



# Made in Northwest Illinois

## NW ILLINOIS

Economic Development

*Celebrating 17 Years in Business!*

### SPOTLIGHTING BUSINESSES IN CARROLL AND JO DAVIESS COUNTIES



When it comes to outside dining, Chadwick Manufacturing has become an industry expert. With more than six decades of leading experience in manufacturing picnic tables, picnic table frames, park benches, grills, bicycle racks and campground fire rings, owner Joe Hammer has what one might think is a “walk in the park” job.

Located in Chadwick, Illinois, in Carroll County with a population of approximately 481 people, Chadwick Manufacturing got its start in 1956 at the hands of Don Smith and his son, Allen, and later Allen with his brother Jake. It is smack dab in the middle of the town’s hub with virtually no public identity. It wasn’t until recently it even had a sign on the building.

Enter Joe and Teresa Hammer in 2024, an aspiring entrepreneurial couple in their own right and Carroll County visionaries.



And even though the Hammers weren’t the original owners of Chadwick Manufacturing, Joe had a long standing interest in it’s success. For Joe the ownership was an evolutionary process. He had been a part of his own family business, Process Screw Products, Inc, with his dad and brothers in Shannon, Illinois, a company that manufactures precision custom machined parts and components. In 2008, Joe added First Turn Supply, Inc., to his portfolio of businesses -another family business they started in 2008 in Freeport, Illinois, producing precision CNC parts -again with Chadwick Manufacturing being a customer, bending their table legs.

“At Fast Turn Supply in Freeport and at Process Screw Products we made parts for them, so I was bending table legs for them in Freeport, like semi loads at a time,” Joe said. “And then Allen wanted to get out of the business. He was getting older and he called and asked if I could



Owner Joe Hammer, Shane Singley, Millwright, and Office Manager Alyssa Hutchison.

help him scrap out his shop because he was getting out of it. So we just made a deal and after a few months of negotiations, we bought it.”

But with the new ownership, Joe also acquired a slight problem as well: two file cabinet drawers of paper files -nothing on computer. So with the help of a hired office person and three weeks of data entry, Joe recovered 20 years of Chadwick Manufacturing customers.

And if that all wasn’t enough, Joe also acquired Gerber Tables in 2024, a well known high quality outside furniture manufacturer based in Madison, Wisconsin. Joe moved the entire waning operation to his Chadwick location. It was an opportunity he said he couldn’t pass up and a chance to add Gerber’s name and products to Chadwick’s bottom line.

Joe said Chadwick doesn’t have much of a retail presence just yet but he said they are working on creating a show room, their website has been revamped, they now attend trade shows and they have a presence in a prominent industry magazine called “Woodall’s Campground.”

“Some of the people I’ve talked





to or dealt with have been buying from here for 40 years. A lot of my customers who are in the campground line of work are finding us through word of mouth - especially older campground owners.”

Regardless, business is booming even though the product is so good repeat orders may be far and few between from a customer. The general consumer may buy one table, grill, bench or fire ring, where parks, cities and campgrounds may buy 100 or 200 at a time. According to Joe the products are almost so indestructible it could be a decade or more before they need to be replaced.

“A lot of times a campground may order once a year, sometimes once every five years depending upon what they need or what gets destroyed,” Joe said. “Some of the tables we’ve replaced look like they’ve been there for a decade or two. The picnic table frames, and it depends, some of them are thicker metal than others, so the thinner ones will rust out fast.”

“But I’ve had a thinner model in my yard for 20 years and it hasn’t

rusted yet,” Joe added. “That’s kind of the downside of the business is to make too good of a product. “

All of Chadwick’s products are manufactured on-site and using materials from only the United States. They offer ten different picnic table designs, along with wood, recycled plastic and aluminum tabletop and seating packages. The weight of the table frames also vary from 50 to 100 pounds. Both full assembled tables and self-assembly packages are available. Other products include three park grill models, campfire rings and six styles of benches. New products added to their line are fire pokers, stainless steel roasting sticks and drink holders.

Although their customers come from all over the United States, Joe says you can also order and pick your items out right at the shop.

“We’ve shipped locally in Carroll County as well as places like North Carolina, Missouri, New Jersey, Colorado, Wisconsin, Illinois -even Costa Rica,” said Joe. “It’s just all over the place.”

Joe says there are competitors out there but nothing that really concerns him. Even at the trade shows he attends Joe says there are little to no competitors even there.

Chadwick’s currently employs four others. Three welders and/or millwrights and an office secretary, but Joe notes that everyone pitches in and does what needs to be done, even if it’s just sweeping floors. It’s steady work for all and the business is good. Even during off season, the company continues to build and warehouse their inventory. As a

result, Joe foresees adding another four or more people, particularly since he added the Gerber operation. Currently he taps into employees from his other businesses to pitch hit when needed.

“Hopefully, I’d like to see probably ten people working here. We have to always be thinking of new products,” said Joe.

And those new product ideas are not far behind in Joe’s mind. Industrial heavy duty garbage cans and lantern posts for campgrounds or even city needs are high on his list.

“I always have ideas rolling around in my head,” Joe said. “With the shops we have we can make almost anything. I want to get where we can maybe get a CNC laser so we can cut people’s names in the fire rings and then we’ll be able to also do memorial benches.”

Joe said he never dreamed his life would take him down all these different paths, especially one leading to picnic tables. But one thing is for sure Joe concluded, “I think it’s an interesting business.”

## Hammer History at a Glance

**Gerber Tables LLC**  
at Chadwick Manufacturing  
224 Main Street  
Chadwick, Illinois 61014  
Started: July 2024

**H2O Express**  
1731 South Lincoln Drive  
Freeport, Illinois 61032  
www.h2oexpressllc.com  
Started: January 2012

**Fast Turn Supply**  
1731 Lincoln Drive  
Freeport, Illinois 61032  
www.fastturnsupply.com  
Started: 2008

**Process Screw Products**  
Shannon, Illinois 61078  
www.processscrewproducts.com  
Started: 2000



Teresa and Joe Hammer

## Contact Details Chadwick Manufacturing

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