

There are manufacturing facilities and offices all over Mentor designing and churning out products that we use or are familiar with, but often didn't know came from our own back yard. Examples range the gamut: clothing and accessories, home improvement products, medical supplies and technology, luxury products, labels, and on and on. Here you'll find just a small sampling of these companies and their backstories. Many times, too, those companies started as a hobby, out of a garage or a home office, and then grew over time to what they are today. You may be surprised to find what is made in Mentor.



ACO POLYMER

Drainage systems often are not top of mind until they fail. ACO Polymer Products on Pinecone Drive in Mentor makes polymer concrete channels for drainage that span a multitude of applications, from roadways, parking lots and garages to playgrounds, pools and sidewalks. In fact, area residents may be familiar with some of their work — the recent drainage improvements made to the parking lot at Great Lakes Mall, for example, as well as drainage channels inside the tracks at Mentor and Chardon high schools.

That just scratches the surface of what products this worldwide company offers. “We try to make things that work for every application,” says Brian Parent, director of operations for ACO Polymer. The company has its worldwide headquarters in northern Germany, with two locations in the U.S.: the Mentor facility and one in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Just one example of innovation from ACO is the “Amphibian Guidance System,” a tunnel and fencing system for amphibians and other small animals. Parent says issues related to blocking migration routes of wildlife can delay construction projects indefinitely, costing the parties involved. This product is designed to direct wildlife through a tunnel to an underground passage below the roadway. It's an innovative, eco-friendly solution that also prevents costly project delays.

A recent introduction is the ACO StormBrixx, a stormwater management system that connects to form an open bonded structure (Parent described them as similar to LEGOs). They are placed underground, with fill gravel over top, then asphalt can be laid on that. The Storm-

Brixx are strong enough that vehicles can drive over them and rainwater can either filter slowly into the ground through them or the water can be cleaned and pumped back up for reuse.

ACO Polymer Products also can be found in residential applications, and consumers can find some of their products through Menards online, HD Supply and Whitecap. It offers a variety of options for drains, including ADA-compliant ones for showers so a wheelchair can roll right across the threshold.

The company is constantly looking for new ways to innovate, both in the Mentor and Phoenix facilities and in northern Germany. Worldwide, almost 4,000 people work to produce ACO products on five continents. Here in Mentor, the company just moved in to the Pinecone facility about a year ago after needing room to expand. The move from Chardon also opens up an employment corridor of Wickliffe, Willowick and Willoughby, which provides more hiring opportunities as the company continues to fill jobs.

To find out more about ACO Polymer Products, visit acousa.com.

LÜM-TEC

As with many companies, the story of Lüm-Tec started nine years ago with a hobby. “I had a habit of taking apart watches and modifying them,” says president and founder Chris Wiegand. “After many years I discovered a way to make the luminous glow extremely bright. I began offering this service to others. It proved to be very popular.”

He continued to modify existing watches and build high-end custom watches until he was able to quit his full-time job

and become a watchmaker. He began designing his own mass production brand with all the features that customers commonly asked for on their custom watches, including “insane luminous, of course,” top-end materials and finishing, special hard coatings, anti-reflective sapphires, exotic materials and more.

He launched the Lüm-Tec brand in late 2007, and initially made 800 watches. Wiegand's company was one of the first established micro watch brands. A story about Lüm-Tec ran in a popular national men's magazine shortly after, and the watches sold out. “The next years we increased production and moved to more exotic materials in our products,” Wiegand says. “Each year our quality and product content has grown better and better.”

Because of the success of the private line, Wiegand has begun helping others launch their own brands. “Today we manufacture and design watches for brands all over the globe,” he says, adding they make watches and watch components for more than 50 other brands.

Wiegand's Lüm-Tec brand stands out from the crowd of high-end, luxury watches because of unique components and a small-batch philosophy. “Our trademarked MDV Luminescent technology is regarded as the best in the industry,” he says. “All watches are made only in a small, numbered series and never made again.”

It ships Lüm-Tec watches to customers all over the globe, and provides customers with services such as free timing adjustments, battery changes on quartz models, seal cleaning/lubrication and pressure testing for life with each purchase.