businesses grow

"This program plays a significant role in helping rural businesses grow their customer bases and expand business opportunities," says Bill Menner, USDA Rural Development state director in Iowa. "It's the only federal loan guarantee developed exclusively for rural businesses to help increase economic development opportunities in rural communities, just like Sully, with around 800 residents."

During the past year, USDA Rural Development's B&I guaranteed loan program has also helped businesses in the ag processing and manufacturing industries expand their export markets.

Businesses across the country have seen record exports for the last four years, and a national "Made in Rural America" initiative is helping rural businesses capitalize on global demand for American-made products.

According to a recent state workforce report, manufacturing remains one of Iowa's largest industries with 214,500 manufacturing jobs statewide and 113,964 of them located in rural communities and surrounding areas.

Jansen is excited about the company's future because of the path and vision put forth by his father, who retired from the business in 2000. "He provided a solid foundation for this company's growth and success, and we have simply built on what he started many years ago," he says. "Our team has a strong dedication to emphasizing quality and service. Building a diversified customer base is the reason why we are a stronger company today than before the fire."

The company over the years has grown from less than five employees to almost 50, and it serves diverse industries including agriculture, construction, power sports and recreation. "We view each job as a reflection of our personal values and a source of personal pride for our employees," Jansen adds.

For information about USDA Rural Development's B&I guaranteed loan program, call 515-284-4663 or visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/ia.

Leach is public information coordinator with USDA Rural Development in Iowa.



REBUILDING: Janco Industries staff will be moving into a new 73,100-square-foot manufacturing facility in Sully in the coming year. The new building project received a \$4.5 million loan guarantee from USDA Rural Development.

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