

WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL



JENNIFER ROTENIZER/JOURNAL

Tony Vulpitta helped lead United Plastics Corp. through its transition into a green-friendly company, saving millions of pounds of auto parts from landfills. "I'm the cheapest man on the face of the Earth," he says. "I don't like waste."

United Plastics grows out of original mold

The company has gone green and begun serving new industries

BY JOHN SNYDER
Special correspondent

MOUNT AIRY — United Plastics Corp. has turned into a very different company from the one it started out as.

It was founded in 1946 as Carolina Plastics Co., which manufactured products for the automotive industry.

But in recent years it has expanded into making items for the building industry and providing products for national big-box retail stores such as Lowe's and Home Depot. And it has become a green-friendly company, embracing recycling and making sustainable products.

"Over the past several years, we have reinvented ourselves," said Tony Vulpitta, vice president and chief operating officer of the company.

United Plastics extrudes plastic in sheets and forms. Its products are used to make such things as storm windows, entry doors, storm doors, garage doors, point-of-purchase displays, conveyor belt systems, gaskets, awnings and items for the marine and boating industry.

"Some of our new products include Thermo Plastic Olefin garage floor coverings, soundproofing materials for houses and home theaters, and ProFekt, a vinyl deck covering material that looks like wood," Vulpitta said. The company owns the patents to most of its



Stanley Edwards of United Plastics stacks vinyl heel pads, which are found in almost all vehicles in America. These were made with recycled material.

products. It also has the ability to make custom products.

Vulpitta reports that Wal-Mart of Canada recently ordered ProFekt decking materials for 100 of its stores. "ProFekt was developed about two years ago to refurbish worn decks," he said. "It costs thousands of dollars to rebuild a deck, but with our product you can make your existing deck look like new for just hundreds."

The company has not forgotten its heritage. It still manufactures the vinyl heel pads that are found on car carpets under the accelerators of most cars in America.

But it's also looking toward the future. The company hopes to increase its number of employees from 56 to 100 in the next two years. And it also hopes to increase its

United Plastics Corp.

Address: 511 Hay St., Mount Airy

Founded: 1946 as Carolina Plastics Co.

Number of employees: 56

Products: Vinyl deck covering, soundproofing material; garage-floor coverings, and components for vinyl windows, doors and more.

Phone: (336) 786-2127

Website: <http://db-4flooring.com/united-plastics>

distribution in the upper Midwest and on the West Coast.

Since Vulpitta arrived at the company five years ago, United Plastics has transformed itself into a green company.

"I'm the cheapest man on the face of the Earth," he said. "I don't like waste."

United Plastics purchases waste products from other auto-parts manufacturers and recycles them to use in its manufacturing. The company has reduced waste to virtually zero from its extrusion processes, Vulpitta said. After its products are made, the company sorts its own waste and recycles, reuses or sells it.

"We used to have two 40-yard Dumpsters of waste picked up every few days. We have reduced that to one pickup every three weeks," he said. "Most of that waste is from the administrative side of the business."

United Plastics recycles Gain laundry detergent bottles, which are then used in the printing industry.

