

In Brief

Three Generations Officially Introduce Nexus' New Facility Expansion

A few months after the company broke ground to begin its new \$1 million expansion project, Nexus Corporation's CEO Cheryl Longtin made it official with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 16. Alongside her mother, Elizabeth "Libby" Wright, and her granddaughter, Grace Gillespie, three generations of the Nexus family cut the red ribbon at their production facility in the town of Pana in downstate Illinois. Nexus added another 63,000 sq.

ft. to the existing facility that was actually built in 1919 when it was owned by National Greenhouse Company, which Nexus bought in 1990, then built the existing manufacturing plant in 1996.

From left to right: Nexus CEO **Cheryl Longtin** helps her granddaughter **Grace Gillespie** cut the ribbon alongside her mother **Elizabeth "Libby" Wright** to officially open the new addition to the company's product facility in Pana, Illinois.



“Because of the increased demand for controlled environment growing in the food category and also the loyalty of our Nexus customers, our customers have been growing and requiring more Nexus structures,” explains Lynn Hackett, director of marketing for Nexus. “We needed to expand to meet that demand.”

Just before the ceremonial cutting of the ribbon, Nexus president Mike Porter spoke of the company's long history with the town of Pana and the community as a whole—which mirrors their own family values. About a dozen more jobs will be added as a result of the expansion; about 17 employees work at the facility currently.

The Pana facility caters to Nexus customers in the Midwest and East Coast. And now with the added space, the company will be able to operate two different extrusion lines at once—even doing aluminum and steel at the same time, which was something that couldn't be done in the smaller area. The \$1 million also includes new state-of-the-art machinery—including a “robot welder” that can weld 16 areas at once—and a new indoor delivery and pick-up area that keeps workers out of the elements. According to plant manager Tom Ade, all of the improvements will allow them to be more efficient and take on more custom projects, which is their specialty.

Another \$1 million will be invested in the expanded facility, as more machinery will continue to be added over the next year, says Craig Kaiser, VP of operations for Nexus. Most of the new equipment is computer-operated, so they run up to about \$150,000 or more apiece.

“The new machinery that we have added is not just for increased production, but it is in pursuit of our continuing goal to always give our customers a high-quality structure,” Craig explains. **GT** —Jennifer Zurko