

Figi's, Inc.

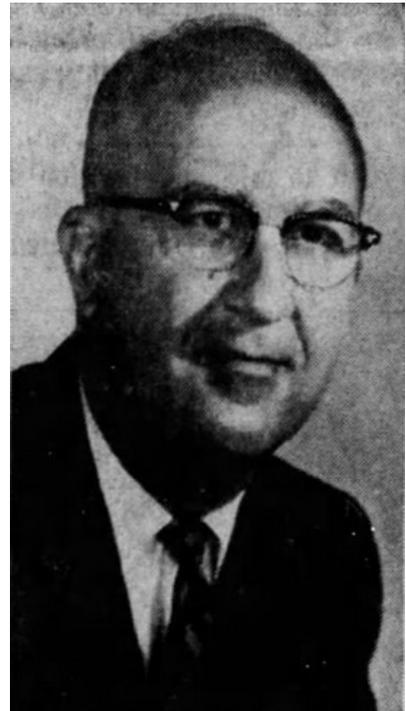
Chamber Will Honor Local Cheese Firm

Figi's Inc., an enterprise that began in a kitchen on W. Cleveland street back in 1943, will be honored Thursday night as Marshfield's "Firm of the Year."

Community leaders will pay tribute to the local firm located at 2525 Roddis Ave., and its president, John Figi, at the 10th annual Industry' Appreciation Night dinner sponsored by the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

A crowd estimated at 250 persons, including civic leaders, businessmen and well-wishers, is expected to attend the event at the Elks Club which will begin at 6 o'clock with a reception, to be followed by a country-style dinner at 7:15 p.m.

The tribute to the local firm will be given by Robert Beggs of Portland, Ore., a close friend of Figi and the former vice president of the Roddis Plywood Corp. Herbert Behrndt, president of the Chamber, will give the welcoming remarks, and introduce the 1965 Chamber officers and directors. Speaking in behalf of the city will be Mayor I. W. Wendt.



(The Keel Studio)

John Figi

The response will be given by the firm's president, John Figi.

The guest speaker will be Paul P. Trainor, Flint, Mich., western sales manager for the AC Spark Plug Division of General Motors.

Offering the invocation" will be the Rev. Douglas P. Oyan of the First Presbyterian Church.

The toastmaster for the evening will be William A. Uthmeier, executive secretary of the Chamber. He will also introduce the honored guests.

Besides Figi, the other officers of the local firm are his wife, Ann, who is the secretary and treasurer, and Ray Ley, vice president.

Born in Monroe on Dec. 10, 1916, Figi was an all-around athlete at Monroe High School. Following his graduation from high school, he attended the University of Wisconsin. After graduation, Figi returned to Monroe where he got his start in the cheese business. In 1941, he was appointed a federal cheese grader for the Marshfield area.

He continued in that capacity for nine years, pursuing his duties which involved primarily inspection of cheddar in the upper half of Wisconsin, upper Michigan and the state of Minnesota. He later became the head of all cheese graders in the state of Wisconsin.

In the fall of 1943, Figi and his wife, the former Ann Rauk of La Crosse, began packaging gift cheese in the kitchen of their home. They sent out a prospectus to 1,500 persons gleaned from telephone directories in a five-state area.

With the end of World War II and the demise of the rationing system which curbed cheese sales. Figi moved his operations to space in the Marshfield Cold Storage Co. plant on N. Central avenue.

A mailing of 9,000 booklets brought in 1,500 orders, and the Figis employed 10 persons to aid in handling this first Christmas rush in the new location.

Today Figi's Inc. is using more than 250 lists purchased from firms all over the globe and, in turn, sells its lists to selected firms, using a checking system to be sure such lists are not misused.

Figi's moved from the cold storage plant location in 1953, when it completed its original 50x90-foot building at 2525 Roddis Ave.

The latest 80x160-foot addition to the plant on Roddis Avenue is the ninth in an almost continuous building program over the past decade.

A crew of 40 year-round employees were augmented this past Christmas by an estimated 1,200 persons. Fifty per cent of the annual business is done in a three-week period.

More than a half million dollars is spent on postage alone and, in addition to the volume poured through the local post office which customarily sets up a separate branch to serve Figi's about 50 leased semi-trucks haul Marshfield originated packages to 40 different cities about the nation for mailing from Post Offices there.

In 1963, Figi's installed IBM equipment to aid the firm in handling its burgeoning business, and a battery of 50 to 60 machines were leased for the recent rush season.

The Figis, who reside at 901 S. Adams Ave., have four children. They are Sarah, who is attending the University of Colorado, Boulder; Todd, who will attend Carroll College at Waukesha, and Hans and Eric who are attending elementary schools here.

(from Marshfield News-Herald, 12 January 1965, page 1 and 8)

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Figi's..Proud to be a part of the Marshfield Area and the Wisconsin Dairy Area

YESTERDAY

In 1941, a young man named John H. Figi, Jr. began making plans to own his own business. As a federal cheese Inspector, he understood quality and believed he could sell Wisconsin's best cheese by mail. With his wife Ann's help, he compiled a list of 1,500 names and addresses from telephone directories covering a five state area. Selecting names at random, they sent a postcard to each person offering a "Cheese of the Month." John Figi delivered the first 43 orders, which had been stored in the family refrigerator, to the post office in a borrowed children's coaster wagon.

The next year, John and Ann mailed postcards to 9,000 potential cheese enthusiasts and received 1,500 responses. Two years later, in 1944, John turned the kitchen back to his wife and rented space in the Marshfield Cold Storage Building. There, in the heart of Wisconsin's dairy-land, "Figi's," as it is known today, was born.

TODAY

Headquartered in Marshfield, Wisconsin, this company with modest beginnings has traveled quite a distance since it was founded. Today, nearly a half century later, the postcards have evolved into a colorful collection of catalogs. The family refrigerator has been replaced by more than 100,000 square feet of storage coolers and the children's wagon has been replaced by a fleet of trucks. Last year, a total of 368 semi-trailer loads of "Gifts in Good Taste" were delivered during the holiday season.

A leader in mail order food gifts with additional Central Wisconsin operations in Stevens Point and Neillsville, Figi's is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Fingerhut Companies, Inc., the nation's fourth largest catalog company. Last year alone, Figi's purchased 2.5 million pounds of cheese, 1 million pounds of sausage and received over two million orders totaling almost 8,000,000 gifts. In this one year, Figi's mailed more than 60 million catalogs and generated revenues of approximately \$100 million.

Figi's success is due in a large part to the philosophy of John Figi himself. "Sell the best cheese, at good prices, and guarantee satisfaction.. no matter what." This philosophy now covers Figi's full line of products, which includes sausage, smoke house specialties, candy, cookies, nuts, cakes, fruits, plants, and a variety of nonfood gifts.



Main Plant on Roddis Avenue



Corporate Office on Hwy. 13 South

AN ALL OCCASION GIFT COMPANY

The majority of Figi's business is generated in the fourth quarter of the year from Christmas catalogs. Although this is the "peak season," Figi's also meets the gift giving needs of the consumer and corporate markets for other events and holidays throughout the year. Currently, Figi's mails catalogs for the Christmas holiday season, Valentine's Day, Easter, "Moms, Dads, & Grads," plus the new all-occasion gift catalog, "Confetti & Bows," and a "Moments to Remember" catalog of collectibles. An innovative "Lifestyle" catalog offers customers a collection of decorations, fashion apparel, kitchen conveniences, products for office organization, and novelty items. As a merchandise driven company, Figi's is constantly testing and updating catalogs and mailings to meet the needs of consumer and corporate markets. In addition, new channels of distribution, including telemarketing, are being developed.



Outlet Store in Shopko Plaza



The Super Pack offers a variety of Figi's famous cheese and sausage.



Party Dazzlers is one of the many gifts offered by Figi's featuring goodies to please your sweet tooth as well as cheese and sausage.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

As an equal opportunity employer, Figi's offers career opportunities as well as seasonal employment for Central Wisconsin residents. Unlimited potential exists for entry level and experienced individuals in areas such as merchandising, marketing, finance and credit, purchasing, computer programming, production, industrial engineering, and quality assurance. Currently, Figi's employs approximately 240 full-time individuals. That number expands to a peak of over 3,100 employees during the fourth quarter of each year, providing flexible part-time employment for area residents.

This year, Figi's will have a peak employment of approximately 1,700 part-time employees for our eight Marshfield facilities. We are hiring for our shipping, warehousing, catalog marketing; gift assembly, cheese cut-wrap, cheese cold pack manufacturing, customer orders and inquiries, data entry, credit, general clerical, retail sales clerks, order entry. Most positions do not require prior experience or skills. We train! Become part of the Figi's team this year. We have flexible hours to meet your schedule.

(from Marshfield News-Herald, 28 September 1991, page 12)

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Figi's Will be Sold to Dallas Company

By Jamie Mara of the News-Herald

Figi's Inc., which has been on the sales block for more than a year, will be sold to a Dallas investment company, it was announced today.

The company founded and headquartered in Marshfield had been a division of Fingerhut Companies Inc., which offered it for sale more than a year ago. The mail-order, cheese and gift firm employs about 170 full-time employees and as many as 2,000 seasonal workers here.

A letter of intent to purchase has been submitted by Empire Financial Corp., Dallas, Texas, according to officials at Fingerhut's Minneapolis office. The sale had been rumored for the past few months, although Fingerhut officials would not confirm details in repeated telephone calls from the News-Herald.

Details of the sale were not disclosed in the brief announcement released today. The transaction is expected to be completed by June.

Empire is a 20-year-old investment company with a profile in institutional banking, manufacturing and distribution.

Executives at Empire could not be reached for comment this morning on its plans for Figi's.

Fingerhut announced in March 1993 that it wanted to sell Figi's as part of a divestiture and restructuring move. At that time, Fingerhut Chairman Ted Deikel went as far as to say the company "didn't belong" in the Fingerhut portfolio.

Officials said they had retained investment bankers to assist in the sale of the seasonal business, which is primarily profitable during the Christmas season.

About 75 percent of Figi's catalog sales of cheese, sausage and other gift items comes in the fourth quarter. Last year, about 35 percent of the company's net sales and about 54 percent of its earnings occurred in the fourth quarter.

Cheeses and meats account for almost half of the Figi's annual sales.

Figi's was founded in 1943 by John H. Figi Jr., a former federal cheese grader, who began packaging gift cheese along with his wife in the kitchen of their home. They handled 43 orders the first year.

Figi later moved the operation to the Marshfield Cold Storage Co. plant on N. Central Avenue. The operation was moved to its present site on S. Roddis Avenue in 1953. An outlet store was later opened near Shopko.

Fingerhut acquired the 52-year-old Figi's in 1981. The company grew to become the country's second largest direct mail food gift marketer.

In 1992, sales were approximately \$76 million. That year, Figi's, mailed about 43 million catalogs generating approximately 1.4 million orders from its 3.5 million active customers.

(from Marshfield News-Herald, 17 May 1994, page A1 & A2)

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Sale of Figi's to Texas Firm is Completed

By Jamie Mara of the News-Herald

A Dallas, Texas, investment company has completed its purchase of Figi's Inc., the president of the investment firm said this morning.

"It has been finalized," Lou Farris, president of Empire Financial Corp., told the News-Herald of the sale this morning from his Texas office.

An announcement in May from Fingerhut Companies, Inc., which had been Figi's parent company since 1981, confirmed that Empire had submitted a letter of intent to buy the 51-year-old mail-order, cheese and gift firm. The transaction was expected to be completed by June.

Figi's, founded and headquartered in Marshfield, employs about 170 full-time employees and as many as 2,000 seasonal workers here.

Farris declined to comment on the terms of the sale deal or his company's plans for the Marshfield firm. Empire is a 20-year-old investment company with a profile in institutional banking, manufacturing and distribution.

Officials at Fingerhut were unavailable for comment before press time this morning.

The Minneapolis-based Fingerhut announced in March 1993 that it wanted to sell Figi's as part of a divestiture and restructuring move. At that time, Fingerhut Chairman Ted Deikel went as far as to say the company "didn't belong" in the Fingerhut portfolio.

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The company grew to become the country's second largest direct mail food gift marketer.
(from Marshfield News-Herald, 21 July 1994, pages 1 & 2)

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Figi's Parent Company Sold

Fingerhut, the parent company of Figi's Inc. has been sold to Federated Department Stores Inc. of Cincinnati, it was announced today.

It is not yet known what impact the sale will have on Figi's, a cheese and gift mail order operation, which was founded in Marshfield and remains headquartered here. The News-Herald was unable to talk to officials at either Fingerhut or Federated this morning.

Figi's president Tom Lenard said he Federated buys Fingerhut for \$1.23 billion in cash couldn't comment this morning on news of a \$1.23 billion cash acquisition of the catalog retailer's Minnesota-based parent company. Federated also will assume \$470 million in Fingerhut debt. The boards of directors of both companies have approved the deal, which is subject to regulatory approval.

In the deal, Fingerhut shareholders will receive \$25 cash per share. Fingerhut is expected to remain based in Minneapolis.

Figi's employs more than 150 people full time and as many as 2,000 workers seasonally. It's main office is based at the Air Industrial Park on Marshfield's south side. The company has several warehouses in Marshfield and operations in Neillsville and Stevens Point.

Federated operates 400 department stores in 33 states including Bloomingdale's and Macy's. The addition of Fingerhut, with its specialty in catalog and Internet retailing, will add depth to Federated's retail base, a retail expert said.

"This will help Federated become a pacemaker in the field of e-commerce and catalog retailing," Kurt Barnard, a retail consultant and president of Barnard's Retail Trend Report in Upper Montclair, NJ. told the Associated Press today. "They needed a distribution network which was more efficient than anything they had and they got that with this deal."

That might be good news for Figi's, which specializes in mail-order gifts and food. Figi's is planning an expansion to its distribution operations along South Roddis Avenue in Marshfield.

However, four years ago it was for sale as Fingerhut tried to divest itself of the company. At that time, Fingerhut Chairman Ted Deikel went as far as to say Figi's "didn't belong" in the Fingerhut portfolio.

What plans Federated, which has annual sales of more than \$15.8 billion, has for Figi's remains unknown. Figi's was founded in 1943 by John H. Figi Jr. a former federal grader, who began packaging gift cheese along with his wife in the kitchen of their Marshfield home. The first year they handled 43 orders. Fingerhut acquired Figi's in 1981.

(from Marshfield News-Herald, 11 February 1999, pages A1 & B7)

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SANTA'S HELPER

After humble beginnings nearly 60 years ago, Figi's is a top shop-at-home firm and key area employer.

The North Pole is a long way from Central Wisconsin.

But, if you're trying to imagine what Santa's Workshop looks like, it might be very similar to the high-technology operation at Figi's Inc's distribution center in Marshfield and gift assembly operation in Stevens Point.



Central Wisconsin Inc. photo by Dan Young

Figi's is one of the nation's largest shop-at-home than 2 million people from all 50 states order about 5 million gifts each year. Most of those packages are Christmas gifts. And that means things at the workshop are really humming.

"We do 80 percent of our business at Christmas so we are just getting into the peak of our sales," said Marie Novak, Figi's facility manager at the CenterPoint Marketplace Mall in Stevens Point.

Want to give Wisconsin cheese? You can, in almost every flavor imaginable. Or, you can give a package that combines cheese with sausage, ham, nuts and sweets too numerous to mention. Add a folksy or glistening craft item Figi's sells them, too.

Want to make that gift look good? Pick a box, basket, or replica of a Wisconsin barn. Or, put your present in a personalized duffel bag, backpack, stocking or box.

Figi's catalogs list hundreds of selections. The company sends out 40 million of those magazines every year.

"We started our first catalog drop (issue for the current season) in August," Novak said. "Every couple of weeks we have catalog drops."

The orders traditionally peak for one week after a catalog has been issued, she said. All told, those catalogs produce more than \$100 million worth of business each year. That's a lot of cheese, any way you slice it.

At its peak, Figi's employs more than 4,000 people, Human Resources Manager Robert Alford said. About 230 are full-time corporate employees who work year-round. The rest help during the Christmas season and a spring season that includes gifts for Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and school graduations.

Up to 2,500 work at Figi's Marshfield operations, including its mailing operation, distribution and warehousing facility and call center for gift orders. The Stevens Point call center, gift as-



Central Wisconsin Inc. photo by Doug Wojcik

FIGI'S EMPLOYEES

Karen Spreifel and Bonnie Dietmeier organize customer orders at the firm's Stevens Point distribution center before sending them down the assembly line to be shrink-wrapped for delivery. The Marshfield-based shop-at-home gift company has grown a great deal since its beginnings in 1941, as evidenced by the large distribution center, which is the heart of Figi's mail order operations in Marshfield.

company wrote in a brochure.

Figi and his wife, Ann, mailed postcards to 1,500 people in five states, offering "cheeses of the month." From that effort, the Figis packed 43 gift boxes of aged Wisconsin cheese, placed them in a child's wagon and sent them to the post office for mailing.

"The next year," the company wrote, "John and Ann mailed postcards to 9,000 potential cheese enthusiasts and received 1,500 responses."

In 1944, the Figis moved their business out of their kitchen and into a portion of the Marshfield Cold Storage Building. The couple hired Figi's first employee, and the business was on its way.

The current 128,000-square-foot distribution center on Marshfield's south side was only 4,500 square feet when it was first built in 1954. That included the corporate offices.

Those offices moved in 1976, after Figi bought the seven-story building on the south edge of Marshfield's downtown that previously housed Marshfield Clinic. He called it Central Plaza.

The 1980s were an active decade for the company. By then, the main south side plant was expanded 13 times. Figi's offices, as well as the company's own computer data center, were moved to a new building in the city's airport industrial park on Highway 13.

sembly and distribution facility employs up to 1,500. A gift assembly plant in Neillsville has up to 240 workers during the year. And, during this busy holiday period, about 60 trained people process computerized orders from their homes.

April and May are the slowest months, Alford said. Still, there are no fewer than 400 employees at any time during the year.

The slow times are still colossal compared with Figi's humble beginnings in 1941. That's when John H. Figi, Jr., a federal cheese inspector, started his business in the kitchen of his Marshfield home.

"He understood quality and believed he could sell Wisconsin's best cheese by mail," the com-



*Central Wisconsin Inc. photo by Dan Young
A worker at the Stevens Point plant packs a basket
to order.*

Figi sold Central Plaza to the city of Marshfield for its new City Hall. The data center was later sold to First Data Solutions. A subsidiary, Donnelley Marketing, recently moved the business into Marshfield's new Mill Creek Business Park.

Also in the '80s, Figi's opened new facilities in Neillsville and Stevens Point, where cheeses and other foods are assembled into the various gift packages.

Figi's opened a telemarketing facility in Stevens Point in 1989. However, it is not used to call potential new customers, Alford said.

"We'll use it to call someone who placed an order in the past but didn't this year," he said, "and we'll remind them of our newest products."

In this decade, the company modernized its warehousing and shipping operations. Marshfield's distribution center was automated in 1990, and was expanded earlier this year. A second shipping facility opened in Stevens Point in 1990.

This year, the Marshfield distribution plant was expanded one more time. About 15,000 square feet of space was added to include a 30-foot-tall freezer designed to keep the food gifts fresh.

John Figi was the first of three owners over the years. In 1981, American Can (now Primerica Corp.) purchased the business, and made it a subsidiary of Fingerhut, a broader-based mail order firm.

In March of this year, Federated Department Stores - the same company that owns Macy's and Bloomingdale's - acquired Fingerhut. Federated is expanding its Internet trade, Alford said, and Fingerhut offered an attractive opportunity to do so.

About 8 percent of Figi's sales are made through the company's Web site (www.figis.com).

"We want to upgrade that site," Alford said. "We believe e-commerce will be a growing part of the business. We see more business from it now, and we expect even more in the future."

Federated has not changed Figi's overall operations.

"We can make all our decisions for ourselves," Alford said.

One of those decisions is to deliver as much as possible Figi's had retail stores in Marshfield and Stevens Point, but the Point store closed a few years ago.

"We felt that retail was not the area where we wanted to grow," Alford said.

However, it made sense to keep the Marshfield store open, he said. The store is located next to the Marshfield ShopKo store.

"Our employees get generous discounts, and the store is a great way to provide them," Alford said. "We also feel we have a responsibility as a corporation to serve the community. It's a service, and it's a good business."

Financially, Figi's has been a strong performer during the decade

"Every year since 1991, when our current management staff took over, the company has been profitable," Alford said. "That hasn't always been the case."

Figi's made a couple of major additions to its product lines in the last few years. One is the move toward personalized gifts that allows the giver to have the recipient's name engraved on a box or other type of package. It's a small but growing part of the business.

"We've seen a 60 percent increase in personalized gifts," Alford said. "The last 2 to 3 years we've increased the amount of automation for those products."

For the second year, Figi's is issuing a separate catalog under the brand name "Maple Street Merchants." It's named after the location of Figi's headquarters on South Maple Avenue in Marshfield, Alford said.

Maple Street features different products including tools, furniture, house decorations and clothing. It's designed for people to buy things for themselves, said Dan Miller, assistant gift assembly manager in Stevens Point. Among other things, you can buy a complete Christmas tree set with lights and ornaments.

"Maple Street Pets" is another new catalog that's being tested this year. It's geared to pet owners, and it offers mugs, cookie jars, toys and medicine. A veterinarian offers informational services on Thursdays.

All of Figi's products are reviewed after each holiday season.

"We'll look at the number of orders and the cost of the products and decide what to bring back," Alford said. "We will keep testing new products with the customers we've dealt with in the past. And we will keep looking at new opportunities.

(from Marshfield News-Herald, 28 November 1999, pages D1 & D3)

TYPICAL FIGI'S YEAR IS LIKE A ROLLER COASTER

By Thom Gerretsen and Jenny Beilke, Central Wisconsin Inc. staff writers

Life at Figi's Inc. is a rapidly-changing cycle of ups and downs. Because it does 80 percent of its business at Christmas time, the company is forever riding a wave.

From December through April, up to 700 employees prepare gift packages for Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and graduations, said Human Resources Manager Robert Alford.

Also during that period, Figi's executives will review their product lines and collect bills still due from the previous Christmas.

In June, workers start assembling gift packages at plants in Neillsville and Stevens Point. It's a process that runs through mid-November.

Shipping begins in late September or early October at Figi's newly-expanded distribution center in Marshfield and a plant in Stevens Point s industrial park. Phone orders start to build up from about Thanksgiving through Christmas, mostly at the Stevens Point call center. At its peak, the company employs more than 4,000 at all its facilities.

"We try to get all the Christmas gifts shipped by Dec. 20," Alford said.

Assemblers package gift cartons with upwards of 40 components.

"Everyone pitches in at crunch time."

*LISA BLUM,
Figi's human
resources repre-
sentative*

Some of the many gift components vary from packaged food products like cheeses and sausages to collectibles.

"We try to combine food products into reusable tins," said Dan Miller, assistant gift assembly manager at the Stevens Point plant.

An enamel chili pot contains multiple layers of components including chili, beef sticks and cheese.

"Just in time" baskets of fresh fruit are assembled on an order basis, Miller said.

Once assembled, the finishing touches are added.

"We try to spruce it up with a bow or something unique to Figi's," Miller said. That Utile extra touch helps sales."

Certain items always seem to be popular. One hot seller is pistachio nuts packaged on the premises.

According to Dave Boehning, Stevens Point distribution manager, 50 percent of orders are for single goods and 50 percent are for bulk orders. Multiple piece orders are usually shipped together for postage and economic reasons.

Items are picked in the warehouse according to a daily report, said Roni Stargardt, assistant shipping manager in Stevens Point.

Popular items are put on the bulk line for shipping, Stargardt said.

A conveyor carries a basket with a label indicating the items ordered. Workers look for the items from their bin and place the items in the basket. The last person puts the label on the boxes before it's shrink wrapped.

"Anything that gets wrapped has to go upstairs to be verified," Stargardt said.

Scanning verifies shipping for billing documentation.

"Without verifying, the system doesn't work, Boehning said. "We could end up reshipping that item."

Packages are sorted by destination before they slide down to the shipping truck. The gifts are packed as square and as compact as possible, Stargardt said.

The bulk system is more efficient, Boehning said. Packages are directly go to the trucks from the conveyor.

Smaller packages are hand delivered to the shipping trucks to prevent them from falling through the conveyor.

"Single items are always picked on a pallet," Stargardt said.

Smaller gifts are verified separately.

"The real small packages go through the stand alone system," Boehning said.

Shipping runs three shifts from the early part of November until the middle of December, Boehning said. The same is true in Marshfield, Alford said.

"Everybody pitches in at crunch time," said Human Resources Representative Lisa Blum. If needed, all full-time employees are out on the plant floor.

(from Marshfield News-Herald, 28 November 1999, pg. D3)

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IN THE HUNT

Figi's battles tight labor market for seasonal workers

Santa's elves are as busy as ever at Figi's in Marshfield and Stevens Point. To meet labor demands, the company is busing in employees to its shipping and distribution facilities.

"We do bus people from outlying communities to do work in the plant," said Lisa Blum, a human resources representative in Stevens Point. Workers are picked up in Waupaca, Wautoma, Mosinee and Adams.

The Marshfield distribution center buses in workers from Wisconsin Rapids, Black River Falls and Tomah, said Human Resources Manager Robert Alford.

"We only bus for first and third shifts," Blum said. "It depends on what the demands are."

There are plenty of workers locally to fill the second shift, Alford said, especially students and working adults who find the second shift from 5:30-9:30 p.m. attractive. Normally, more than half of those who work on the third shift are bused in.

Gift assemblers were hired in July and telemarketers followed in August. Phone agents were hired in the first part of October, Blum said. The beginning of November is when the big shipping "thrust" is.

For the first time this year, Figi's is giving bonuses to workers who refer others to the company, Alford said. For the first 40 hours a referred employee works, the current employee gets \$50. For every additional 40 hours, the worker gets \$25. The need for good workers is always there, Alford said.



Central Wisconsin Inc. photo by Doug Wojcik
LUIS CRUZ places customer orders into bins destined for various parts of the United States. Cruz is one of the more than 4,000 people who will work for Figi's this year.

"We're constantly hiring," he said. "Some people work only a few weeks due to family commitments. We need to depend on people, but the people we attract are often those who don't need to work full-time mainly students, parents and retirees."

Figi's Timeline

1941 - John and Ann Figi packed and mailed their first 43 boxes of Wisconsin cheese from their Marshfield home.

1944 - Figi's Inc. moved into the Marshfield Cold Storage Building and hired its first employee.

1954 - A 50' x 90' main plant and office facility was built at 2525 S. Roddis Ave, Marshfield.

1976 - Offices moved from the main plant to Central Plaza, 630 S. Central Ave., the former Marshfield Clinic.

1981 - Figi's was acquired by American Can (now Primerica) and became a subsidiary of Fingerhut, based in Minnesota.

1887 - A 64,000-square foot headquarters and office building was built in Marshfield's Air Industrial Park.

1988 - Gift assembly facility was opened in Stevens Point.

1989 - A new 30,000-square foot gift assembly facility was built in Neillsville.

1989 - A telemarketing facility opened in Stevens Point.

1990 - Marshfield shipping and distribution center became automated.

1990 - A second shipping facility was opened in Stevens Point's Industrial Park.

1994 - Figi's celebrated its 50th anniversary of incorporation.

1996 - Figi's catalog distribution reached 40 million copies throughout the United States.

1998 - Neillsville gift assembly plant was expanded.

1999 - Figi's and its parent company, Fingerhut, were acquired by Federated Department Stores.

1999 - Marshfield mailing operation facility was expanded.

1999 - Marshfield's distribution center was expanded to 128,000 square feet.

Some come back Christmas after Christmas, Alford said. Many join Figi's after leaving other seasonal jobs.

"There are Christmas tree farmers, potato and vegetable workers who end their seasons in the fall," Alford said. "We often pick them up after they get laid off."

The Stevens Point plant is in the industrial park. There are eight people to a line with a capacity of 13 lines. Normally, only 10 or 11 run.

There are two shifts for gift assembly. The first shift works eight-hour days while the second shift works for four-hour days four days a week.

At the peak, Marshfield's distribution facility runs 24 hours per day with three shifts.

After the holidays five or six lines run through April or May, said Dan Miller, assistant gift assembly manager in Stevens Point.

June and July gifts are built according to forecasted demands. This time of year, however, gifts are built by the actual number of orders, Miller said.

"We look at our calls and mail to determine our staffing," Alford said. The,

company gets up to 500 pounds of mail orders per day.

"We need more flexible workers in September and October, because there's less certainty about steady business," Alford said. "But from late October through December, we're going all day."
(from Marshfield News-Herald, 28 November 1999, pg. D3)

Also see 901 S. Adams (home of John Figi):

http://hstrial-marshfieldare.homestead.com/~local/~Preview/901_S_Adams_Avenue.pdf