

MASABA

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screening, and wash plants.

All in the family

It's not unusual to find Higman's desk surrounded by family photos. Masaba came about largely through the efforts of his grandfather, Harold "Bud" Higman, Sr., who founded Higman Sand and Gravel at Akron, IA, in 1939.

Jerad Higman's dad, Harold Higman, Jr. formed Masaba in 1962 and incorporating what he had learned from his father, began building and selling equipment tough enough to withstand the everyday abuse of mining environments.

Harold Higman Jr. and Justin, Jerad's older brother, are still active in the operation of Higman Sand and Gravel, while Jerad puts in University of Nebraska mechanical engineering degree and years of personal experience in the business world to work here in Vermillion.

That experience has led to Masaba producing equipment that works beyond the realm of gravel pits, the major type of mining found in this part of the country.

"We have diversified considerably," Higman said. "We're still into building equipment for hard rock and sand and gravel, but we're getting more into the areas of coal, pulp and paper, frac sands and equipment for the unloading and loading of materials, such as on docks for ship loading and unloading."

"Our growth has been because we've expanded our range as far as dealerships throughout the United States, and we have our sister company, Masaba Canada, and it's done a phenomenal job," he said. "We've also done quite a bit more overseas this year than we've ever done before. We've shipped our first product to Australia, and we're getting more work out of that product and we're hopefully going to grow that as well."

Masaba's success also can be attributed to its ability to craft custom equipment to meet various customers' unique needs.

"It's become somewhat of who we are," Higman said. "I think people out in the industry - if they get into something that's rather unique, that's when our name comes up. It is very engineering-intensive work, so we have struggled over the years to get more engineers on board."

Masaba currently has 12 engineers on its staff. Higman hopes to hire a couple more engineers, along with at least two additional drafters in the first quarter of this year.

"When we talk about growth and economic development, this last year I



The new addition being constructed by Masaba will allow employees to sandblast the products they build indoors, in a controlled environment, before they are painted. Currently, the blasting of equipment before it's painted occurs outdoors.

(Photo by David Lias)

would say we added close to 70 people, and I see that happening again this year if we can continue this growth curve and after we get into this new building," he said.

Masaba employed around 35 people when it began operating in Vermillion seven years ago. Today, its staff numbers 180.

"The good thing about manufacturing businesses is we are creating something, and a lot of our sales aren't even in the state of South Dakota," Higman said. "All of the money that we bring back, in the form of wages and salaries and so forth ... we bring that wealth back into the state."

The continued success and growth of Masaba has not gone without notice in the South Dakota.

"Three expansions in five years is an impressive track record," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. "I'm pleased Masaba has found a hospitable environment for growth in Vermillion and that the company continues to invest in South Dakota."

Masaba's aggregate payroll in the manufacturing industry rose from \$5.2 million in 2008 to more than \$6.9 million in 2010. Part of the reason for the increase in payroll is the creation of new jobs in Vermillion.

"Success in the manufacturing sector is truly a success for the entire community of Vermillion," said Steve Howe, executive director of the Vermillion Economic Development Company, in a prepared statement released last week to announce this latest bit of good news for the community. "A higher aggregate payroll translates into

more money being spent in the retail and service businesses in Vermillion, and should begin to drive a slow housing market."

The community's expansion-based incentives and tax breaks for businesses are driving growth. Masaba is projecting it will employ 250 people within three years. The business-friendly climate has also helped to Masaba export its products overseas.

"The community of Vermillion has been focusing on expanding our manufacturing sector for the last several years," Howe said. "The results of recruiting efforts, fiscal incentives and business-friendly regulations are evident in the growth taking place. Businesses have a solid foundation to build upon."

The business climate in South Dakota, Higman added, is playing a major role in Masaba's success.

"Speaking as an entrepreneur ... the thing I love about this state, and I fly its flag high - it's the best state to do business in. Hands down," he said.

Current national economic trends may be worrisome, but Higman said he intends to concentrate on Masaba's operations and subsequent growth in Vermillion.

"I'm focusing on what we do best," he said. "I would like to think politicians can help get things under control and get our country back on the straight and narrow. But the one thing we did, when things were bad in 2009-10, we went out and hired people, sales people specifically, and let people know we were here and active. Today, it's paying off."

"The thing that makes us special is our team," Higman said. "We've got

phenomenal people on board here, and with any organization, it's the people you have on board, pushing the growth and the quality of the company. It's who you are. It's your DNA. I think we have a phenomenal DNA and a culture around here to build with pride and with the best of quality. Our goal is to make every customer happy, and I think that sets us apart."

That "corporate DNA" can be traced back to the company's earliest roots, to the one man who has made it all possible - Bud Higman, Sr., Jerad's grandfather, who died last April. He was 94.

Higman gets emotional just thinking about him.

"He's a pretty special guy," he said, his voice cracking. "He's the guy that started Higman Sand and Gravel and got it all going, and I spent a lot of time with that guy growing up. I think he kind of established that hard work ethic, and passed it on to my dad, and he instilled it in me."

"The one thing I learned from him, besides hard work, was the importance of giving back to your community," Higman said. "It's not just about you. You're here for a purpose, and we've been very blessed as a company, and one thing I've found to be very important is to give back, be it through local charities, or the university, or through the guys who work here."

Bud Higman grew up during the Great Depression, and began working after completing eighth grade. He built much of his equipment himself after starting Higman Sand & Gravel.

"He made me who I am today," he said.

WORK

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Howe said.

"We're going to have to pull in from Yankton, we're going to have to pull in from Sioux City and Sioux Falls," he said. "That's just a fact of life of living in Vermillion. You look at any of the employers, the make-up is vast majority Clay County, supplemented with ... outside (communities). It's definitely a mix of both local and commuter."

Finding living accommodations for these incoming employees will make it necessary to address some of Vermillion's "housing shortages," Howe said.

"I'm not talking about the existing inventory, I'm talking about the opportunity for new homes to be built," he said. "If we're going to be successful long-term in recruiting growth, they're going to want a place to live, and they're going to want a nice place to live."

But those employees will bring more revenue into the community, as well.

"Based on some previous studies that we had done in how much of the money (employees earn) stays local, we can expect probably about 55 percent of that to be local consumer expenditures," Howe said.

The growth of manufacturing in Vermillion also could lead to more businesses coming in, he said.

"People want to locate their businesses in areas where people speak their language, where people are doing similar things, where they're comfortable. They like to cluster," he said.

The growth in manufacturing shows that Vermillion could be one of those "cluster areas," Howe said.

"(Masaba) knows they're not going to be the only manufacturer in town now," he said. "It provides a comfort level for a new business considering setting up a manufacturing because somebody's already paved that trail for them."

Free bariatric seminar for weight loss scheduled in Yankton

The public is invited to attend a free educational presentation on Bariatric Surgery for Weight Loss using the adjustable LAP-BAND® System on Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 7 p.m. at the Best Western Kelly Inn, 1607 East Hwy 50, Yankton. General Surgeon Michael D. Haley, MD, FACS, on staff at Avera Queen of Peace Hospital in Mitchell, is a trained bariatric surgeon and uses the BioEnterics® LAP-BAND® System, and will be the featured speaker at the bariatric seminar.

Individuals 80 to 100 pounds overweight that have been unable to keep pounds off with over-the-counter medication, exercise, or other weight loss programs now have a minimally invasive surgery option that significantly reduces the capacity for food intake. The LAP BAND® System is adjustable and is placed laparoscopically without cutting or stapling of the stomach or gastrointestinal rerouting to bypass normal digestion.

Patients will experience reduced pain, trauma, and recovery periods, as well as sustained, healthy weight loss primarily because the procedure creates an earlier feeling of fullness and limits food consumption. Dr. Haley has been trained and credentialed in the

laparoscopic placement of the BioEnterics® LAP-BAND® Adjustable Gastric Banding System and began performing the procedure at Avera Queen of Peace Hospital in 2004. He is among the first surgeons in the area to perform the LAP-BAND® System procedure and will be available for questions following the presentation.

The LAP-BAND® System is currently the #1 implantable device prescribed for weight loss worldwide. To date, over 450,000 LAP-BAND® Systems have been distributed worldwide. LAP-BAND® System patients on average achieve weight loss comparable to gastric bypass surgery at five years after surgery. According to our latest statistics, at 24 months after surgery our patients are achieving a loss of 50 percent or greater of their excess weight. The LAP-BAND® System has a perioperative severe complication rate reported as <1 percent in a study by Parkhetal.

In addition to Dr. Haley, staff at Avera Medical Group Bariatrics includes Nathan Hinker, CNP; Mindy Miller, RN, bariatric coordinator; and Deb Schoenfelder, RN.

For more information about bariatric surgery using the LAP-BAND® System, please attend the presentation or call Avera Medical Group Bariatrics at 996-5482.

VHS presents O'Neill's play 'The Hairy Ape'

Vermillion High School students will be presenting the one-act play "The Hairy Ape" by Eugene O'Neill on Friday, Jan. 20 at the Vermillion High School Performing Arts Center. This expressionist drama, written in the 1920s, explores a common laborer's quest to find his place in an industrial society. "Yank," the play's protagonist, discovers his pride shattered when Mildred, the spoiled daughter of a wealthy steel mogul, declares his behavior as uncouth and animalistic.

This 45-minute production will be performed at 7:30 p.m. on the Vermillion High School stage. It is free and open to the public. After Friday's performance, the students will take the show on the road to the Region IA, South Dakota High School Activities Association's One-Act Play contest held at Yankton's Mount Marty College theatre on Tuesday, January 24 at 9 a.m.



The cast of the one-act play, "The Hairy Ape," rehearses a scene on the stage of the Vermillion High School Performing Arts Center Tuesday afternoon. VHS students will present the play Friday.

(Photo by David Lias)

St. Agnes Youth will serve breakfast

The St. Agnes Youth Group is having a French toast breakfast fundraiser Sunday morning, Jan. 22, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the St. Agnes Gym. This breakfast fundraiser is for the St. Agnes youth Group Winter trip, to Mankato, MN,

Skiing at Mt. Kato in February. There will be a free will offering taken at the door.

For more info please contact Ray Hofman at 624-6457. Catholic United will have matching funds for this project.

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA THERAPY GROUP

Were you physically abused as a child and still suffering from it? We are offering group therapy that has been found effective through research. Sessions will be held at the Psychological Services Center at USD. Group begins the beginning of February and involves one evening session per week for 10 weeks. Participants need to attend a screening session to see if they qualify. Call 605-677-5354 for more information. Space is limited - please call a.s.a.p.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY