



Photo by Mark Justesen

Greg Heitz and his sister, Stephanie Fleming, took over Grafton's Exacto Spring from their father in 2000.

# Exacto Spring honored

## Longtime Grafton business keeps family roots

By **Kenneth Anderson**  
News Graphic Correspondent

GRAFTON — Exacto Spring may be a funny name for a company, but there's an interesting story behind it — and the name makes a lot of sense.

Bill Heitz started the company in 1960 in Rockford, Ill. By 1964, he decided to move to Grafton to position himself closer to his Milwaukee customers.

As he found himself driving back and forth, the "Exact Change" sign at the Illinois toll plazas struck a chord and led to the name for the newly relocated business.

He wanted to make springs that were exactly the same every time. "Exact change" became "exact spring" — and Exacto was born.

The Grafton-based company manufactures tight tolerance, hard-to-make springs and wireforms.

Exacto will be honored by Ozaukee Economic Development in September as this year's Mid-Size Business of the Year.

Exacto Spring's products can be found in everything from medical devices to military applications. However, about half of their production goes to automotive-related implementation.

"There's not a car on the road that most likely does not have our spring," said Greg Heitz, son of the founder

and co-owner of Exacto Spring. The manufacturing company produces parts for Chrysler, GM, Ford and Toyota, to just name a few.

Exacto works with its customers to design custom, high-end products. Unlike the springs found in things like pens, Exacto's springs and wireforms are made to be incredibly reliable, lasting a lifetime. Exacto creates and designs its products for critical applications "that will save your life in car accidents and operating tables," Greg Heitz said.

The company has retained its family-oriented roots. Heitz and his sister, Stephanie Fleming, took over the business from their father in 2000. As co-owners, Heitz and Fleming have continued to grow Exacto's impact around the world.

In comparison, back in 1960, they started with one customer. Now they ship to 15 countries.

With about 155 employees across three buildings on its Grafton campus, it's no small order to produce all of the custom products they need to their customers.

"Our workforce has been very loyal. We've had people who've been here for 30 years and above," Greg Heitz said.

With employment loyalty in abundance, Exacto hasn't had to look hard to find a reason to give back to the community.

"We've been heavily involved in the

### Businesses of the Year

Ozaukee Economic Development recently announced its 2017 Businesses of the Year. The annual award, which started in 2013, recognizes businesses that have seen significant business and job growth and are strong community partners.

This year's honorees are:

- Small business — Fiddleheads
- Mid-size business — Exacto Spring
- Large business — Kleen Test

The businesses will be recognized Sept. 26 at OED's Business of the Year/Economic Forecast Breakfast at the Ozaukee Pavilion on the county fairgrounds in Cedarburg.

community for 54 years," he said. "We're happy with Grafton. We like the people, the workforce, the community."

Through the years, their philanthropic support has included mostly health care programs and education, through many of the schools in Ozaukee County.

Greg Heitz said he aims to continue the model that has helped the company get to where it is today.

"We really are into the applications that require the best of the best," he said.