



Ashore Manufacturing Group Acquires Concept-4, Investing in the Future of Ohio Precision Manufacturing, Tool and Die

Acquisition retains all staff and preserves the shop's legacy while positioning the business for growth in aerospace, defense, and precision manufacturing.

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BERLIN CENTER, Ohio, May 12, 2026 — Ashore Manufacturing Group has completed its acquisition of Concept-4, a precision machine shop focused on tool and die with deep roots in the Mahoning Valley just outside of Youngstown. The transaction marks the beginning of a new chapter for the business, with full retention of existing staff, continuation of all current operations, and a clear roadmap for modernization and growth.

The acquisition was led by Zachary Woods and Chris Thomas, who founded Ashore Manufacturing and together bring an uncommon combination of financial, defense, and operational experience to the manufacturing space. The two were introduced through Scot Loveland, Director of the Youngstown State University APEX Accelerator, whose network has become a connective thread for entrepreneurial and economic development activity across the Mahoning Valley.

Concept-4 was owned by Mike Pence Sr, a lifelong machinist and diemaker who built the shop from the ground up and dedicated his career to the craft. After establishing a registered apprenticeship program and training his own son, Mike Pence Jr, in the same trade, Mike Sr is retiring with the knowledge that the business he built is in capable hands. “I gave my life to this trade,” he said. “Chris and my son went to grade school together, so handing this to Zack and Chris is not something I take lightly, but the future of this shop is bright.” Mike Pence Jr will remain with Ashore Manufacturing as the Machinist & Diemaker Coordinator, carrying on the Pence family legacy and serving as an anchor of institutional knowledge and shop floor expertise.

ABOUT THE NEW OWNERS

Zachary Woods is from Canfield, Ohio, and he attended Ursuline High School before going on to study infrastructure finance at Cornell University. Zack’s return to his roots is driven by a conviction that the region’s manufacturing base can be rebuilt, run well, and positioned for the next generation of industrial demand. “The Mahoning Valley built this country’s industrial backbone, and it is time to bring this area back to the forefront to once again lead the charge in American manufacturing,” Woods said. “We are here to invest in the right technology and the right people. The name says it all. We are bringing manufacturing jobs back ashore to the United States and back into this valley.”



Chris Thomas is from the Berlin Center area. He served in Army intelligence in Iraq and worked in defense contracting in Washington, DC, with Northrop Grumman and other firms. He later took over Tri-County Tower, a telecom tower construction business focused on government contracts throughout Ohio, as its owner and CEO. Outside of work, Chris coaches high school football for the West Branch Warriors. “Supply chain resilience is a national security issue, and the answer starts with domestic manufacturing capability,” Thomas said. “My background in defense and contracting has shown me exactly where the gaps are, and at Ashore, we are positioned to fill them.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Ashore Manufacturing is executing a near-term roadmap focused on quality management certifications and defense contracting readiness, including ISO 9001, ITAR registration, and CMMC Level 2 compliance. The company is working with The Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET) on its AS9100 certification path. These credentials will allow Ashore to layer defense production subcontracting on top of its established tool and die and precision machining foundation, creating a more diversified and resilient business. Ashore is also actively engaging with the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, the Mahoning Valley Manufacturers Coalition, Youngstown State University, and local career and technical centers on education, hiring, and research initiatives that support workforce development and long-term regional growth.

Ashore is also actively investing in equipment upgrades, workforce development, and process modernization, with a focus on integrating advanced technology alongside the craft knowledge that has always defined the shop. “It means a lot to carry on what my father built,” said Pence Jr. “This trade is in our family, and what excites me about the new ownership is their commitment to investing in the people here, through competitive wages, continuing education, and the latest equipment.”

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