

Todd Steinbach – Aero-Mod

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.” That old saying refers to a situation where lots of resources are around us but none of them are useable. In the case of water itself, this saying reminds us that water is vital to life. Today we'll learn about a Kansas company which specializes in cutting edge technologies for waste water treatment. This company's systems are being used across the nation and around the globe. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Todd Steinbach is co-owner and CEO of Aero-Mod, Incorporated, the company which is designing and providing such water treatment systems. The company began as a project of K-State civil engineering professor Larry Schmid. In 1981, Professor Schmid and some partners founded a company to work on treatment systems for waste water. They designed and installed small treatment plants and worked on housing developments as well.

The company grew and changed through the years. After Larry Schmid, John McNellis served as president of the company. He worked with a contact in Algeria to build the business overseas. Todd Steinbach joined the business in 1994. He and partner Rob Mahan own the company today.

Aero-Mod specializes in cutting edge waste water treatment systems. “There is oxygen demand when bacteria attack waste,” Todd said. “We are essentially treating water so that oxygen isn't consumed,” he said. This works kind of like an aerator in a household aquarium.

“We use naturally occurring bacteria to make the water safe for consumption,” Todd said. These systems are built to remove nitrogen cost-effectively and produce superior effluent quality.

“We're treating this waste water and putting it back into the rivers so that it is useable again,” Todd said. “Think of the health benefits of people having clean, unpolluted drinking water world-wide,” he said.

Aero-Mod specializes in small to mid-size municipal type systems. Many smaller towns used lagoon water treatment systems for years, but now are needing to upgrade. Aero-Mod systems provide that opportunity in a cost-effective way.

Aero-Mod has developed and installed municipal systems from California to Vermont, and as far away as Algeria, Costa Rica, and Chile. Wow. The company's corporate clients include Ford Motors, General Motors, Kraft Foods, Frito-Lay, Coca-Cola, Intel Corporation, and more.

The company's headquarters is located on the east side of Manhattan, Kansas. Aero-Mod staff design, build and market the equipment at the Aero-Mod facility.

“We have a great group of employees here,” Todd said. The company has grown to 45 employees.

“We need more engineers,” Todd said. “There are great opportunities in civil engineering,” he said. “It is a very broad field. You can get into things such as water, like we're doing here, or other environmental issues, structural design

such as buildings, you can get into transportation, you can get into geotechnical things, construction materials, there's lots of opportunities," he said.

Todd, a Wisconsin native, studied civil engineering at Iowa State before coming to Aero-Mod. His professor at Iowa State was a friend of Larry Schmid's and helped make the connection with Todd and the company. "We knew nothing about Kansas," Todd said.

Todd's business partner Rob Mahan previously served as a consulting engineer himself. Rob comes from the rural community of Rossville, population 1,151 people. Now, that's rural.

"For the consulting engineer (on these water projects), we can be an extension of their office," Todd said. Such support has made a big difference as projects are bid, built, installed and maintained.

"We now offer a two-day school for water system operators," Todd said. "Our customers know we're there to support them."

Demand is strong for high quality, efficient waste water treatment systems across the nation. "We had a record year," Todd said.

For more information about the company, see www.aeromod.com.

"Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink." That old saying reminds us that we all need water but the water is no good to us if it isn't clean and safe. We commend Todd Steinbach, Rob Mahan, John McNellis, Larry Schmid, and all those involved with Aero-Mod for making a difference by providing systems for treating water for our use. I wish those systems were in use everywhere.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.