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## Vermilion Iron Works owners have big vision for plant

By SHANNON RUH

The Vermilion Iron Works facility represents a niche market in the foundry industry. Globalization has had an affect on the foundry industry, as castings for large manufacturers are now made overseas, but a need still exists for "small batch" or jobbing foundries such as Vermilion Iron. With a limited number of small batch foundries in the Midwest, Vermilion Iron Works has the opportunity to capitalize on this market demand. Having the facility fully operational and meeting market demands will prevent profitable jobs from going overseas.

New owners of Vermilion Iron Works plans to renovate the facility over time to modern standards of efficient operation and environmental compliance, a clean, healthy, attractive workplace. The goal is to build an attractive, efficient, and profitable short run casting producer serving the needs of the midwest industry. Mike Pentas, manager of operations, plans to create a "hometown" manufacturing facility, not only producing castings as a profit-making enterprise, but also serving the community as a source of pride, stability, opportunity, year-round employment, training and education for the youth.

Plans for the facility involve reinitiating production, maintaining and serving the existing client base and instituting a progressive "rolling" maintenance and replacement program for all

facilities and operating equipment.

While the vision and plans for the facility are great, challenges are immense. The plant suffers from years of neglected or "jury-rigged" maintenance practices, from oversight of housekeeping, resulting in a rundown, unattractive, inefficient facility which now cries for good management practices in order to become a source of community pride, a clean, attractive place to work, and a contributor to the economic engine of Hoopeston.

Making Vermillion Iron Works into the modern casting facility visualized is no easy task. It will take the will of all employees over an extended time period to turn it

See VISION on other side



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## Police News



**Hilario Palomo**, 59, of 321 W. Main turned himself in to police at 9:09 a.m. Thursday. Palomo, wanted on a Vermilion County traffic warrant for failure to appear, was released on \$541 cash bond.

**Charlotte M. Akins**, 31, of 420 N. Ninth Ave., was arrested at 7:59 p.m. Thursday in the 700 block of East Wyman. She was charged with battery on a complaint from a 22-year-old Hoopeston woman who alleged that Akins pushed her and tried to strike her.

Akins was released on a notice to appear.

**Kimberly A. Magee**, 35, of 203 S. Donovan, Wel-

lington was arrested at 11:31 p.m. Thursday in the 100 block of East Penn. She was charged with driving on revocation and was released on a notice to appear in Vermilion County Circuit Court.

**Ryan L. Cade**, 25, of 616 E. Honeywell was arrested at 10 p.m. Friday at the McFerren Park basketball court.

Cade, wanted on a Vermilion County felony warrant, was taken to the Public Safety Building in Danville in lieu of bond.

**Gerardo Torres**, 26, of 818 E. Young was arrested at 1:21 a.m. Saturday in the 600 block of East Seminary.

### Vision continued from other side

into a profitable, productive manufacturer and even longer to use available funds to modernize the operations. Pentas will need the help of all the employees and the City of Hoopeston to turn his vision into reality.

The facility currently has installed capacity of two six-ton induction melting furnaces and two one-ton induction melting furnaces, of which only one 6 ton furnace is operational. Vermilion Iron Works poured its first heat on Saturday, May 26. When all four furnaces are on stream, the production capacity (estimated on a 1 shift basis) will be approximately 25 million pounds of good castings. This translates into a revenue stream of between \$40 - \$50 million at present prices.

### Briefly

#### Hydrant flushing

Hydrants in Hoopeston will be flushed on Fridays during the summer, weather permitting.

#### Meetings

Hoopeston City Council, 7 p.m. Tuesday, city hall.

### Obituaries

**NICHOLS** - Ralph Dean Nichols, 45, of Polk City, Fla., formerly of Watseka and Hoopeston, died Saturday, May 26, 2007 in Lakeland, Fla. due to heart failure. Funeral service was held at 10 a.m. Thursday at the Kersey Funeral Home, Auburndale, Fla.. Visitation was 6-8 p.m. Wednesday at the funeral home.

The plans for Vermilion Iron Works extend beyond the initial cleanup. Pentas is already looking at opportunities to expand the facility. He is currently looking to acquire a heat treat furnace which would allow the finishing work to take place in Hoopeston, generating additional revenue and cutting down on shipping distances. An additional melt furnace would also provide the opportunity for Vermilion Iron Works to manufacture steel parts for the rail industry. The expansion of production and finishing capabilities will allow the growth of jobs, as well. Vermilion Iron owners anticipate as many as 50 or more jobs in the near future. Pentas is also looking at the possibilities of establishing a training program for local high school students. Young people from Hoopeston, who wish to pursue manufacturing as a career path, will benefit from the ability to augment their academics with part-time employment, workshops, training and skill-based learning at the facility.

Tremendous progress has already been made at Vermilion Iron. Nineteen of the previous employees have been hired back to work at the foundry. Significant cleanup has taken place both inside and outside. Pentas welcomes community residents to visit the facility for a tour at anytime.

### Weather



Chance of thunderstorms today. High 75. Tonight, partly cloudy. Low 54. Tomorrow, cloudy. High 75, low 57.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopeston Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.

He was charged with driving under the influence and was released on \$100 cash bond with a court date in Vermilion County Circuit Court.

**Jarred I. Stone**, 26, of 215 E. Penn was arrested at 1:48 .m. Saturday at #10 Parkview Court. He was charged with criminal trespass to state-supported property and criminal damage to state-supported property.

He was released on \$100 cash bond with a court date in Vermilion County Circuit Court.

A **52-year-old** Hoopeston man reported at 10:40 a.m. Saturday that someone slashed three tires on his 1992 Plymouth which was parked in the 600 block of East McCracken.

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