
Crownline Displays First Finished Product

FRANKLIN COUNTY— The assembly line started again three weeks ago at Crownline. A new owner bought the boat builder in August and hired a hundred people. Wednesday morning the company and those workers showed off what they've accomplished so far. Workers, owners and local officials stood in applause... But, the clapping isn't only about boats. It's about a future that might never have been- for Crownline owners and for workers who thought they wouldn't be called back... "There's a lot of us that are very glad to be here," explains rehired DJ Pedigo. "We really didn't know what we were gonna do cause this is all we've known for 10 to 15 years. So we are very happy to be back." Most workers say it's reassuring to see the first boat come off the assembly line. "It's nice to know that I've played a part in that boat- helped roll it from top to bottom." Kathy Hilliard recently rejoined Crownline in the lamination department. She worked there for 11 years before the plant laid off all its employees nine months ago. "My grandkids always ask me about that, 'What did you do on that MawMaw?'" Hilliard chuckles. "I said, I put that stuff right there on it."

The workers are encouraged to know many more boats will follow, and they're not the only ones. "Just last Sunday I spoke with a customer that's buying this boat," explains international Crownline distributor, David Fraser. "And they're really excited about it. And it's great to see it here and finished and looking as good as ever." Vice President Kevin Riem says, this is the beginning of a beautiful future with domestic and international support for the boat producer. "What this is is really one of the first steps with reestablishing our company on a global basis." And that attitude seems to have re-energized everyone at Crownline... "It's basically undescrivable," says a tearful Pedigo, "there's nothing like working here." Riem says, workers will be busy for a while. More than 550-units are sold. Riem says production is at 25 boats a week right now and expects that to jump to more than 30 within months.