

Trade show features top suppliers



Albert Giommi



NATIONAL SUPPLY CENTRE LTD.

By Pauline Clark

From selling valves and piping supplies out of a small location along a commercial strip in Sault Ste. Marie to holding trade shows to display his wares, Albert Giommi has come a long way as an industrial supplier in the North. And today, his business, National Supply Centre Ltd., is gearing up to host yet another full-day trade show, which is expected to attract well over 2000 people.

The upcoming trade show is geared mainly to contractors and will feature product displays of interest to those working in mechanical, construction and refrigeration industries.

It will also be of interest to manufacturers, engineers and architects who will have an opportunity to attend seminars in order to acquire the points they need to maintain their certification, says Giommi.

National Supply Centre hosted a similar show about five years ago when almost 600 people from across North America attended.

"I thought it was time for another one to let people see some of the new products available now," explains Giommi, who is also the company's general manager.

"The whole purpose of the show is to bring everyone - contractors, engineers and manufacturers - up to date with products that are available," says Giommi.

A number of well-known companies will be exhibiting at the trade show, including Dow Chemical Insulations, Dayton Richmond, Northern Partners HVAC, Alltemp, Multiglass Insulations, Gerrard Oval strapping, Energy Vent, Sika Canada and Sonoco.

National Supply Centre Ltd. planted its roots in the Sault about 10 years ago.

Giommi, backed by 13 years experience in the construction supply field, decided it was time to start his own company so he started out by a selling valves and piping supplies from a commercial location on Black Road. Within three months, the business flourished and Giommi discovered he was already outgrowing the building on Black Road.

Before the first year was up, he moved to the present location at 158 Sackville Road with an expanded line of construction-related products. When a local refrigeration and supply store

closed, he expanded his product line to fill that need as well.

Within a couple of years, Giommi had purchased Rubberwall Canada Ltd., a spray-on rubber company, and established a location in Thunder Bay to serve the northwest.

He soon tired of the traveling between Thunder Bay and the Sault and sold those two businesses so that he could concentrate fully on his Sault Ste. Marie-based businesses.

Just last year National Supply Centre completed yet another expansion, tripling the floor space at their location and increasing their inventory. They are currently looking into a new computer system and a Web site is currently under development.

National Supply Centre Ltd., with 10 full-time employees, is made up of four main divisions:

- * Concrete pumping
- * Construction supply-primarily concrete-related products
- * Mechanical piping and valves
- * HVAC refrigeration and air conditioning

National Supply's most recent product line comes from Italy. First-year sales of the line of specialty high-heat products geared particularly to steel mills and the glass industry reached \$2 million.

Giommi will be meeting with the Italian manufacturer of the specialty line with the hope of assuming sales for all of North America - a coup that is expected to bring in revenues of up to \$30 million annually.

"Ideally, the long-term goal is that the manufacturer would set up a factory here in Sault Ste. Marie," Giommi explains.

National Supply boasts a client base from across Canada, particularly for its concrete pumping service. Their roster of past projects include private homes, hydro dams, bridges and high-rise buildings. Toronto's Sheppard Avenue subway station and the Placer Dome Gold Mine north of Pickle Lake both utilized National Supply's concrete pumping service.

Giommi is also the owner of National Transportation Carriers Inc., which employs approximately 40 employees and transports goods across Canada and the United States. The

three cement-pumping trucks have booms of 28 metres, 32 metres and 36 metres.

John Febraro, industrial marketing co-ordinator for Sault Ste. Marie Economic Development Corp. (EDC), says Giommi's "entrepreneurial spirit" is vital to the Sault area. Febraro adds Giommi is never lacking in ideas to develop the Sault and area, and says that hosting the trade show is just one of the ways Giommi tries to help.

"We're all sales people for the EDC - every businessperson," Giommi says. "People would be surprised at how many people from the Northern Ontario business community promote the North when they are in southern Ontario."

Both Giommi and Febraro agree it takes years to develop relationships, but suggest planting seeds now can lead to growth in five years.

"It took two-and-a-half years to get the Italian company to sell in Ontario, but now we're looking at selling in Northern Ontario and the possibility of a factory someday," Giommi says.

Meetings are expected to get underway early spring to discuss the possibility of a manufacturing facility in Sault Ste. Marie.

"Once businesses start coming North everyone will benefit," Giommi says.

"It's so important for businessmen to think like Albert (Giommi) does," says Febraro. "For Albert, the thought is there, but he also carries those thoughts out."

▶ National Supply Centre Ltd. is located at 158 Sackville Road, Unit 1, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, P6B 4T6.

▶ The trade show will take place at the Holiday Inn in Sault Ste. Marie on May 9 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

▶ For more information about their products and services or about the trade show, call 1-800-486-0529, 1-705-253-5646 or fax 1-705-253-0261.

▶ Albert Giommi can also be contacted via e-mail at agiommi@nationalgroup.ca.

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