

# Brimrose Technology

## County commissioners working with manufacturer to bring a bullet-proof vest factory to the area

By David Chaffee

# BRIMROSE

Brimrose Technology Corporation wants to come to Grant County and build a factory to fill a critical national need, potentially creating more than 100 jobs in the process.

“I love this area,” says Brimrose CEO Dr. Ron Rosemeier. “The people are hard-working and patriotic, the costs reasonable, the attitude gung ho.” In fact, Rosemeier enjoys the area so much he has built a mountain home here.

Grant County reminds Rosemeier of the area where he grew up as the son and grandson of coal miners in Western Pennsylvania. However, because of the lack of jobs, it was necessary for him to move elsewhere to start Brimrose. He doesn’t want that to happen to talented young people now living in Grant County. “As your children get a college education, they must leave for jobs elsewhere,” he notes ruefully.

A materials scientist by training who got his Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Rosemeier is an entrepreneur at heart.

Starting out in Baltimore with little more than a degree, Rosemeier had nearly maxed out his credit cards trying to start a new company when he finally received his first government contract. Some 34 years later, he runs a company of 65 employees that does business around the world, with customers including Corning, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Astra-Zeneca and many others.

Brimrose sees an opportunity to create jobs in Grant County as the home for a new bullet-proof vest facility. “This is a high-tech application, but there is nothing here regarding jobs that Grant County residents couldn’t master with training,” says Rosemeier.

While Richie Sites from Sites Construction was building Rosemeier’s home, Sites introduced Rosemeier to Doug Swick, a Grant County Commissioner who was soft-selling Rosemeier to the area.

Without much prodding, Rosemeier was on board. Swick then set up meetings for Rosemeier with Rep. David McKinley (R.-W.V.) in McKinley’s Congressional offices in Petersburg and Washington D.C.

As of now, the three members of the Grant County Council share Rosemeier’s excitement.

“We are grateful for Ron’s vision,” says Swick, who as stated was instrumental in developing the idea for Grant County. “We have very few manufacturing jobs here. In fact, the local hospital is the biggest employer.” Adds Swick: “I am very supportive of any business coming to Grant County. We definitely need jobs.”

Grant County Commissioner Jim Wilson agrees. “We would like to see the plant come to our county and West Virginia,” says Wilson. “This part of the state has been disadvantaged economically.

One in three of our workers have to Drive out of the county even to find work,” he adds.

“I can’t imagine any place that would be better for this kind of plant,” says Commissioner Jim Cole. “People here are patriotic, hard-working and understand firearms. We would be tickled to death to house a facility like this. Our people would come back here in a heartbeat to work at this facility. We will do anything within our power to see this happen.”

Brimrose wants to manufacture ballistic vests and ceramic accessories in Petersburg.

The method the company has developed, known as FAST, for Field Assisted Sintering Technology, substantially reduces the manufacturing time of current methods by a factor of from 10 to 80. Plate thickness also is reduced, thus decreasing the weight the soldier would have to bear in wearing a vest.

Grant County has been very generous in offering land and providing other benefits for the plant, including potentially helping with startup costs from the county budget.

One obstacle is who would fund the \$3.5 million production unit required to make the material, something that Brimrose believes the U.S. Department of Defense should help with.

The \$3.5 million would seem like small potatoes when one considers that DoD gave BAE Systems \$48 million in 2012 to develop soft-body armor. That could increase to \$108.5 million.

Also, Ceradyne received an initial \$127 million in DoD funds for ceramic armor plates. The entire body armor market is expected to exceed \$1 billion, according to a recent market study.

If the plant is approved, Dr. Rosemeier sees a variety of benefits for spinoffs coming from the boron carbide processes, such as cutting tools, hypersonic vehicle parts, thermo-electric materials and bio-medical applications.