



Each month, we recognize one of the region's top manufacturers with the aid of NEPIRC, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center. Since 1988, NEPIRC has been working with manufacturers to improve their productivity, profitability, competitiveness and long-term viability through consultative services.



Wilkes-Barre manufacturer's seats used throughout the country

The next time someone passes you by on a motorized wheelchair or scooter, or you're enjoying a round of golf while vacationing in Florida, or you're taking in a show at a university or museum auditorium, you just might find a seat that was manufactured right here in Northeastern Pennsylvania.



John Dellamalva with a Backspin Seating display

Founded in 2000 by Thomas Dellamalva, Custom Seats, Inc. has been creating a variety of seat cushions, backs and arm rests that are being used across the United States and in parts of Mexico and Canada.

Although the company is only 16 years old, Custom Seats, Inc. has become a sought-after source for custom seating. The company has created waterproof scooter seats with a pressure plate that are being used at Walt Disney World and made 400 red and blue seat cushions and backs that are in the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. You'll also find their seats at the American Express Building in Lower Manhattan near the site of

the World Trade Center memorial; universities including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Chicago and UCLA; the UCLA Medical Center; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Seattle Court System; the former Kodak Theatre (now the Dolby Theatre) in Los Angeles, which is home to the Academy Awards ceremony and American Idol, and the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama.

Dellamalva capitalized on his background in engineering and years working for Pride Mobility, Inc., a major manufacturer of motorized wheelchairs and scooters, to launch Custom Seats in Pittston. Pride Mobility was purchasing seats and seat backs for its products from another manufacturer before 2000 but has since been using Dellamalva's company. Today, Pride Mobility remains one of the company's major clients.

Custom Seats began with less than 10 employees and has grown to more than 40 people working in its new facilities in Wilkes-Barre.

Within its first two years, Custom Seats, Inc. began making seat cushions and backs for other chair manufacturers including making seats for optometry examination chairs as well as rolling stools for doctor and dentist offices. This has become a significant part of their business, said Dellamalva's son, John, who is vice president of finance.

One of the company's biggest projects came in 2002 when Custom Seats crafted more than 800 seats for a Quakertown business that was designing a symphony hall for the University of Denver. Bill Legg, plant manager, said he remembers when they took on the project that they were worried

about being able to meet the deadlines. He said everyone worked day and night and completed the order just in time for pickup and delivery.

While Custom Seats is still the majority of the company's work, Dellamalva, an avid golfer, launched a subsidiary company, Backspin Seating, for the design and manufacture of custom, high-end golf cart seats complete with arm rests and seat belts. Dellamalva needed to put new seats on the two golf carts he owns and realized that this could become another division of his company. All the seats are designed to fit the customer's specifications with many options including colors, quilting and embroidery.

Backspin Seating has a sales staff in Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina and has sold its custom seats to golf cart dealers in Florida. The company has been upgrading its designs for the past several years and looks at this as a big part of its business heading into the future.

John Dellamalva said the company has been working with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC) for two years and has benefitted from a variety of its services. "We've attended the training seminars they hold. They also helped us obtain small business financing for our building, and we've done a broad-band initiative grant with them to upgrade some of our computer systems," he said.

Legg said NEPIRC has been there whenever the company has needed them. "They've been really helpful. Anything we've asked of them, they've gone out of their way to try and help us and point us in the right direction. (Thomas Dellamalva) is always happy to see them when they come by."



An employee at Custom Seats puts final touches on a custom golf cart seat back.

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