



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.



Scranton manufacturer's products serving military worldwide

When Joseph Shea founded North American Manufacturing Co. in 1976 with six partners in Taylor, Lackawanna County, the company landed its first government contract with the United States Postal Service to manufacture metal postal boxes that are found in the lobbies of post offices around the country. That was 40 years and more than a million postal boxes ago.

Today, with Shea's son, Joseph, at the helm, the company's product line has been greatly expanded through military contracts to provide backpacks, various pouches, embroidered American Flags and military cots for the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and federal civilian agencies around the globe.

In 2006, the company got its first contract with the U.S. Army to manufacture cots. Then, in 2011, North American Manufacturing received a \$38.2 million multi-year contract with the Department of Defense to make cots for all branches of the military.

In the beginning, Shea's father and his partners worked long hours constructing the postal boxes. And so did Shea's son Joseph who was only 12 years old at the time. "I'd work in the morning before school and then after school into the early evening hours. That continued right through college," he said.



A worker monitors the embroidery of stars on American flags.

In 1981, North American Manufacturing moved to a larger



Joseph Shea displays some of the military products his company manufactures.

facility in Scranton where it has gone through several expansions and remains in operation today. In 1985, shortly after he had graduated from college, Shea's father passed away unexpectedly. Joseph has been running the company since.

Expansions in the early 2000s involved adding metal presses to facilitate the manufacture of metal cabinets, and fabric spreaders and cutters that allow the company to make the backpacks, military pouches, flags and many more products.

The company currently has a contract with the Defense Logistics Agency to manufacture the embroidered flags for use by various branches of the military.

The military backpacks Shea's company makes are used throughout the world including in Afghanistan and Iraq. The company also makes the backpacks for other

companies that have contracts with Argentina, Australia, Peru and other countries.

Almost 50 people work at North American Manufacturing today. Shea said they are currently working one shift but from time to time have added shifts when needed to fill orders.

Shea said his company has been working with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center on its ISO certification. "They have helped us obtain funding for this project that is going to help us get contracts that require the certifications. They have also provided internal auditing training that has greatly benefitted our company as well," Shea said.

This feature is sponsored by...

