



JUSTIN WAN PHOTOS, JOURNAL STAR

Miguel Ornelas works on a manufacturing line at Lincoln Industries. The company supplies big-name brands like Harley-Davidson and Kenworth with patented parts for their products.

SISTER ACT

Third generation owners look to preserve family legacy

LAUREN PENINGTON | Lincoln Journal Star



While Marc LeBaron remains CEO and chairman of the board of Lincoln Industries, his daughters Katie Haszard (left) and Kassy Knudson have joined him as procurement director and vice president, respectively.

Katie Haszard knew she wanted to continue the family legacy at Lincoln Industries from the time she was kicking her feet in a too-big chair in business meetings with her dad, Marc LeBaron.

“When I was 7, I’d already decided that’s what I wanted to do,” Haszard said. “A family friend gave me Lincoln Plating Company business cards that were official ... with my name, with a title, with a logo and everything. I’ve just known ever since then that this is what I wanted to do.”

Dale LeBaron founded Lincoln Plating in 1952 as a small shop specializing in custom plating solutions for everything from tea cups to radiators.

In 1983, Marc LeBaron, Dale’s son, bought the business. By 2007, plating had shifted to only one of the services offered as the company grew into a manufacturing role and changed its name to Lincoln Industries.

“We’ve had pretty phenomenal growth over the past several decades,” Marc LeBaron said. “And we’re excited to continue that, together.”

Today, Marc LeBaron’s daughters have stepped into their own roles as third-generation owners. While he remains CEO and chairman of the board, his daughters Kassy Knudson and Haszard have joined him as vice president and procurement director, respectively.

Knudson took a different path to the company than her sister.

“When I entered college, I didn’t plan to be part of the company at all,” she said.

The pre-med student was nearing graduation and applying to medical schools when she realized that wasn’t what she wanted to do. Instead, Knudson joined a local company’s sales and marketing team.

After a few years, a conversation with her father led Knudson back to Lincoln Industries, to continue working in marketing and sales.

“I don’t think there was one defining moment where I realized I wanted to be part of the company permanently,” Knudson said. “As

I got more comfortable with understanding the company and what we do and where we're going, I wanted to be part of that. I'm excited to be part of that success."

The sisters have held a variety of roles within the company — from time on the floor as team leaders to positions in business development and production planning.

"It was really important to my dad and both Katie and I that we had good exposure throughout the business and understood what we do here and how the business works," Knudson said. "Not only that, but also get to know the people and the processes that make us unique and successful."

While Haszard always knew she wanted to end up at Lincoln Industries, part of the deal she made with her dad was that she would work somewhere else first, to gain experience outside the company and see how it compared to what she had grown up with.

After graduating from Drake University, she worked for a call and distribution center in Des Moines, Iowa.

"It really made me understand what's so special about our business and our culture," Haszard said. "... They wanted to do some of the things we've done for years and years



COURTESY PHOTO

A group of employees from Lincoln Industries hikes up Mount Sherman — a 14er near Breckenridge, Colorado — on the company's annual wellness trip. The term 14er refers to a mountain with an elevation of 14,000 feet or higher.

here at Lincoln Industries around culture and people, but when it came time to ask for a budget to do that, or managers and people to help execute an event, there was a lot of pushback."

Haszard said Lincoln Industries has long made efforts to make sure team members feel valued.

The company hosts monthly champions lunches, offers an onsite health clinic and organizes an annual company trip to Colorado to climb the state's collection of 14ers.

The annual hiking trip to explore mountain peaks topping 14,000 feet started out as a group activity for company leadership. Now, anyone can participate.

"Every year, we've had more and more people that go," Haszard said. "We've got representation across all of our sites — people coming from Minnesota and Mexico, and Wisconsin and Texas. ... Title doesn't matter, job doesn't matter, it's all about getting to the top of the mountain together."

Marc LeBaron and his daughters also pride themselves on maintaining a startup mentality, even as the company continues to grow.

"Entrepreneurship is in our DNA as a company," Knudson said. "We really like people that are entrepreneurial themselves and not only do they enjoy working at Lincoln Industries, they view it like it's their company as well. When we're all in that mode where 'This is our company' to-

gether, you start behaving and acting very differently than if it was just a paycheck."

That entrepreneurial focus, Marc LeBaron said, means being willing to take risks and experiment while staying loyal to their family values.

"I have a lot of pride in continuing my family's legacy," Knudson said. "We watched our dad work really hard to fulfill his vision and now that he's saying he wants us to continue that legacy, there's a lot of pride that we share and a lot of responsibility in that as well."

Lincoln Industries is currently working to expand its own brand, in addition to supplying big-name brands like Harley-Davidson and Kenworth with patented parts for their products.

"We're doing everything we can to make sure this is going to be a successful business that our kids can participate in when they're grown," said Haszard, who remembers coming into the office on Saturday mornings with her dad and wandering the plant floors when she was young. "... My kids are 6 now and I'm hoping in another year or two they can start coming to work with me on Saturday, and we can continue the tradition that my dad and I started 30-some years ago."



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