

Above & BEYOND



COMPANY NEWSLETTER • JANUARY 2026 VOL. 1

Covers events: Oct. 2025–Jan. 2026

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EMPIRE NEWS

SAFETY FIRST

GREEN SCENE

T.E.A.M. TALK



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RESPECT • INTEGRITY • RESPONSIBILITY
CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT • KNOWLEDGE • EXCELLENCE



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Giving a Helping Hand

Empire has always been an advocate of helping the community. Our previous newsletter showcased two events that Empire is involved with on an annual basis: being the official printer of the Childrens' Miracle Network Holiday Cards, and providing stickers and printing "In Memory" signs for the Steppin' Out in Pink event – a non-competitive fundraiser supporting breast cancer research and patient support program through Gundersen.

What some people might not know is that Empire contributes to smaller organizations as well. In the last few months, they helped three organizations that involve Empire employees.

SAND LAKE SCAMPERS

The Sand Lake Scamper is a fundraiser where students collect monetary

pledges from family and friends for Sand Lake Elementary School.

The Parent-Teacher Group (PTG) made a goal of ensuring every child would have a T-shirt for the event, with the Scamper logo on the front and sponsors on the back. That's where Empire and Russ Kuehn (machine shop supervisor) stepped in to help.

Russ' daughter is an alumni of Sand Lake Elementary so the president of the PTG approached Russ to see if Empire would be willing to be a sponsor and help with the t-shirts this year. They said yes! The PTG provided 400 t-shirts with the help of other sponsors, and Empire provided the labor and t-shirt transfers of the school logo and sponsors.

The actual scamper took place at school, where the kids and teachers had fun dancing, running around, and

being silly. Top earners got to throw a pie in their favorite teacher's face, and because they met and actually exceeded their fundraising goal, the principal had to kiss two goats!



The Scampers 2026 t-shirt



The kids had a blast and loved the shirts. You can still see kids wearing them out and about even though the event has ended.

RING & RUN, INC.

Ring & Run is a non-profit organization that brings cheer to people in Houston County, Minnesota. It was created in 2013 by Mark and Cathy Buttell (project manager in the art department). The community sends in nominations of people that need some cheer due to illness,

death of a loved one, an unexpected tragedy, etc. Right before Christmas, the Ring & Run committee distributes monetary gifts in a "ding dong ditch" manner, keeping it anonymous. Since its inception, Ring & Run has helped over 700 individuals and families. Empire has been monumental in their success by donating raffle tickets since 2022, as well as the prize board used at their annual Mingle Jingle event.

WEST SALEM HOCKEY ASSOCIATIONS

West Salem Hockey Association (WSHA) is a non-profit organization established in the mid-1970s and



WSHA stickers and banners. Driftless Predators items are for the Co-op West Salem & Tornado Youth Hockey (Bantam Level)



Ring & Run committee and raffle tickets

based in West Salem, Wisconsin. Guided by core values of effort, teamwork, dedication, respect, and physical fitness, WSHA is dedicated to promoting youth ice hockey in the West Salem, Bangor, Rockland, and Mindoro areas. The organization supports more than 120 youth ages 4–15 across its programs.

This strong sense of community and commitment to young athletes is further reflected through the involvement and generosity of families and local partners. Jennifer Schloesser, creative art director and parent of a player on one of the teams, contributes her talents by creating custom artwork. Empire graciously donates items such as trading cards, welcome signs, tournament bag tags, stickers, and magnets.

Contributors:
Russ Kuehn, Cathy Buttell, & Jennifer Schloesser





FIRE SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE
(October: Fire Safety Month)

Some of the information in this article can be found on the website:
<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/workplace-fires/>

Throughout the year, it's important to know what to do in case of a company fire. A fire in an office or store can be devastating to your community. In addition to potential deaths and property loss, people may lose their jobs and the community may lose a vital service provided by the businesses.

HOW TO STAY SAFE AT WORK:

- » Know what your company's Emergency Action Plan is if there is a fire. At Empire, our EAP can be found in QMS/Policies/Safety/Emergency Action Plan folder.
- » Create an emergency response team that is responsible for specific tasks.
- » Schedule regular fire training: learn the evacuation routes, and have a designated area to go outside of the building. Have someone in your department keep track of personnel to make sure everyone got out of the building safely.
- » Check with your local fire department to see if they are willing to come out and train employees on fire extinguishers.
- » Know where the fire alarms are located in your building.
- » Make sure fire escape plans are posted in every section or level of a building.
- » Know where exit locations are, along with escape routes, and where to find fire protection equipment and fire extinguishers when applicable.
- » If you are a new employee or aren't familiar with your company's protocol, make sure you talk to your supervisor. Being prepared is the best way to stay safe!



NATIONAL ESTIMATES

Nonresidential building fires & losses for 2023

1,110,000 fires

130 deaths

1,200 injuries

\$3.16 BIL. in dollar loss

OVERALL TRENDS

10-year period of 2014-2023:

- 19% ↑ fires**
- 70% ↑ deaths**
- 14% ↓ injuries**
- 10% ↑ dollar loss**

SAFETY NEWS

REMINDERS FROM THE SAFETY COMMITTEE

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE is crucial because it protects employees from injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. At Empire, we have certain guidelines that must be followed in order to ensure the safety of our employees. There have been issues with repeated violations, so please make sure you are following the requirements listed below. These are put in place to keep you safe!

- **Earbuds** are not allowed in the plant. The only place they can be used is in customer service and art department (in one ear only).
- **Hoodies/Hoods** are not to be worn on your head in the production areas. The hoods take away from your peripheral vision.
- **Razor blades** have been showing up in inappropriate places, including stuck in key boards. Please use the magnetic strips designed for them.
- **No open pop cans** in production areas. Liquids must be in a non-spill container to protect you, the product, and the equipment from spills.
- **Hair** longer than shoulder length needs to be tied back when running machinery or presses.

NO LOST TIME

As of December 28th we are at 865 days with no lost time from accidents. Keep up the good work!



WINTER SAFETYLAND

With winter here, make sure to take steps to stay safe when arriving and leaving work:

- ❄ Walk on the blacktop and not through the grass areas, and take small steps (like a penguin!).
- ❄ On snowy days, please park on the back edge of the parking lot so the snow can be removed. Refer to the maps posted throughout the plant.
- ❄ The aluminum ramp can be slippery when wet. Please be careful.
- ❄ Salt is located at the entrances. If you are in first, please throw some down if it's icy.
- ❄ If you notice entries aren't being shoveled, or are concerned about icy areas please let maintenance know so they can take care of it.



Jennifer Schloesser

EMPIRE IS REPRESENTED AT THE SBC CONFERENCE

In addition to Empire employees attending the Sustainable Business Council conference, **Jennifer Schloesser** and **Alexis Marsh** were asked to be on panels this year.

See Alexis' story on the next page.

SUSTAINABILITY 2025 SBC ANNUAL CONFERENCE November 4-5th, 2025 • La Crosse, Wisconsin

Each year, the Sustainable Business Council holds its annual conference, where it continues to live by its mission: "To accelerate the integration of sustainable principles and practices into business strategies and operations." This year, the conference was held at the La Crosse Center. As a member, Empire has participated on a number of occasions, either as a guest or as a panel speaker, and even hosted the event in 2016.

For this year's event, we opened our doors once again to offer a tour of our facility, where participants could see firsthand how we have turned innovation into environmental action through our UV LED ink-curing technology. The facility tour highlighted Empire's cellular manufacturing process, advanced automation through our lean initiatives, and sustainable print manufacturing to deliver high-quality, durable products that support our customers' ESG goals.

Panel Participation

Alexis Marsh was asked to participate in the Keynote Panel: The Green Masters Program® as a Tool to Advance and Integrate Sustainability. This session was moderated by Erin Bauer, Founder & Principal of Tack & Clew LLC and Instructor at UW Green Bay. Other panelists included Jennifer Koenig, Chief Sustainability Officer at Brunswick Corporation, and Lisa Geason-Bauer, President of Evolution Marketing.

I was also asked to participate in a breakout session. My panel was moderated by Douglas Johnson, Co-owner of Keen Works, LLC, who is our Environmental Management System (EMS) Green Tier auditor, along with Jamie Wallner, Director of Global Compliance and Sustainability for Brady Corp.



Alexis Marsh

Our panel focused on leveraging EMS to build a sustainability program that goes beyond compliance. Through our own experiences and strategic planning, we discussed how our EMS was developed not only to support compliance but to move beyond it. Our discussion touched on Wisconsin Green Tier programs and utilizing the Sustainable Business Council's Green Masters programs as a tool to support our sustainability goals and achievements. By leveraging our EMS, we utilize documented processes and planning tools to unlock competitive advantages, reduce emissions, and support long-term environmental goals.

We had several questions and follow-up discussions after the event. People are usually pretty amazed by what we have accomplished and how UV LED has reduced our energy consumption. It's pretty remarkable in



Douglas Johnson and Jennifer Schloesser during a keynote panel session



Douglas Johnson

manufacturing and business to achieve these types of results, and I don't think we as employees realize the impact we have on our industry. We work in it every day, not realizing how little our manufacturing process impacts the environment. It was an honor to be asked to participate in the SBC conference and work alongside like-minded individuals and companies who strive for environmental excellence. I always enjoy the opportunity to share our story and the great work of our employees.



Jennifer Schloesser, Creative Director / Green Team Coordinator

EMPIRE RECOGNIZED AT GREEN MASTERS CEREMONY



Green Master status for 2025



Top Performer in Customer Welfare (Mfg & Heavy Industrial Category)



EMPOWERING SUSTAINABLE ACTION
Reflections from the SBC Conference Panel

On November 5th, I had the honor of representing Empire Screen Printing at the Sustainable Business Council (SBC) Annual Conference in La Crosse, Wisconsin. I joined a panel discussion titled “The Green Masters Program® as a Tool to Advance and Integrate Sustainability” alongside Jennifer Koenig, Chief Sustainability Officer of Brunswick Corporation, Lisa Geason-Bauer, President of Evolution Marketing, LLC facilitated by Erin Bauer, Founder of Tack & Clew LLC and Instructor at UW-Green Bay.

The SBC Conference brings together business leaders from across Wisconsin who are about driving positive environmental and social change. The Green Masters Program—a proprietary online assessment tool—is a framework for companies to

measure, prioritize, and manage their sustainability performance across environmental, social, and governance areas. It’s a resource that helps turn good intention into actionable results.

Empire’s Approach: Sustainability in Action
During the panel, I shared how Empire integrates sustainability into our core business strategy and daily operations—not as a stand-alone initiative, but as part of who we are. Our participation in the Green Masters Program provides structure to Empire’s continuous improvement goals.

Each year, our team completes the program’s assessment, which helps us identify opportunities to strengthen our sustainability efforts. From our LED curing technology that eliminates solvent

emissions, to solvent recovery systems and recycling initiatives that reduce waste, the Green Masters framework helps us track progress and challenge us to do even better.

But sustainability at Empire goes beyond environmental impact. It’s also about people—providing a clean and safe workplace for our employees—and about our community, where we strive to be responsible leaders.

Learning and Leading Together
One of my favorite aspects of the panel was the diversity of perspectives shared. Jennifer highlighted Brunswick’s work embedding sustainability into large-scale operations and product design, while Lisa offered insights from the B Corp and small business community—reminding us that no

matter the size of the company, meaningful impact begins with intentional action.

Hearing from leaders across different industries reinforced that sustainability is not a competition—it’s a collaboration. Whether through manufacturing innovation, community engagement, or supply chain responsibility, every effort contributes to a greater purpose.


A Shared Commitment to Progress
The SBC Conference was a powerful reminder that businesses are leading the way in sustainable innovation. The energy and openness among attendees shows that progress happens when we learn from and support each other.

One of my favorite aspects of the panel was the diversity of perspectives shared.

Alexis Marsh

For Empire, this experience affirmed our long-standing belief that sustainability and business success go hand in hand. The Green Masters Program continues to guide our journey as we invest in technologies, people, and partnerships that make a lasting difference.

We’re proud to be part of a network of organizations that don’t just talk about sustainability—they live it. Together, we’re creating a future where doing good and doing well mean the same thing.

 Alexis Marsh, VP of Operations



CANDY GUESSING GAME

<p>1</p> <p>Amount 133</p> <p>Winning Guess 127</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Amount 116</p> <p>Winning Guess 112</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Amount 89</p> <p>Winning Guess 89</p>
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Pumpkin Carving Contest

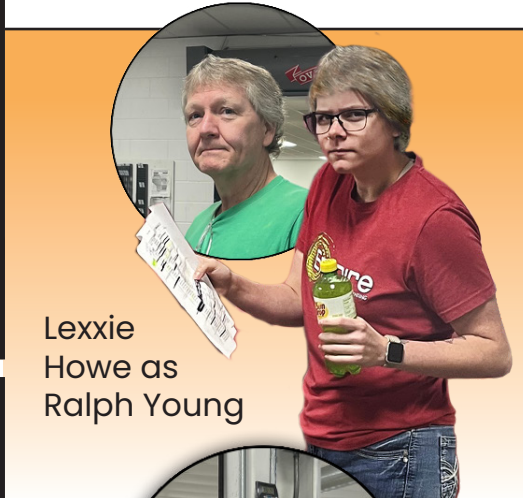


HALLOWEEN FUN AT EMPIRE



COSTUME CONTEST

Halloween Photoshop Magic:





SUGAR MAMA



WENDIGO



BEETLEJUICE



PRINCESS LEIA



BOB FISCHER



RALPH YOUNG



LOLA & BUGS SPACEJAM



GUMBALL WATTERSON



STEAM PUNK SANTA



SPIDER WITCH



PIT BOSS



IDENTITY THIEF



GIRL GOING TO THE BALL AND FINDING HER PRINCE



CREEPY GIRL

HALLOWEEN

COSTUMES

EMPIRE HOLIDAY PARTY at Stoney Creek

This year's company holiday party was held on Friday, December 5th at Stoney Creek Inn. Everyone had a great time with fun entertainment throughout the night:

- Blue Moon provided a delicious meal, including some Grinch-themed cupcakes.
- The Left/Right game gave someone at each table a chance to take home a wooden sleigh decoration created by Jennifer Schloesser and Shane Palen (laser cutting).
- A prize board (designed by Cathy Buttell, art dept.) was a fun way to pick a prize or cash amount when your name was called.
- Midwest Sound DJ Entertainment supplied both a photobooth for goofy pictures, as well as lively music for dancing.





Photobooth



2025 Empire Holiday Ornament



EMPIRE HOLIDAY PARTY Prize Winners

PRIZES

Philips 75" Google TV	Gunner Huber
(2) Pizza Baker/ Frozen Food Ovens	Steve Johnson/Joann Anderson
Electronic Dartboard.....	Dave Collins
ION Block Rocker All-Terrain Speaker.....	Anthony McDowell
Cricut Explore 3	Teri Herold
Sony PS5	Brian Subjek
Bissell Crosswave Cordless Vac	Jory Stall
Nintendo Switch and Carrying Case	Britney Hendel
Fanttik Air Inflator	Bonnie Anderson
(2) Fanttik Cordless Screwdrivers	Doug Kuehn/Walt Staff
Edge2 Cellular Trail Camera	Tim Kurtz
Ipad.....	Josh Parnow
Ninja Crispi Portable Cooking System	Danielle Helke
Xbox.....	Ralph Young
ION Trailgater Rugged Bluetooth Speaker.....	Randy Hoff
Ninja Belgian Waffle Maker	Matt Vanderloop
Yeti 1 Gallon Jug	Dave Benzschawel
(2) Uncle Henry Hunting Knife and Sheath.....	Mattison Dunlap/Dalton Morkrid
Keurig K-Iced Coffee Maker	Patty Wells
Instax Instant Camera	Paul Fanning
Kitchen Aid Stand Mixer.....	Jon Schubert
Bella 4qt Air Fryer	Emily Syring
Nespresso Compact Coffee Machine.....	Kiecila Fruetel
DeWalt 20V Drill/Impact Driver Combo.....	JD Meyer
CAT Electric Pressure Washer	Rhonda Peterson
Hoover Automatic Carpet Cleaner	Sherri Vinson
Echo Show	Katrina Murphy
(5) Vizio 50" TVs	Sarah Sauers/Brad Cook/Jeff Gierok/ Rob Kranski/Robert Fischer



\$50 CASH ENVELOPES

- Petra Vogel
- Jennifer Schloesser
- Krystel Roller
- Chrystal Claude
- Ben Bakken
- Mara Wallin
- Trish Lastofka
- Angie Pierce
- Mike Rolands
- Keith Cook
- Brenda Hansen

\$100 CASH ENVELOPES

- Ginger Anderson
- Curtis Johnson
- Kristy Borger

\$50 VISA CARD

- Megan Gartner
- Zach Johnson

PTO DAY

- Lisa Massoth
- Sam Sokolik



Remaining employees received \$20.00

MYSTERY PRIZE (DICE GAME)

The Mystery Prize was the Dice game, where you roll to win. Raven Erickson was the first person called. He rolled a 1, which amounted to \$100.00, and kept the game going. The next person was Ginger Anderson, who rolled a 3, for \$300. That would have normally ended the game, but John kept the game going with some added twists. He continued to draw names from the RSVP responses for more opportunities to win. Several people were called up to try their luck. Some walked away with some cash, while for others the dice didn't roll their way.* To close out the dice game, Jordan Witt walked away with whatever John had left in his pocket, which was \$360.00. John kept the game exciting and several people walked away with a little extra in their pockets.

*not all names/prizes were recorded



Employee SPOTLIGHT

Honoring our Empire Veterans

In honor of Veterans Day, November 11th, 2025, our spotlight is for all the employees who served or are actively serving in our military.

NAME	DEPT	BRANCH
Peter Brenegen	LVS	Air Force
John Freismuth	President	Navy
Steve G Johnson	QA	Army Reserve
Rob Kranski	Stock Cutting	Marines
Jeff Meyer	Machine Shop	Army
Jim Schweinfus	Vice President	Army National Guard
Troy Stockers	Art	Coast Guard
Carol Tollefson	Shipping	Marines
Karl Schultz	LVS	Army
Mike Smith	Customer Service	Air Force
Jim Weber	Stock Cutting	Army

We are deeply grateful for your strength and the sacrifices you've made to keep us safe and free.



CELEBRATING ANNIVERSARIES & NEW EMPLOYEES

For Years of Dedication and Excellence

CONGRATS!

NEW EMPLOYEES

Nick Andre, Jared Ball, Lindsey Bonnar, David Cochran, Dennis Eggen, Hayden Everett, Tracey Lawrence, Bonnie Neumann, Sydney Sabine, Chris Strickland, Gary Thorson, Robert Wemette

OCTOBER

Name	# of Years
Eileen Ustby	31
Cathy Buttell	30
Laurie Arentz	20
Ben Bakken	15
Troy Hanson	10
Robert Bialecki	7
Lisa Anderson	2
Tyler Allen	5
Shane Palen	4
Trish Lastofka	1

NOVEMBER

Name	# of Years
Jim Weber	40
Keith Cook	34
Roman Kamrowski	31
Dawn Mcgrath	31
Marcia Mcfarlane	28
Candy Amann	25
Theresa Antony	21
Jonathan Schubert	19
Christine Kendhammer	18
Rick Auterson	17
Bonita Anderson	16
Dustin Maule	13
Jason Koopman	11
Todd Lejeune	10
Dawn Bentzen	7
Mike Wakeen	6
Bronson Tamke	4
Jonathan Valley	4
Hunter Krajewski	2
Alexxis Howe	1

DECEMBER

Name	# of Years
Kathy Vaughan	37
David Collins	31
Steve Johnson	30
Steve Vinson	26
Eric Coleman	21
Kathy Inglett	20
Krystle Roller	2
Zach Mikkelson	1
Kayla Nofsinger	1

JANUARY

Name	# of Years
Randy Hoff	37
Jennifer Schloesser	26
Mai Khang	19
Eric Wienkes	18
Steve Limpert	9
Emily Syring	8
Carol Tollefson	8
Phillip Treu	5
Sarah Haskins	4
Kristy Borger	2
Paul Fanning	1

If you would like to announce something in the next newsletter (marriage, birth of a child, anniversary, etc.), please contact Jen @ x2398 or Cathy @ x2309

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

FEBRUARY

02	Groundhog Day
02	National Tater Tot Day
09	National Pizza Day
14	Valentine's Day
15	National Wisconsin Day
16	Presidents Day
17	Random Act of Kindness Day
28	National Chili Day

MARCH

02	Dr. Seuss Day
06	Employee Appreciation Day
08	National Proofreading Day
08	DAYLIGHT SAVINGS
10	National Ranch Dressing Day
14	Pi Day
17	St. Patrick's Day
23	National Puppy Day

APRIL

01	April Fools Day
02	National PB and Jelly Day
03	Good Friday
05	EASTER
12	Grilled Cheese Day
15	Tax Day
22	Earth Day
23	National Picnic Day

UPCOMING EVENTS

	COMPANY BINGO	FEBRUARY 16th Starts February 16 th • 3 Games
	MARCH MADNESS	MARCH – APRIL March 17 th – April 6 th
	CLEAN-UP ON EARTH DAY	APRIL 26th Day of Clean-up TBD
	COMPANY PICNIC	AUGUST 15th Saturday • Town of Holland
	PHOTO CONTEST FOR CALENDAR	AUGUST Information to come
	STEPPIN' OUT IN PINK	SEPTEMBER 12th Saturday
	HOLIDAY PARTY	DECEMBER 4th Friday • Stoney Creek

Above &

BEYOND

CONTRIBUTORS

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Coordinator Jennifer Schloesser (Creative Director)
Ext. 2398 / JSchloesser@empirescreen.com

Layout..... Cathy Buttell
Proofreaders Clark Martin, Jenny Ledman
Contributors:

Jennifer Schloesser, Cathy Buttell, Russ Kuehn, Alexis Marsh,
SBC Photos courtesy of the Sustainable Business Council

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Coordinator Keith Cook (R&D)
Ext. 2313 / KeithC@empirescreen.com

Lisa AndersonHT
Theresa AntonySVS Operator
Tom Donaldson..... Digital Manager
Nancy Gilbertson.....Customer Service
Megan Gartner.....SVS Operator
Brenda Hansen.....Payables & Receivables
Curtis Johnson.....IT
Kathy Vaughan.....HR
Mike Wakeen.....Director of Manufacturing

THE GREEN TEAM

Coordinator Jennifer Schloesser (Creative Director)
Ext. 2398 / JSchloesser@empirescreen.com

Cathy Buttell..... Art Dept. Project Manager
Keith CookR&D
Jeff Gierok.....Electrical Technician

T.E.A.M. COMMITTEE

Coordinator Jennifer Schloesser (Creative Director)
Ext. 2398 / JSchloesser@empirescreen.com

Lisa Anderson.....HR
Cathy Buttell..... Art Dept. Project Manager
Kathy Vaughan.....HR

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter (submitting articles, photos, etc.) please contact one of the coordinators listed above. Thank you!