



Peddinghaus pride

Andrews machinery builder a part of nation's infrastructure

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AS SOON AS YOU ENTER Bob Meltzer's office, you know right away he's a Chicago Cubs fan. He proudly displays posters, ticket stubs and other Cubs gear. It's obvious his 23 years in Andrews and away from his native Illinois has done little to diminish devotion to his team.

He does have a competing passion, however—Peddinghaus, the Santee Electric Cooperative-served manufacturing company that brought him to South Carolina when it opened a second American plant in 1997. Since 2000, Meltzer has been the chief operating officer of Peddinghaus South Carolina, overseeing the production of specialized machines for structural steel and heavy plate processing.

"It's been a great company to work for," says Meltzer. "Taking care of their employees is important to them and so is producing the highest quality products in our industry."

Peddinghaus machines drill, cut, mark and process structural steel that is often used in building major infrastructure such as bridges, hospitals and stadiums.

As happy as Meltzer was about returning to the iconic Wrigley Field to see his Cubs play a World Series game in 2016, he has just as much pride for the stadiums he and his team have had a part in erecting—Yankee Stadium, the home stadiums of the Dallas Cowboys and the Arizona Cardinals and last year's Super Bowl site in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Meltzer isn't the only one that carries around Peddinghaus pride.

"You can ride across a bridge and know that you had a part in punching the holes in that steel," explains Mary Lewis, a member of Santee Electric and the company's first female machine shop supervisor. "I can walk into a hospital and say that I contributed to this because the machines that we build helped build this hospital."

Lewis is one of seven of the 12 original employees that still work for Peddinghaus South Carolina. Meltzer says that most of them were

Of the 12 original employees of Peddinghaus South Carolina, there remains seven—from left) Mary Lewis, Scott Howard, David Powell, Ed McCrea, Amarty Tisdale, Herb McCray and Jeff Tisdale. Bob Meltzer (far right) came to Andrews from the company's headquarters in Bradley, Illinois, to help with the launch and has remained for 24 years.

former textile workers who'd been educated at Williamsburg Technical College. Since then, the company has continued to place a high value on technical education. Many of their employees are graduates of Williamsburg Tech or Horry-Georgetown Tech and they provide full tuition reimbursement to those who are pursuing a relevant degree.

"We're big on schooling," says Meltzer. "Both of the tech schools are feeders for us with the welding, machining and now with the new mechatronics. We couldn't do anything without our local technical colleges."

Meltzer points to one of his favorite success stories as an example. Richie Jennings came to him as a sophomore in high school having just completed a welding course and looking for part-time work. Before he completed his





◀ Welder Gill Hinson is one of the graduates of Williamsburg Tech that have come to work for Peddinghaus.



senior year, he was a full-time employee. Peddinghaus paid for his education at Williamsburg Tech as he acquired an associate degree and multiple welding certifications.

"I love that they gave me the opportunity to do something I love to do," says Jennings. "You come in and you form these relationships with people and it becomes like working with family."

In addition to his job as the welding shop supervisor at Peddinghaus, Jennings is an instructor at Williamsburg Tech and has also taught at Horry-Georgetown Tech. Several of his former students are now with the company.

"To see those guys grasp some of the same opportunities and how they've grown, it's a win-win for me," says Jennings.

The relationship with the local cooperative has also been important for Peddinghaus. Having experience with the large investor-owned utilities in his home state, Meltzer says he has been impressed with how Santee Electric makes the plant's operations a priority.

"They treat local business and manufacturing great," says Meltzer. "If there is a hurricane or an ice storm, I always get a call from Santee Electric to find out what we're doing. They are very proactive about keeping us up and going (with power). We didn't get that up in Illinois."

Santee Electric delivers electricity to some formidable machines at the Peddinghaus South Carolina facility. A recent addition to the shop—a gigantic robotic arm dubbed the PeddiAssembler that



◀ Welding shop supervisor Richie Jennings (right) and Alan Ard prepare a steel structure for Peddinghaus's robotic welding arm (shown above).

Peddinghaus Profile

- ▶ Founded in Gevelsberg, Germany in 1903 by Paul Peddinghaus.
- ▶ Initial products included anvils and hammers.
- ▶ Established U.S. headquarters in Bradley, Illinois in 1977.
- ▶ Chose their Andrews location in 1997 over Florence and Charleston.

- ▶ Manufactures machines for builders and steel industry across the globe, including several South Carolina companies, including:

Merchant Iron Works, Sumter

Steelworks of the Carolinas, Piedmont

Frazier Industrial, Lamar

SC Steel, Taylors

Watford Steel Buildings, Kingstree

Steelfab of South Carolina, Florence

C.M. Steel, York

- ▶ Currently there are 38 employees, most of which are from Georgetown, Williamsburg and Florence counties.

lifts, twists and welds steel structures—required a new feeder line from Santee Electric to power it. Then there is the Anglemaster, an intimidating green and orange machine that punches and shears with over 200 tons of pressure. Peddinghaus not only uses these machines, but markets them to their customers as well.

"Peddinghaus is an interesting company in that they use many of the machines that they make," says Ronald Carter, manager of economic development for Santee Electric. "We enjoy a strong partnership with them and we are proud to have them as a member of the cooperative."