



A docked Grand Craft Super Sport wooden boat.



GRAND CRAFT BOATS LLC

5 MINUTES WITH...

PATRICK GALLAGHER

President and chief executive officer, Grand Craft Boats LLC

GRAND CRAFT BOATS LLC, a maker of custom mahogany watercraft, recently moved its headquarters from Holland, Michigan, to Genoa City in Walworth County. The company expects to employ 20 workers in the village within the next three years. It currently has about eight craftspeople building boats. Patrick Gallagher, president and chief executive officer of Grand Craft, recently spoke with BizTimes reporter Alex Zank about his recent acquisition of the business, the decision to move it to Wisconsin and his plans for the company's growth.

YOU AND YOUR WIFE, ROSE GALLAGHER, BOUGHT THE COMPANY IN FEBRUARY. HOW DID THAT COME TO BE?

"Having grown up on Lake Geneva during the summers as a kid, I always had a love for the lake and a love for boats. After being in a family business the last 20 years, I decided I wanted to make a change. ... I didn't want to buy any company that made any kind of widgets. I wanted a company that had a potential to scale up and grow, had a need for increased sales and marketing, and the more I thought about it, the wooden boat segment was the perfect fit for me."

WHY DID YOU TWO DECIDE TO MOVE THE BUSINESS TO WISCONSIN?

"It was really many weeks before the acquisition that Rose and I discussed the idea of moving the operation in Wisconsin in due time. But then as we got closer to the closing, and as we got closer to having to begin our search for a VP of operations, I decided to put a stake in the ground and make the declaration to ourselves that we were going to move the operation within months after the acquisition."

HOW DO YOU VIEW THIS NEXT CHAPTER OF THE COMPANY UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP?

"When we set out to buy Grand Craft, even though it was a 42-year-old company, it was in many ways for us as new owners more of a start-up. We were acquiring the company name and assets, as well as the existing craftsmen. But what we knew we needed to do is not only entice them to relocate, but also to hire several more here in Wisconsin."

WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE COMPANY FIVE YEARS FROM NOW?

"Our goal is, within the next five years, to be building well over 25 boats (annually), and closer to 50. There's a demand, but there's also so many untapped markets for us. Not only domestically – in pockets around the country there are untapped opportunities for Grand Craft – but there are enormous potentials for us overseas. And so, international sales is very much a part of the growth plan for us." ■