

MADE IN CENTRAL OHIO

C&R INC.

Stainless steel welder chasing craft brewers

BY LIN RICE

C&R Inc. President Ronald Murphy says he realized 44 years ago that there would always be a market for stainless steel, and he's been right so far.

"Anything that goes in your body in a liquid form, or on your skin, has to be run through stainless steel – that's required by the government," he said. "That's where we came in."

Founded in 1972, C&R is a specialty stainless steel welding fabrication shop that provides layout, fabrication and final installation for industries such as pharmaceuticals, food and dairy, lawn care and others. C&R has furnished customers as far away as California and Puerto Rico, said CEO Christina Murphy.

Stainless steel makes up about 75 percent of C&R's fabrication – welding tanks, filters, piping, walkways and platforms. The company also works mild, or low-carbon, steel, aluminum and specialty materials.

Ron Murphy started the company in Dover, at a time when dairies were transitioning to new piping systems – meaning plenty of work for welders and fabricators. He soon was traveling to Canton, Cleveland, Wheeling, West Virginia, and elsewhere on contracts and was able to begin hiring. In the years since, C&R has outgrown several facilities and completed contracts in over 20 states.



ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

Custom stainless steel is a specialty field, Ronald Murphy said.

"We're not the only ones in town that do this work, there are about three or four others, but size-wise we're probably the largest, other than the union, and been in business about the longest."

C&R employees complete installation rather than sub-contractors to guarantee time tables are met, Murphy said. "We don't take on a job we can't handle. The worst thing in the world is starting a job and not being able to finish."

WHAT'S NEW?

C&R recently added new press brakes and rolling machines that can work thicker steel more precisely. The company tries to add equipment each year but isn't in a rush to grow. "We've always tried to maintain a comfortable size," Ron Murphy said.

Central Ohio has seen a boom among craft brewers, and C&R is starting to break into the growing market, Christina Murphy said.

"The skids and tanks we would usually build are ordered several months in advance – you have to be in front of it or the new brewers have already ordered equipment from Germany. We're seeing more inquiries from those that want to work with local companies; it's becoming a very big business."

30 SECONDS WITH CHRISTINA AND RON MURPHY

We've heard demand is high for qualified welders in Central Ohio. Has it been difficult finding new talent?

Chris Murphy: "Some of the older guys have been here since the beginning, then there are kids that after six or eight weeks are out the door. It's not so much a lack in the talent pool as a lack of desire to work."

That has led to a partnership between C&R and the Eastland Vocational School. What's that relationship like? **Christina Murphy:** "Their high schoolers who are at least 18 can work a paid half-day with us. We train them and some move on, but we've been able to retain a few after they graduate." **Ron Murphy:** "They also get experience with some processes they wouldn't learn in school and get hands-on experience with the more expensive materials like stainless steel and aluminum."

C&R INC.

Business: Custom stainless steel fabrication.

Address: 5600 Clyde Moore Drive, Groveport

CEO: Christina Murphy

President: Ronald Murphy

Employees: 35-40

Other facilities: 2550 Creekway Drive, Columbus

Reach: National

Annual sales: \$7 million to \$8 million

Founded: Dover, 1972

Phone: (614) 497-1130

Website: crproducts.com



JANET ADAMS

Michael Taylor works with a roller that has taken a flat piece of metal and rolled it into a perfect circle, top. Ron and Christina Murphy, next photo. George Poling welds a stainless steel fixture, above. Brian Miller finishes a product used in packaging Neapolitan ice cream, left.