

Webster distributor to expand

By Velvet Spicer

A Webster parts distributor has broken ground on an \$850,000 expansion to accommodate business growth.

Classic Automation, founded in 2003 by Fritz Ruebeck, will expand its Salt Road warehouse through the addition of 12,000 square feet. The non-industry specific supplier of automation parts currently is operating from a 41,000-square-foot facility.

"We've been growing consistently every year and we just reached the capacity of the warehouse and we need a lot of inventory to take care of our customers' needs," Ruebeck said.

Classic Automation fuels customers that range from manufacturers to wastewater treatment plants to cruise ships and prisons. The company specializes in parts for older automation systems.

"The key reason why people want to keep them running and not simply replace them like (they do) a desktop computer every three years is that the program that is in there is specific to their machinery," Ruebeck explained of his company's purpose and growth. "To move that to different hardware is very complicated and costly and could result in a lot of down



Photo by Velvet Spicer

Fritz Ruebeck, center, leads the groundbreaking of a 12,000-square-foot expansion at Classic Automation's Webster facility.

time. So people simply want a spare part to keep their machinery and their operations doing what it was doing before."

On hand for Thursday's ceremonial groundbreaking were Monroe County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo, Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce Inc. President and CEO Bob Duffy, Assemblyman Mark Johns, R-Webster, and Webster Town Supervisor Ron Nesbitt.

The site previously was owned by Xerox Corp. but was abandoned around 2007 and stood empty for five years.

"It was something you couldn't walk through," Nesbitt recalled. "It was full of asbestos and mold, and we didn't know whether or not we would take this building down and start from scratch

again. But Fritz came along and he had a vision and he built that vision into what we have today."

Ruebeck founded the parts distributor in his Webster home following a career with Taylor Instrument Inc. In 2006, Classic Automation moved to a location on Monroe Avenue in Rochester. The company had 10,000 parts and four employees. Seven years later, upon the move to Salt Road, Classic Automation had grown to 18 employees and an inventory of 100,000 parts.

Ruebeck said the company has experienced double-digit growth each year since its inception. Classic Automation employs some 52 people.

"The new expansion will almost double our inventory capacity and let us expand our test lab space," Rue-

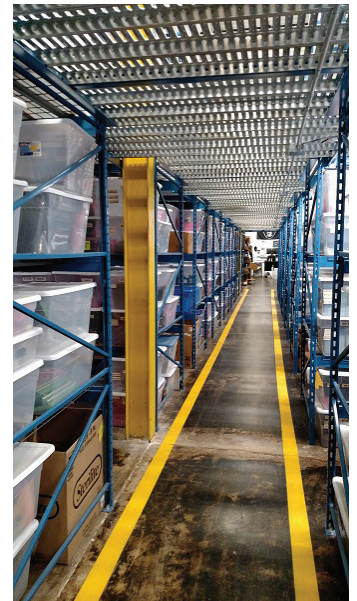


Photo by Velvet Spicer

Classic Automation has outgrown its 41,000-square-foot Webster facility.

beck said. "This is a major investment for us that will strengthen our competitiveness and let us continue to grow in this area."

Dinolfo touted Ruebeck's spirit and entrepreneurship.

"He brought good paying jobs to so many people in Monroe County. And he brought something that is necessary to keep manufacturing going," Dinolfo said. "I know that companies like yours are in great demand, but you've made a commitment to Monroe County."

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