

U.S. SEN. SUSAN COLLINS COMES TO AUGUSTA



Staff photo by Andy Molloy

BOAT BUILDER: Dave Emery assembles a rooftop cabin for a boat at the Kenway Corporation Wednesday in Augusta as the firm's Chief Executive Officer Ken Priest II, shows Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, around the plant. The firm recently expanded.

LOCAL OUTFIT ADDS 20 JOBS
BY KEITH EDWARDS
Staff Writer

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AUGUSTA -- Doubling the size of a manufacturing facility and adding 20 jobs is worth celebrating anytime, Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, said while standing inside Kenway Corporation and Maritime Marine's recently expanded state-of-the-art composites manufacturing building.

But doing so in this economy?

"That's extraordinary," Collins said. "When you look at communities throughout the nation, they're struggling to find answers to meet the challenge of the financial crisis. I believe they can find the answer right here. This is a remarkable story of innovation."

The \$1.2 million expansion doubled the size of the Riverside Drive business, to 40,000 square feet, and brought 20 new jobs providing health insurance and retirement benefits.

Kenway is a nationally known fabricator of fiberglass and composite products for marine, pulp, paper, power and other industries.

Maritime Marine is a relatively new part of the company that manufactures a line of simple motorboats known for their fuel efficiency and seaworthiness. The expansion added space to bring the boat line to Maine when the owners of Kenway purchased the firm, which was previously based in Massachusetts.

Ian Kopp, president and chief operating officer, said boat sales are somewhat down due to the economy, but said the other parts of the composites manufacturing business have been busy.

"There are businesses downsizing, or shutting down, all over the world, and this business is expanding" Mayor Roger Katz said at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Wednesday. "I wish we had a lot more Kenways here in Augusta."

The project, Kopp noted, benefited from partnerships with city, state and federal government.

The city applied for and received a \$400,000 Community Development Block Grant to help fund the extension of a water line to the plant and other infrastructure.

Kenway and Maritime also receive research-and-development funding from the Gardiner-based Maine Technology Institute, and got assistance in expanding from the governor's office and North Star Alliance Initiative.

Kopp also said the company's success is a credit to its high-quality employees.

Kenway was founded in 1947 by the father of now-Chief Executive Officer Ken Priest II. The firm started in Palermo, manufacturing wooden boats of its own design.

In 1966, the company got out of the boat business to focus exclusively on industrial clients.

It moved to Augusta in 1991, and got back into the boat business, building skiffs, in 2004.

"A company like this could be anywhere, even overseas," Collins said. "That's why I like family businesses so much. They have a commitment to the region, to the state, that is so strong they stay with you through thick and thin."

The company employs about 75 workers.

Keith Edwards -- 621-5647