



Russ and Kim Crowe

AN UPSTATE MANUFACTURING

company rooted in faith and family is constantly evolving and thinking outside the box.

Progressive Packaging designs, builds, and tests boxes to meet its clients' specific needs.

"You might think a box is just a box, but it's so much more," founder Russ Crowe said. "We create packs that protect our clients' products from Point A to Point B. They have to arrive at their destination looking good to make a great first impression."

Russ and Kim Crowe started Progressive Packaging in 1995 with their fathers. Their mothers also played a role.

"My mom answered the phone. She did payroll and inventory," Russ said. "She wore every hat in the startup phase."

Kim's father, John Burgess, was a self-made man whose rags-to-riches story inspired Russ to develop his own business plan. Russ pitched his proposal to the bank where his father-in-law served on the board.

"I will never be able to repay him for what he did for me," Russ said, "but I can love his daughter, keep her safe, and raise his grandchildren so he can be proud."

The Crowes have two children ages 14 and 8. Kim focuses her energy on their kids, but she keeps her finger on the pulse of the family business. Progressive recently restructured to give Kim 55% ownership. That restructuring was the first step to earn certification from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council. The Crowes hope that certification will get them a seat at the table with large, international companies that want to do business with woman-owned manufacturers.

Progressive started out selling and distributing corrugated products made by other companies, but in 2008, the Crowes invested everything they had in the

equipment to manufacture their own packaging. The economy crashed, and the orders dried up.

"You could hear crickets chirping," Russ said. "I thought it was a sign that we should close the plant, but Kim said, 'I believe in you, and I believe you can make this work.'"

The Crowes got some good advice from other business owners, and the company thrived. Progressive is now expanding and adding new jobs. They've renovated the plant and upgraded the equipment.

The Crowes say they owe their success to their families and the people who work at Progressive.

"Everyone is committed to putting out a quality product on time and meeting our customers' needs," Russ said. "There's a lot of pride in that."

Fact 1

Progressive Packaging, Inc. has 53,000 square feet of manufacturing space and 75,000 square feet of inventory space at its headquarters in Greenville County.

Fact 2

Progressive has earned certification from the American Institute of Baking, which makes sure manufacturing facilities meet high standards for food safety.

Fact 3

The state of South Carolina named Russ and Kim Crowe Hampton County Economic Ambassadors after they opened Progressive's new distribution center in Early Branch.



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