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Crain Communications Inc., Oct 07, 2002
GOODBYE FORKLIFT, HELLO DOLLY
By DAVID PRIZINSKY**

Kinetic Technologies LLC, a recently formed provider of material handling equipment in Willoughby Hills, is about to close a big sale to General Motors Corp. that would help the automaker phase out the use of heavy forklift trucks at one of its plants.

Kinetic is selling 92 material handling carts to GM in Tonawanda, N.Y., near Buffalo, where the automaker is expanding an engine assembly plant. Kinetic also will supply the Tonawanda plant with special lifting devices that will be married to carts at points on the assembly line. The first 60 carts are to be delivered in November. The rest will be delivered around the first of next year.

"We expect to begin production (of the carts) any day now," said Kinetic president Larry Tyler.

Mr. Tyler said the order will generate \$350,000 in sales for the company, which is seeking equity investors.

"We've got customers and orders, and now we need investors," said Mr. Tyler, a former vice president of sales for Lincoln Canada, a subsidiary of welding products maker Lincoln Electric Co. in Euclid. Mr. Tyler and Kinetic co-founder John Neumann together invested \$50,000 to start the company.

Steve DeBrand, superintendent of production, control and logistics at the GM plant in Tonawanda, said he was impressed with the material handling equipment developed by Mr. Tyler and Mr. Neumann, a former General Motors manager. Mr. DeBrand said the men designed a highly flexible system that is an alternative to the practice of delivering large pallets of components at the engine line using forklift trucks, which GM is replacing for safety reasons.

Mr. Tyler said it was clear from his discussions with potential customers in the auto industry that popular lean production methods would require flexible and simple material handling systems. He said Kinetic's systems include carts that can rotate and tilt and are easily moved with little effort. The carts also can be pulled in chains by motorized tugging devices.

Mr. Tyler said GM and other automakers are investigating more efficient material handling systems, a trend that will create more opportunities for Kinetic's products. He said the company is preparing a proposal for Honda of America Manufacturing for a material handling system at the Japanese automaker's engine assembly plant in the Shelby County community of Anna, Ohio.

Kinetic is using an independent metalworking manufacturer, the nearly century-old American Mine Door Co. at 2340 E. 69th St., to produce its equipment. American Mine Door at the end of last year moved to Cleveland from Willoughby, said owner Daniel Zenisek, who bought the company two years ago. Mr. Zenisek said he expects American Mine Door's role as a contract manufacturer for Kinetic will give a boost to the company, which produces railroad track cleaning equipment and large steel ventilation doors used in underground mines.

American Mine Door already is preparing to expand the size of its shop floor to 34,000 square feet from 18,000 square feet by leasing adjacent space in the building it occupies. Mr. Zenisek said the expansion will occur in about 60 days.

"I am getting a lot of orders for mine doors, and I will need help with the Kinetic work," Mr. Zenisek said. As a result, Mr. Zenisek will soon add two employees, which will increase his work force to 10.