

Action Floor marks 20 years in community

By DIANE MONTZ
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MERCER, Wis. — Action Floor Systems LLC celebrates its 20th anniversary of producing maple sports floors in Mercer this year.

Action began production on March 20, 1989, with 20 employees.

Owners Tom Abendroth and Dan Corullo and plant manager Karl Anderson are still at work at Action Floor 20 years later.

“It took off right from the get-go,” Anderson said.

Action buys lumber from regional sawmills — 13 million board feet of lumber a year at this time.

It dries the lumber, then cuts it into tongue-and-groove boards for sports floors.

In recent years, Action has added a urethane floor to complement its wood floors. The self-leveling urethane material comes from the Netherlands. Among its uses is indoor tracks around the perimeter of basketball floors.

Today, there are 105 full-time employees, according to Anderson.

At one point, Action had four owners, 130 to 140 fulltime employees and operated 1.5 production shifts.

“We improved our efficiency,” Abendroth said.

The plant has a capacity of 7 million square feet annually, he said, adding that “the market is not demanding that.”

Abendroth is the fourth generation in the hardwood floor manufacturing business. His great-grandfather converted a planing mill at Rhinelander into a flooring mill.

Later, his father started a flooring plant at Amasa, in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Abendroth and Anderson worked there; Corullo’s sawmill provided lumber. That company was sold in 1985.



Diane Montz/Daily Globe

Action Floor Systems owners Dan Corullo, left, and Tom Abendroth, center, confer with plant manager Karl Anderson. Action, which produces maple sports floors at a Mercer, Wis., production facility, celebrates 20 years at the site in 2009.

The Mercer facility opened four years later.

Abendroth notes that:

—Action is the largest employer in Iron County. Since 1989, it has put \$64 million payroll dollars into the community.

—Action has purchased more than \$146 million in lumber from sawmills; 45 sawmills — 75 percent of them — are within a 100-mile radius of Mercer.

—Since 1997, Action has reinvested more than \$9 million in the Mercer facilities for buildings and equipment. A \$1,055,000 boiler plant is the most recent investment.

—Action Floor has customers in all 50 states and 24 countries.

“Action Floor Systems does not just recirculate dollars,” Abendroth said in a news release. “All these dollars spent come from revenues generated from around the country and the world.”

Action is “certified green” by the Forestry Sustainability Council.

The certification reflects everything from the business practices of the loggers and

sawmills it does business with to its own emissions, according to Corullo, and the recycling of waste materials generated in its production processes.

The owners say it reflects an environmental stewardship that runs through the company.

“We’ve lived it from the day we started here,” Abendroth said.

Action floors are in gyms at Gogebic Community College in Ironwood; schools in Mellen, Butternut, Eagle River, Arbor Vitae, Minocqua and Wausau; the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colo.; Lambeau Field (racquetball courts) in Green Bay; the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md.; Stanford University in Palo Alto, Cal.; and universities in Estonia, Turkey, Qatar, Korea and India.

The economic downturn “hasn’t impacted us at this point,” Abendroth said in January.

Owners are optimistic that 2009 will be another good year for the company.

After that, they say, they’ll “batten the hatches” and continue their emphasis on lean, efficient production.