

TOP DOG



written by Lynn Swanton photos by Debbie Daanen Photography

SCREEN PRINTING, EMBROIDERY & DESIGN

"Your **Image** is Our Business"

What does **Top Dog** do? We are a multi-faceted promotional design company. We do screen printing and embroidery on hats, t-shirts, polo's, jackets and blankets, to list just a few of the products and services we offer. We also do promotional products, banners, and vinyl graphic lettering. In-house design is provided at no additional cost with your order and absolutely nothing is printed without the customer's written approval. Whether its screen printing, embroidery or design, it is ALL done in-house, allowing us total control of each and every customer order, which guarantees that our standards, and yours, are met with superior quality and service. I think this is one of the major things which sets us apart from many of

have an extremely talented in-house design staff with the ability to take your pencil drawing and make it into a professional looking logo.



other promotional product businesses, we do it all in-house. Even our embroidery digitizing is done in-house, where a large portion of our competitors have to send this out. We use only high quality, reputable product suppliers, we also do low-run orders and custom designs. Our sales and customer service staff are always available to assist our clients from start to finish, ensuring that they get exactly what they are looking for. We

I consider all of my employees here as part of my family. We work as a team and have a great support system. When you spend 5 days a week 8 hours a day with these people, everyone and everything needs to work together. Everyone here is self-motivated, caring and talented. We take pride in the work we do. Each of us has a specific job to do, but we aren't afraid to help out in someone else's area, or learn new things. I'm happy to say our employee turnover is very low. I believe this is because we enjoy what we do and have fun doing it. Having people who enjoy what they do reflects on their work. Happy employees make for happy customers.

The nuts and bolts of the operation. How did Top Dog get started? In the early 1960's, my father started a business called Thunderbird Industries, which he ran part-time, out of our basement. In 1980 he incorporated the business and

moved out of the basement, into a building near downtown Appleton. At that time we were doing industrial signage - instruction labels, warning labels and panel fronts. These products are made from many different substrates, such as anodized aluminum, plastic engraved polycarbonate, stainless steel and screen printed aluminum. Late in the 1990's we decided a name change was in order, to more accurately describe what we do, and we changed the name to Industrial Nameplate, Inc. Because we were already screen printing on different types of other materials, and we had some knowledge of screen printing, we thought "why not try screen printing on apparel?" The next logical step to that was, "if we screen print, why not do embroidery?" A 'one stop shop' type of thing.

Well, if we decided to do this, we knew that our 2000 sq ft shop would not be spacious enough to handle all of the equipment we would need to expand our business. We searched for an existing building and could not find one we liked, so we figured building a brand new building, specifically designed to meet our needs, would be the way to move ahead with our plans. We ordered the manual screen printer and two single head embroidery machines, and started construction of the new building, all at the same time. In March of 2004, our construction was complete and we moved into our brand new 8000 sq ft building at W6251 Neubert Road. Next, about a year down the road, our business was doing so well we had to purchase an automatic screen printer



and a six head embroidery machine. Needless to say, with both businesses having banner years, expansion was once again necessary. So, in less than four years, we have expanded our original 8000 sq ft building to our current 12000 sq ft, which encompasses our recently completed addition and we were able to move in this past January.

Now for a little about me, Lynn Swanton. I was born and raised in Appleton. I moved away to Phoenix, Arizona and came back after only a year. Being an only child with all of my family here, there really is no place like home. Also, this is a great place to raise kids and I have two wonderful daughters. Nicole is 20 and works with me. Allison, 17, is a junior at Appleton North High School. Looking back, I guess I have been in the screen printing business all of my life. I got started by helping my dad in the basement shop when I was... I don't know how old. I feel very fortunate and appreciative when I see the customers we still have with us, who have been with us since we started in the 60's. To me, that means we are doing something right. It's such a huge compliment to have returning customers walk through the door time and again.

With the economy the way it is, I think our thriving business has grown these last couple of years because screen printing, embroidery and promotional products are an inexpensive way to advertise. Everyone has to wear clothes, so why not use them to advertise your business. When someone sees your logo on your apparel, they also see Top Dog. We take pride in how our customers look, because it's a direct reflection on us.

Come visit our large, sunny showroom and take a look at the huge variety of samples and wide selection of catalogs. And remember, if you can't find what you are looking for in our showroom, we can work magic to find the product you are looking for.

For all your promotional needs:

**Top Dog Screen Printing, Embroidery and Design
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You can also visit us online at www.topdogapparelinc.com

