

The Journal Record Innovator of the Year profile: Crossroads LED LLC

A little more than a year ago, Buddy Stefanoff was a partner in an LED company that focused on industrial applications - streetlights, post lights, etc. His wife, Dana, was the human resource director for a long-term care facility. The couple decided to resign from their jobs to start a business out of their home in Collinsville.

Crossroads LED is an electronic engineering and manufacturing company that focuses on creating solid-state, or LED, lighting products. An LED, or light-emitting diode, is a semiconductor device that emits light when an electric current is passed through it. It does not work the same way as a light bulb, so it does not burn out in the traditional sense. An LED emits light at specific wavelengths in order to produce a variety of colors.

The company provides single and multicolor LED lighting solutions to the amusement park, entertainment and automotive accessory industries, said Buddy Stefanoff.

"It was truly a leap of faith and has already proven to be an amazing journey," Dana Stefanoff said. "At middle age, we've finally found the adage to be true: make a living at what you love and you won't work a day in your life. How could we not have fun at what we do - we make dazzling LED lighting for amusement parks!"

Since launching the company in February 2010, the company's projects have included fulfilling orders for amusement ride manufacturers with attractions at Six Flags Over Texas and the Tulsa State Fair and even an order utilizing more than 5,500 LED lights for the Texas Motor Speedway. In December, the company relocated from the Stefanoffs' home to a manufacturing facility in Owasso.

The advantage Crossroads has, and what is attracting so much attention, is the quality, Buddy Stefanoff said. The light tubes, which he sells beginning at \$55 a foot, are manufactured locally and in Albuquerque and El Paso - not China, which is earning a reputation for producing poor-quality LEDs.

"Many of the lights produced overseas do not make it through a season," Buddy Stefanoff said. "Ours are guaranteed for 100,000 hours. They are water-tight. They can last 10 years."

The popularity of LED lights is growing in the amusement industry because of the cost savings and less maintenance of the products, said Dana Stefanoff.

"Everyone is asking for LEDs. In fact, amusement park owners are telling the ride manufacturers, 'Do not send rides to us without the LEDs,'" she said.

Also, incandescent light bulbs will be banned beginning in 2012. While it is still up in the air how this will impact businesses, what is not debated is that over the past eight to 10 years everyone's awareness of environmental issues has grown.

"People are paying attention to these issues," Dana Stefanoff said, "and LED lighting is one of the solutions to those concerns."