

21Alive Fort Wayne, Indiana

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Your Story Made Here: Onward Manufacturing

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By Melissa Long -21Alive
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HUNTINGTON, Ind. (21Alive) -- Grilling a perfect steak. It's an American tradition, but a family of Canadians makes a line of gas grills that put the sizzle into any cookout, and they're manufactured right here in Huntington, Indiana.

Onward Manufacturing started in 1906 making fountain pens and floor sweepers in Canada. By the late 70's the company was making fireplaces and needed a product to sell in the summertime so they started making grills.

The business was growing and they looked into moving operations to China. But a lack of health, safety and environmental oversight gave them pause.

"We felt we could control the quality much better and we could control the supply much better by locating in the US," Ted Witzel said.

They bought the old Majestic Fireplace building, renovated it and began operations in Huntington in October of 2009. The 400 thousand square foot building contains in excess of 300 employees.

There are metal stampers, powder coating, porcelain coating, assembly workers, warehouse and distribution workers, schedulers, plant managers and support staff.

"Well, the people really understand the quality system, They've bought into it. You went on a tour with me...you saw how committed the people are. The location here has been exceptionally good in the middle of two steel mills, the town has been incredible to us," Witzel said.

"I'm really proud of the fact that we're making them here and especially in Indiana on top of that, what's great about our grills is that they really perform well. We last a long time, we have unique features, we outperform other competitors that we have and we are competitively priced," Witzel said.

Onward makes the Broil King and Huntington Brand of grills and also makes smokers

and other accessories. Everything you need to put the sizzle in your steak.

"Our grill will cook a steak to perfection. I'm very proud of our facility here. We've got great people."