

MASSILLON —

Gov. Ted Strickland and U.S. Rep. John Boccieri marched into Shearer's Foods' bright-white and brand-new Millennium Manufacturing Facility. They joined state representatives, Stark County commissioners, the mayor and all the in-the-know and in-the-mix people around.

The guy at the podium was the mover and shaker. But the guy sitting off to the side and in the front was the mastermind of it all.

Jack Shearer celebrated his 83rd birthday Friday, not with birthday candles, but with a ribbon cutting. The tiny snack-food distribution business he started 36 years ago with his wife, Rosemary, has grown into a worldwide leader in the snack-food manufacturing business, with six plants across the country.

But the 47,000-square-foot facility Jack Shearer sat in Friday is the crown jewel of them all, a state-of-the-art building recognized as the first platinum-certified Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design manufacturing facility in the world.

"It's just been daylight to dawn," he said. "I'm just so proud of everyone."

His son, Robert Shearer, company chief executive officer, recalled standing on a patch of earth almost 14 months ago for the ground breaking of the plant at 4100 Millennium Blvd. SE.

"In the last 14 months we've come a long way," he said.

Shearer's Foods is now embarking on the second phase of the facility, a 65,000-square-foot addition. The \$66.5 million project will result in a couple hundred jobs over time. State and local governments have assisted the project through grants and tax incentives.

Meeting the requirements for the LEED certification translates into a 30 percent savings on



*Bob Shearer, president and CEO of Shearer's Foods speaks at the unveiling of the company's environmentally friendly plant in Massillon. Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland (right) praised the company's progress.*



*Jack Shearer, center, gets help with cutting the ribbon on Shearers' Foods new Massillon facility from front row left, Melissa Shearer, Bob Shearer, Gov. Strickland and U.S. Rep. Boccieri.*

Shearer's energy bill. The building recycles 92 percent of its waste and is built with wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. Thirty percent of the ingredients used in production are grown locally.

The U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program aims to leave the smallest footprint on the environment as possible. More than 7 billion square feet of building space across the world has been certified by LEED.

Everything from the lighting to the lawn at the new manufacturing plant was considered in the certification process.

Strickland said the plant's design will allow the company to be more profitable, sustain its work force and protect the environment.

"Every business uses electricity and lighting, but they're going to be spending less of it here at Shearer's because the windows and skylights were designed to bring the sunlight in," Strickland said.

"Every business uses energy and spends money on heating, but they are going to be spending less here at Shearer's Foods because they are capturing the excess heat from their machinery to help (heat) the building," he said. "Every business uses and spends money on water, but at Shearer's Foods they are going to be using less because of their advanced production techniques and their innovative use of rainwater."

Robert Watson, founder of the LEED system, said he was profoundly humbled to be part of the experience.

"What we're seeing is the bottom line of green is black," he said. "Investing in green is not digging a hole in the backyard, piling money into it and then covering it up and then saying we've invested in green and now it's not going to do anything. Investments in green and making this plant more efficient are going to create future jobs."

Watson said the facility should be emulated and replicated by all manufacturers, not just within the food-processing industry.

About 200 officials were on hand for the event, which included tours of the new facility. The facility was designed by architect John Picard, of Canton, and built by Schumacher Construction.

After the ribbon-cutting, Strickland hopped onto the stage and asked everyone in attendance to join him in singing "Happy Birthday" to Jack.

“I never dreamt things would get like this,” a smiling Jack Shearer said. “First of all, it was about making a good product. When you put your name on it, you want the best. We never cut the day shorter. I’m just so proud.”

Jack said he wished his business partner and wife, Rosemary, could have been there to see it. Rosemary “Grandma” Shearer died in 2008.

“I feel bad my wife can’t be here to see this,” he said.

Theresa Horning, Jack’s personal assistant, said she was there in spirit.

“Rosemary is looking down on this right now,” she said. “She’s very proud.”

**By Matthew Rink**

**IndeOnline.com staff report**

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