



Benton Harbor Manufacturer New Products Celebrates 99 Years in Business

By Pat Moody | Posted April 26, 2021 | [What's Happening](#)

At the pinnacle of his amazing career, Benton Harbor industrialist Walter Miller garnered the nickname of “Mr. Benton Harbor,” for the development of eight corporations in the community over the span of his lifetime, and one of the jewels of his enterprise is marking 99-years in business here in 2021.

Ironically, the oldest of his corporations is the one still firing on all cylinders, in the form of New Products Corporation which officially turned 99 last Thursday, April 22nd.

Walter Miller was a veritable machine for innovation, and New Products was just the first of his burgeoning empire during his heyday.

What started out as Pier Equipment company in 1919 at a workbench in a barn by the railroad tracks just a couple of blocks down the road, became New Products three years later in 1922 when Miller purchased land at the current site and changed the name. He built his enterprise on a willingness to take on piecework that many others in the industrial community refused to tackle. The company still does that to this day.

As Miller grew his expertise, he branched out and other businesses in the Benton Harbor region followed including his Modern Plastics, Plastic Masters, VM Corporation, Regal Manufacturing, Bangor Plastics, Stanley Tool and Kaywood Corporation.

Among Miller’s many inventions were the spindle that converted a record player into a record changer, plastics development, and even military inventions that won him a commendation for helping win the Battle of Britain.

Innovation continued when Stanley O. Miller took the helm at the age 28. New Products again won military commendations from the U.S. Navy. The New Products team even had their own version of *Rosie the Riveter* as they hired many women during the war for positions including assembly, inspection, and metals lab work. Today New Products continues to employ and encourage women in all areas of the business.

As a manufacturer of custom high pressure die castings, New Products gained fame. Among their most recognizable creations were the iconic microphones seen in performances with Elvis Presley and Patty Page and the Cobra engine cover.

Today, New Products parts are in every corner of the world, including in every Chevrolet Corvette since first produced in 1954. Dave McClelland designer of the early Corvettes visited New Products and signed new ‘vette engine parts as they came off the assembly line. Additionally, you will find New Products Corporation parts in all of the award-winning Silverado trucks, and in most Cadillacs and General Motors SUVs. Ever evolving to adapt to a changing world, today, New Products is also manufacturing parts for next generation electric vehicles.

New Products parts have spanned a number of industries including:

- Automotive
- Industrial
- Medical
- Marine
- Appliances
- Food products
- Musical instruments
- Toys

Cheryl Miller was appointed as Vice-President of New Products Corporation in 1985, became CEO in 2002 and additionally was appointed as President and Chairperson of the Board of Directors in 2006. She has grown the company to its historical largest point, and the company continues to innovate and is evolving into what they are calling the “new, New Products.” The company has diversified customers and grown their product mix, and been awarded many new long-term contracts. With Miller at the helm, NPC has become a certified woman-owned business, and they are an IATF certified automotive supplier. As they mark 99 years in business they are proclaiming, “We are on the move!”

In contrast to most companies, Cheryl Miller makes a point of telling folks, “We are here for our employees. Throughout our history our employees have been our most special asset. We are a fun place to work. We have frequent fun events including more than 90 company picnics, service award parties, Trashcan Turkey Bake, pizza parties, and pumpkin carving contests. We were the very first in the greater community to offer healthcare to our employees, and the employee healthcare contribution was only a \$10.00 co-pay until well into the 2000’s.”

New Products is proud that employees arrive and they want to stay. Over the course of their 99 year history, they have had many employees with over 40 and a number with more than 50 years of service, and the current average length of service is 22 years.

In the past year, through the course of the coronavirus pandemic, the New Products team made good use of the decreased production period to clean the factory, the machines and the ceiling and gave the plant a new coat of paint. Additionally, they purchased and upgraded machines and equipment to continue their march forward.

New Products continues to flourish due to high customer satisfaction, top quality products, and highly experienced leadership. In fact, they are the only aluminum die caster to achieve the GM #4 scorecard award. Cheryl Miller says, “GM challenged us by saying no one had achieved that rating, so we rose to the challenge and achieved what GM claimed was impossible! We have always produced extraordinary quality products. I am so proud of our team!”

The company has also added several new customers, purchased a number of new machines and equipment, and welcomed new employees. Plus, they are hiring, with several open positions on the time including slots for a licensed electrician, maintenance workers, and die cast and CNC operators. Interested parties can call 269-925-2161, ext. 321 for additional employment information.

As the company continues the journey toward their centennial year in operation, CEO & President Cheryl Miller is excited, saying, “I am really proud of our team. We are a poster child for high pressure die casting—excellent quality, on-time, every time delivery. New Products is unique. We are the oldest, world class, family and woman-owned high pressure custom die caster in Michigan, and possibly in the nation.

While the celebration got started last week with a balloon themed party with cupcakes, fun gifts, and \$99.00 checks for all every employee, the extraordinary year will continue going forward.