

Fabricators celebrate SteelDay



The PKM quality control team provided welding inspection demonstrations for visitors to its SteelDay event on Sept. 23.

“Did you see what we do?”

The American Institute of Steel Construction (AISC) asked that question on its Web site page promoting its third SteelDay event, and now hundreds of people can respond “yes.” They now know what is involved in steel structural fabricating.

On SteelDay the AISC encourages all parties involved in structural steel construction—engineers, erectors, fabricators, and steelmakers—to open their doors to customers and the community, so they might understand how steel structures

are created. This “celebration of structural steel,” as the association calls it, involved more than 40 different events across the nation this year.

One of the largest occurred in Salina, Kan., where PKM Steel Service Inc. dedicated an entire weekend for the celebration. On Friday, Sept. 23, the company hosted a community expo where more than 60 organizations set up booths in the parking lot of one of PKM’s buildings; some of the booths were directly related to the manufacturing industry, such as the robotic welding technology integrator or the plate processing equipment manufacturer, and others catered to services, such as wellness program management or legal advice, which many companies find to be an integral part of their business practices.

Friday also included educational opportunities, even an official AISC class at the Salina Municipal Airport, led by Carlo Lini, an AISC engineer. Attendees could take one of four tours available on the day: PKM’s two steel fabrication facilities; Valmont Salina Galvanizing, which has the largest galvanizing kettle in the world (by zinc volume); MAICO Industries, a manufacturer of sign structures and traffic light poles; and Salina Steel Supply, a metal distribution company.

The rest of the weekend included a golf tournament and street fair on Saturday and a marathon that was a fundraiser for Salina-area charities on Sunday. With visitors coming from as far away as California, SteelDay festivities organizers were hoping for more than 1,000 visitors, the number who came to last year’s event, according to Mark Hamade, PKM’s chief operating officer.

The event coincided with the 80th birthday of PKM founder Paul Mai. He was on hand Friday to sign copies of his biography *Immigrant Steel*, which tells the story of how a German-born boy discovered the American manufacturing dream in the heart of Kansas.

Actually, before any of the SteelDay festivities began, Mark A. Guidi, a former *Fortune 500*® company executive and now a business consultant, addressed a small group of PKM employees and guests on a very timely subject. His presentation was called “Driving Business Value Through Technology.”

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MAICO Industries, Ellsworth, Kan., highlighted its fabricating skill by showcasing a Harley-Davidson® V-Rod® on a custom-made motorcycle display.

"If you can execute innovation, adaptability, and quality—even pretty well, you can create tremendous value," he said.

Guidi used historical examples to prove his point, but current-day examples were evident on the grounds of PKM the very next day:

- **Innovation:** PKM relies on its Kinetic plate processing equipment to plasma-cut through steel plate to create components for its customers' fabrications. But this piece of equipment is no one-trick pony, as it also has an oxyfuel torch to cut the very thick material, sometimes approaching 4 in. thick, and a drill for holemaking.

- **Adaptability:** Pressured to deliver fabrications with tighter turnarounds, PKM has taken steps in employee training and shop floor setup to expedite orders through the shop.

- **Quality:** Of course, this is a necessity in today's manufacturing business. PKM maintains a staff of experienced quality control personnel that visually inspects fabricated pieces before they leave the shop. Rework at the job site, which can result in expensive delays, is eliminated, hopefully.

"To be successful, value has to be about more than profit," said Guidi toward the end of his presentation.

Paul Mai understood that as he built his structural steel business on the edge of town, now comprising six buildings. PKM's business model is centered on meeting customers' needs and maintaining the safety of its employees. Profits may result from those activities, but they are not the sole motivator.

Successful fabricators—not just in the structural steel industry—understand that as well. The general public should be aware of that message, and businesses using SteelDay as an opportunity to share that wisdom typically find a very sympathetic audience.

For those interested in hosting their own SteelDay event, visit www.aisc.org.

—Dan Davis, Editor-in-Chief

EIS acquires Cobra Wire & Cable

EIS Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Genuine Parts Co. and Atlanta-based distributor of process materials, production supplies, and value-added fabricated parts, has acquired the stock of Cobra Wire & Cable Inc. from Merit Capital Partners and Fulton Capital.

Cobra, with headquarters and a distribution facility in Hatboro, Pa., and additional distribution locations in Seattle and Plano, Texas, serves the telecom, battery, uninter-

ruptible power supply (UPS), and marine markets. It will operate as a separate division of EIS and continue operations with all existing customers and suppliers from its current facilities.

Peter Sheehan, president of Cobra, will lead the Wire and Cable Division of EIS.

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