

Waste not, want not



ROBERT C. REED | HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Rob Howard (left) and Scott Sharp are shown with a piece of contact lens recycling equipment at Recycling Equipment Inc. in northeast Hickory.

Growing company makes recycling equipment

BY JOHN DAYBERRY

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HICKORY

Five weeks of long hours will soon pay off for a Hickory company when it delivers a \$130,000 piece of recycling equipment to a Johnson & Johnson facility in Jacksonville, Fla.

Such equipment, designed to destroy and compact Johnson & Johnson's outdated or otherwise compromised

contact lenses, should save the health care giant millions of dollars in outsourcing costs and related fees, said Scott Sharp, the 34-year-old owner of Recycling Equipment Inc.

Sharp, who founded Recycling Equipment in 1996 as a manufacturer of wood grinders, said a growing number of businesses are turning to recycling as a way to cut costs and help the environment.

"Everybody's got waste," Sharp

said.

"Landfill space is limited, and the cost of transporting waste to the landfill is high and getting higher.

"Plus, I show people how they can actually profit from recycling their waste.

"You can't beat that, especially in a weak economy."

Recycling Equipment originally

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DETAILS

Company: Recycling Equipment Inc.

Type: Builds and services grinders, shredders, balers, conveyors, compactors, granulators and other recycling equipment

Founded: 1996 by Scott Sharp

Employees: Eight

Location: 1008 18th St., NE, Hickory

Phone: 304-0195

Web: www.recyclingequipinc.com

RECYCLE: Hickory company designs, manufactures and services equipment for other businesses

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filled a need of the region's furniture industry, which grinds up wood scraps for a variety of uses including chipboard production and boiler fuel.

As the American furniture industry downsized, so did its need for wood grinders.

"We went from making 10 or 12 or 15 wood grinders a year to one or two," Sharp said.

"We had to adapt."

So the company added balers, shredders, conveyors, compactors, granulators and other devices to the recycling

equipment it designs, manufactures and services.

It still serves wood products customers, including Carolina Base-Pac, a Hudson-based manufacturer of wood pallets and crating.

Carolina Base-Pac uses a customized wood grinder it purchased from Recycling Equipment to grind up its waste wood, which is then delivered to customers that use it for erosion control, boiler fuel, to manufacture chipboard or for other purposes.

"Rather than taking the material to a landfill, we turn our waste into a usable product,"

said Weidner Abernethy, owner of the 28-year-old Carolina Base-Pac.

"It keeps us from paying astronomical landfill fees and it helps to save landfills.

"Any way you look at it, it's added value."

Recycling Equipment has expanded its customer base to businesses that produce plastic, paper and other wastes.

The company's recycling equipment is used by a variety of retailers and in various industries, including recycling.

Aqua Plastics Inc., a Hickory-based company that recy-

cles plastic waste, has bought several pieces of equipment, including a grinder and a baler, from Recycling Equipment.

"It was nice to find a local manufacturer of recycling equipment," said Randall Cline, Aqua Plastics plant manager.

Cline agrees with Sharp that recycling is an area of tremendous potential growth.

"And with the economy in a slump, recycling plays a more important role than ever," Cline said.

Sharp said the equipment his company designed and

made for Johnson & Johnson — capable of processing 8 tons of contact lens material each day — represents a time of renewed growth for Recycling Equipment.

"We need to add two or three people to the work force now, but there's just not room," Sharp said.

Recycling Equipment, which operates from an 8,500-square-foot building and a two-acre storage lot in northeast Hickory, plans to build a 30,000-square-foot or 40,000-square-foot building this year.

The company is considering a move to the EcoComplex at

the Blackburn Landfill, said Rob Howard, Recycling Equipment's vice president. Catawba County is working with private companies to develop the EcoComplex, which is designed as a center for green energy, agricultural and environmental innovation.

Wherever it builds, Sharp said Recycling Equipment will continue to grow.

In addition to making and servicing recycling equipment, Sharp wants the company to become a recycler itself.

"There's huge potential for growth, just huge," Sharp said.