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CEO Michael Field cuts the centennial celebration ribbon opening the Raymond Corporation Headquarters' lobby and museum for local officials and the public on July 12. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

Raymond turns 100 and the community celebrates

Tyler Murphy
Evening Sun Editor

GREENE – The Raymond Corporation, a Toyota Industries Corp. company, has been a staple of Chenango County for a century.

The business celebrated its 100th Anniversary this summer.

The company was founded in 1922 by George Raymond

Sr. and transformed into a corporation worth billions of dollars today.

Raymond was keen to patent certain aspects of design that were being used at the beginning of the century, as automation and mass production became more centralized.

He recognized the value of common use designs and saw the wooden pallet as something very practical that every warehouse would need and

use. In 1939 George Raymond Sr. reinvented the pallet, improving upon its design and function.

At the time there was a number standards and many businesses used different sized pallets made of different materials, and used customized equipment and methods of manpower to handle them.

But Raymond looked past this and saw a greater oppor-

tunity. Raymond knew the real potential in becoming a provider of key materials was to create a common standard that all companies would use. He would then sell them the standardized equipment they would need to utilize those designs, so essentially, a forklift sold in California would be just as useful to a company in another industry in New York.

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New perspective pilots United Way of Mid Rural New York into another year

By Shawn Magrath
Evening Sun Contributor

NORWICH – Donning a new name and embracing a larger regional footprint, the United Way of Mid Rural New York is forging ahead with its mission to improve education, economic mobility, and health resources for those in need. And thanks to the successful consolidation of area United Ways, the organization now has more resources at its disposal.

However, the United Way is facing high hurdles in 2023 and administrators acknowledge the need for outside-the-box thinking in order to address a jumble of challenges, like inflation, campaign shortfalls, and finding innovative ways to market its new



United Way of Mid Rural New York Executive Director Elizabeth Monaco and Marketing and Communications Specialist Kyli Anderson pose with makeshift silhouettes representing those who have experienced domestic violence. The effort was one of many the nonprofit made in 2022 to draw attention to the needs of the community. (Photo submitted by United Way of Mid Rural New York)

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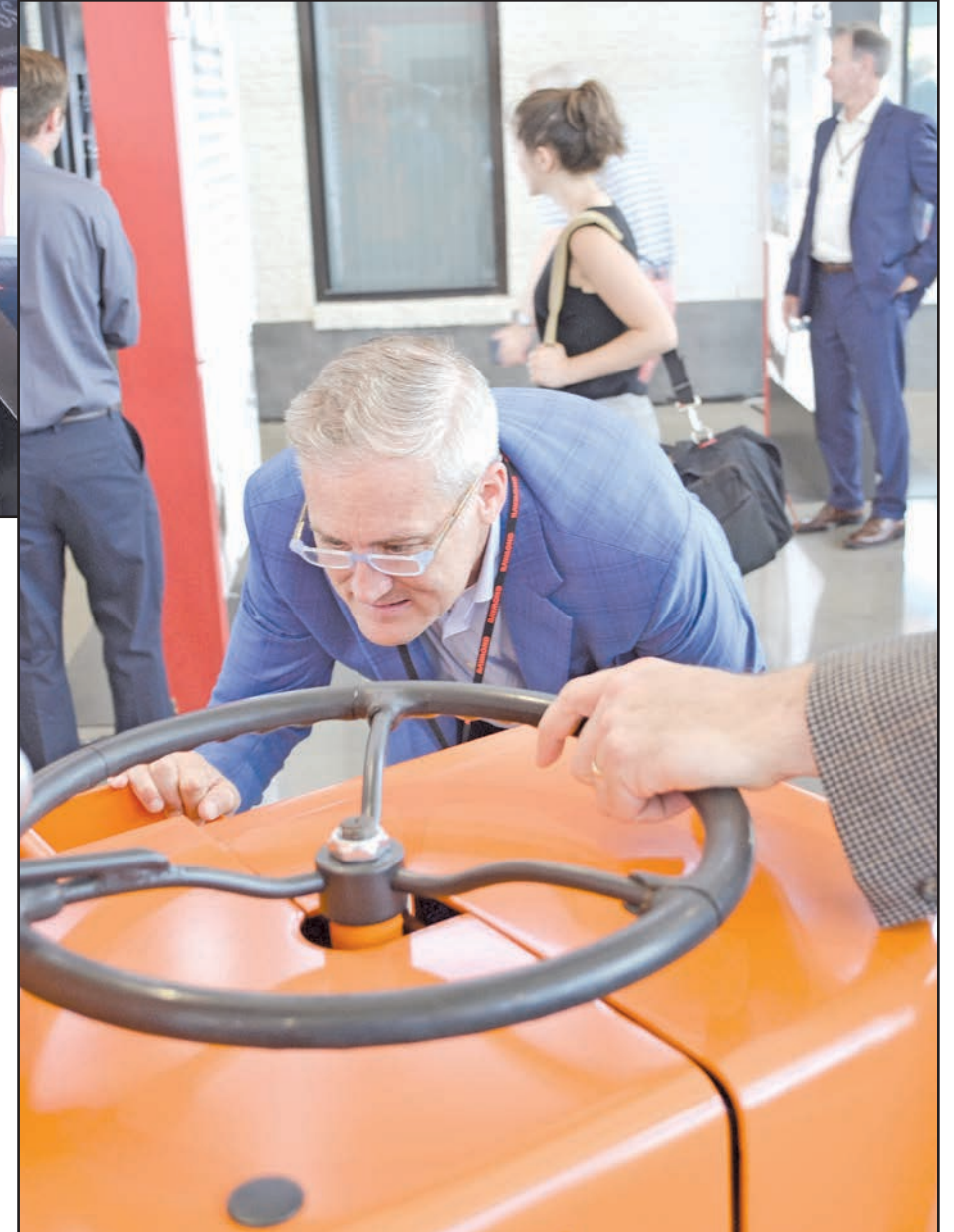
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Board of Supervisors meets second Monday of the month at 10:30 a.m. in the Board Room of the Chenango County Office Building

Raymond turns 100 and the community celebrates -



In its centennial year, the Raymond Corporation opened a gallery of the last 100 years of the company's history. The opening was attended by a number of press, federal, state and local officials, leaders from Toyota Industries Corp. and a number of other dignitaries and community leaders. (Photos by Tyler Murphy)



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The key was using the same sized pallets made of the same materials that could tolerate different temperatures and weights - and it had to be cheap, so wood was primarily used.

While reinventing the pallet Raymond also took inspiration from a barber's chair and created the first hydraulic lift truck.

Raymond researched and patented the key designs and materials making pallets that were stackable and efficient, and he then released his rights to some of those designs - making them free for any business to copy and use.

It was a major success and was widely used and over time it changed the industry and became the standard.

The Raymond Corporation was, in serious part, born of that inspiration and the lines of equipment they provided over the next 100 years.

The company has employed and provided for thousands of local residents and their families throughout the last generation. It remains one of Chenango County's oldest and most successful companies, and its headquarters are a major landmark for the Village and Town of Greene.

Raymond Corporation in 2022

To this day the foundation

of the company remains as a manufacturer of leading forklifts. The company produces a competitive range of specialized and general-use trucks, widely used in commercial industries to move pallets of material in warehouses, stores, construction sites and manufacturing facilities.

In its centennial year, the company is a globally recognized provider of material handling products and intralogistics, and it employs more than 7,000 people in its North America facilities - with 2,100 in its Greene and Syracuse facilities alone.

As the business has grown and demand for technology has increased, Raymond now presents a range of products that include advanced warehouse equipment, software and material handling expertise.

"What we talk about today is providing intralogistic solutions to our customers to enhance their overall productivity," explained Steve VanNostrand, Executive Vice President at The Raymond Corporation. He has worked for the company for 22 years.

"So the business foundation is our trucks, but it's really the technological solutions that are driving a lot of the value as the markets change and the demands for our customers have changed," he said.

These changes evolve

around energy, automation, virtual reality and other technology's performance and productivity.

The impact in recent years on the global supply chains has made efficiency even more important and Raymond has tried to make itself a part of the solution for hurting businesses and customers.

"First and foremost, as our customers were being challenged, our focus was on them. Optimizing, connecting and automating operations gained a lot of interest," said VanNostrand.

The company has been heavily impacted by the growth in e-commerce in the last decade. It has led to significant growth of the company, which is recently, and almost always, in a state of seeking employees both locally and abroad.

"Our trucks are foundational, so we need to continue to deliver the highest quality, best product in the marketplace. Our history around innovation has also allowed us to focus our efforts on what's in the future," VanNostrand said.

VanNostrand explained energy, telematics and automation are driving the future of the material handling business.

"We're fortunate to have the right foundation but also be driving the future and be a market leader from a technolo-

gy perspective," he said.

New products on forklifts focusing on automation include new notification technologies for pedestrian awareness. The trucks use sensors to detect people and other moving or stationary objects

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nearby and alert a driver. They can even slow down or stop if someone steps into a dangerous path.

The system records a constant awareness on how close a pedestrian is to the forklift and that data is constantly relayed to the driver's interface.

The industry has also seen an increase in demand for systems that can place materials on warehouse storage racks that are built higher.

"As warehouses continue to go higher, the innovation to do that, based on the physics, is pretty amazing. So that's been one of our most well-received products this year," said VanNostrand. "If you can make the footprint of your building smaller and raise the

roof, it's much more cost-effective from the standpoint of utilization of land. That's the whole idea, narrow aisles with high-level racking systems reduces your utilization of land. And broadly, sustainability - you're minimizing your footprint, which drives your cost down."

The company's most popular products are standard forklift reach trucks and the commonly used walking floor trucks. These products appeal to almost every business.

Larger commercial businesses use higher-capacity reach trucks, higher-capacity order pickers and other premium products where efficiency can add up to large savings, such as large warehousing companies, e-commerce companies and grocery store distribution centers.

Knowing what is important

In the last year the company, along with the rest of the industry had to cope with lingering issues in the supply chain.

"The first three quarters of the year we continued to be challenged by COVID-related and other supply chain challenges on a global basis. So our teams really worked hard and did a tremendous job keeping our factories running and delivering product to our customers. It was more challenging than we would have planned for initially," said

VanNostrand.

Despite the challenges and perhaps because of them, demand for the Raymond Corporation's products has increased.

"It was a very busy, successful year for the organization, and with the 100th anniversary we had some really meaningful moments," said VanNostrand. "We had so many positive events over the last year, but many demands at the same time."

"Clearly the most critical resource is our people. They are the ones who are driving innovation in our products. They're building quality into our products, and broadly defined providing service here to each other as well as out in our communities. So it's about our people, and we continue to grow and have greater demands for additional staffing.

"We're trying to bring people in and get them accustomed to our culture, and build upon, what historically for Raymond is, people coming in and having very long, lifetime careers with us. We want to continue that because we think that's our secret for being successful here where we're located," said VanNostrand.

The highlight of the year for the Raymond Corporation was the 100th anniversary events and celebrations. The

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company honored their history, along with past leaders and workers.

The company held a full-year event that won't end until March when they will have a major industry show to cap it off.

Raymond kicked things off initially with an event and presentations for principal dealers, who are the people who are selling and servicing Raymond products. The company also hosted dignitaries from Toyota for several days and received recognition from the governor of New York and other offices.

VanNostrand said one of his favorite events in 2022 took place a few months into the year, which was an open house for employees and their families.

"We probably had over 3,000 people who attended, and truly, the best day of my year was to watch our employees with their kids, and in many cases their parents too, to take such pride to show them the facility, to show them where they worked and what they did. We had special 100th year anniversary jackets that went along with it and food and stuff, but it was really that pride to see people tour the facility that was fantastic," he said.

Toyota and Toyota Material Handling North America also presented formal gifts to the company.



The Raymond Corporation was founded in 1922 by George Raymond Sr. He is credited with a number of innovations including the double-faced wooden pallet. (Photo by Tyler Murphy)

"They presented us with a beautiful statue of a lift truck and an eagle that sits out in front of the facility. Our parent company TICO (Toyota Industries Corporation) started off in the textile business, so they also presented us with a very special weaved display of the Raymond history," said VanNostrand.

Raymond hosted a ceremony with President and CEO Michael Field along with the grandson of the company's founder, and the former CEO, Stephen Raymond. They led a

large group of state and local officials through a tribute and tour of a museum at the facility.

"We've really spent a lot of time sharing our history also — there are materials display setups that went out to all of our dealers, or solutions and support centers, as we call them. So not only are we celebrating in Greene and Muscatine and Syracuse, but all our major cities that we're in in North America also had events. It has been a year of celebrations and special hon-

ors," said VanNostrand.

Plans for 2023

The company's first priority is increasing capacity by expanding manufacturing facilities and hiring more staff.

"We continue to have significant demand for our products, so we're looking to grow the number of trucks we can build every single week. That's our absolute number one priority. On an annual basis, we're making tens of thousands of trucks a year. We'd like to grow our capacity 25 to 50 percent this upcoming year to

continue to meet demand."

The company hired about 200 new employees last year in New York and are looking to hire another 400 to 500 staff in the next 12 months.

"We will continue to make new product introductions. We don't talk about those in advance, but we have a couple of exciting things coming to market that will further strengthen our leadership position," said VanNostrand.

"At its core we have a workforce that has a good education, has a really good work ethic, and is a great culture fit for Raymond. Company success really does get down to culture — more of a family-minded, small-town feel to the company, but still part of a global organization, is the balance that we try to strike."

"Our location allows us to do that. I think it would be very difficult to do that in a major city. I hate to make it as simple as we have a lot of really good people who care about their community, but that's at the core of our success," said VanNostrand.

The challenge for the company is seeking employees in a limited population.

"We're hiring a spectrum of positions right now. At the entry level, we're hiring people that are new to the workforce that probably have relatively limited skills, who we can help support and train and develop. Then we're also hiring PhD software engineers, and everything in between. So wheth-

er you're a welder, a painter, assembler, a machinist — we have opportunities. There's also finance, IT, engineering, sales and marketing. We do hire across the spectrum.

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"We attract people throughout the US, so we relocate quite a few people here. Generally it's a hard sell just based on the size of the community for people coming from larger cities, but many times people with families — once they come here and get settled — the quality of life and ability to afford a home and all of those things is really positive. They like to be here."

"It really is the culture. I came from a much larger company, and the ability here to make a difference every single day and to work with people who really care about how the company is doing and take such pride in the product that they produce — every day I get to see that and I'm proud to be associated with it."

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brand to the community. Even so, United Way leaders say there's good reason to be hopeful. In January, the Chenango United Way cemented a years-long partnership with the Delaware-Otsego United Way, rebranding itself as the United Way of Mid Rural New York and taking on a bigger geographical scope as a single organization. A second merger with the Madison County United Way is likely to finalize in April.

Although stakeholders may be unsure about what consolidation means for the future of their local United Way, executives assure that the new four-county nonprofit will have the benefit of improved streamlining of information and resources between counties while remaining focused on the individual communities they serve.

The merger is a culmination of a nearly three-year alliance between regional United Ways, said Elizabeth Monaco, executive director of the United Way of Mid Rural New York. It's also been a personal goal of hers while leading the Chenango United Way for more than a decade.

"We've envisioned and planned for this for a long time," Monaco said. "You can't just bring together United Ways without thinking about how it's going to affect the communities."

Monaco and her staff – with help of Colgate University interns – spent 2022 evaluating existing resources of each United Way, how much each has served in the past, and how much money they've raised. Heads of the Chenango and Delaware-Otsego United Ways knew they wanted a new, cohesive United Way that was going to be efficient in serving communities across all three counties. An official merger with already partnering United Ways simply made sense, especially given the similarities in population, demographics and needs, explained Monaco.

Despite now having a larger geographical scope, the United Way of Mid Rural New York will continue to address growing needs in homelessness, transportation, and poverty right here in Chenango County.

"One of our promises to the community is that we'll maintain community campaign funds locally, so the money we raise will stay in those communities," Monaco said. "Even though we'll be a four-county United Way, we still care about the local community. Nothing is going to change for donors; their money will still stay in the local community and we still feel very strongly about funding local organizations."

"Keeping dollars local is what United Way is all about," said United Way Board Chair and Senior Vice President



The United Way of Mid Rural New York is a conduit for serving the educational, health, and financial needs of families and individuals across Chenango, Otsego and Delaware counties. The nonprofit is also planning a merger with the Madison County United Way to be finalized in the spring of 2023. (Photo by Shawn Magrath)

Jennifer Telesky. "This was a key concept in the discussions held by our joint task force, and we believe this model will best serve individuals and families in our rural communities."

In order for the new United Way of Mid Rural New York to be successful, its small staff of three has to adapt. The organization is still reeling from the effects of the pandemic as many employers are sticking with visitation restrictions, meaning it's become harder for the United Way to get its foot in the door of local businesses to solicit donations for their employee contribution

campaign. Moreover, a growing number of employees are working remotely, and that makes it tougher to engage them for help.

All this may have a future impact on the United Way's ability to soothe the needs of the community.

"We just aren't able to talk to people the way we used to," Monaco said. "I think we need to shift our thinking a little bit and figure out some new and different ways to tell the United Way story because it's still very important and we're still doing so much in the community."

The United Way has out-

lined several key priorities in the county to combat in 2023. Those priorities encompass early literacy, affordable quality housing, hunger, the child care shortage, escalating heating and utility costs, and the effects of inflation.

"So many of these issues feed into each other," Monaco said. "We're trying to stay at the forefront of the issues that are facing people. Our biggest challenge will be figuring out how to address the inflation issue."

Adding to the United Way's difficult endeavor, last year's campaign contributions fell short of its \$425,000

goal. The organization raised \$415,000 — just \$10,000 shy of its target. Monaco said shortfalls in the nonprofit's employee contribution fund may be to blame.

But it's not all bad news, she added. She points to a notable decrease in employee campaign deductions from employers, and that's typically a bulk of the United Way's campaign. Conversely, there was an increase in giving through the residential campaign and individual donors, including retirees.

"We did well. Even though we didn't meet our goal, we heard from many people that the economy, inflation, high grocery and gas prices were a real challenge this year. We were holding our breath because we weren't really sure what was going to happen," she said. "To do as well as we did is really fantastic. What we're seeing is a shift in the way people give."

Monaco said she's unsure how future funding requests will be impacted by today's economy. Charitable organizations petition for United Way funding every two years. This year marks the end of a two-year cycle, and funded partners will submit new requests later in the year.

In 2022, 19 Chenango County organizations in the realms of health, education, and financial wellbeing were dependent upon funding doled out by the United Way.

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