

Beachside machine shop serves global clients

BY ANDREW GRAY

Nick Chambliss explained that his reason for moving his business, CMS Tool & Die, to Carolina Beach from Durham in 1998 was simple.

“In 2002-2004, I was just like any vacationer at the beach, I would come down every weekend. At some point it dawned on me, that I could run my business here,” Chambliss said.

Chambliss moved CMS Tool & Die to Wilmington in 2005 and then, he said, the business quickly outgrew that facility and moved to Carolina Beach. Chambliss said moving his business was not as simple as relocating an office. Each of CMS Tool & Die’s Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) milling machines weighs from 10,000 lbs to 25,000 lbs and requires an 18 wheeler to move.

Founded in 1987, CMS Tool & Die produces parts for the aerospace, automotive, telecommunication and medical industries. CMS produces parts for a wide range of medical

clients including the Biomedical Science and Anesthesia Departments at Duke Hospital and the Anesthetics Department of the Imperial Medicine College of Chelsea & Westminster Hospital in London as well as for California Tech, Georgia Tech, Virginia Tech, University of Miami, and Triangle Biomedical Science in Durham.

CMS Tool & Die also produces parts for Red Box, the video rental system found at many grocery stores. CMS has been making custom parts for the popular vending machine since the first prototype was assembled.

“I was in on the ground level in that I knew the original company that was building it,” Chambliss said.

Parts made by CMS also go into products that Progress Energy and Duke Electric Company use to produce electricity.

“Part of the success of our business is that we approach things as a team,” said Chambliss, who credits



PHOTO BY CHRIS WILKERSON

Nick Chambliss: President of CMS Tool & Die Inc.

his relatively young staff for helping the company succeed. Of the ten total employees, four of their machinists, as well as the shop manager are all under 40 years old and had never worked in the manufacturing industry before coming to work at CMS. Chambliss highlighted Jeff Teasdale, Operation Manager and Joel Thomas, Senior CNC Program Technician as “two key employees, that are a major part of the business.”

“This type of employee is the future of not only CMS, but also the future of our community,” said Chambliss.

Both Chambliss and Lynn Willis, CFO, stressed how important their relationship with Carolina Beach was to the company. “We give back a lot to the community and try to participate,” said Willis.

One or more employees are actively involved in most Chamber events, he

said, including the Blues Festival, the Christmas by the Sea project, and the Beach Music Festival.

The company also sponsored a CMS employee in the recent Special Olympics Polar Plunge. Their shop mascot, Sam, a black miniature Schnauzer, was the mystery bachelor at the Breast Cancer Awareness Bachelor auction and drew in the top bid of \$1,000.

Chambliss sees the future of his company as bright and profitable. CMS has once again outgrown their space and is exploring options to expand the square footage at the current location.

The company is debt free and continues to produce critical parts for a wide range of industries around the world.

“A lot of people work their entire life with the plan to retire at the beach. I choose to live there,” Chambliss said.