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 2314.39 up 14.40

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 3-month 3.21% last week: 3.21%
 12-month 3.70% last week: 3.70%
 36-month 3.94% last week: 3.94%

Charlevoix company designs new log siding system

BY LOUISE NELLE
 NEWS-REVIEW STAFF WRITER

CHARLEVOIX — On the outskirts of Charlevoix lies a business which has turned log siding into an affordable, user friendly product available to the everyday consumer.

A family run business, Pine River Inc. has been in production since fall 2006 manufacturing the e-log.

So what exactly is the e-log?
 "It's an engineered log siding system," said owner Mike Way. "It's a laminated product and a larger log which gives a very authentic log look."

To the unknowing eye, the e-log appears to be a wooden log 12, 14 or 16 inches in diameter. However, its inner layers tell a different story. Beneath the finished surface are three layers: an oriented strand board base, foam core and an outer layer of hardboard laminate and wood veneer.

The wood veneer is a local product from Manthei Veneer Mill in Petoskey. Way said he uses a thick veneer, one-eighth inch to one-sixth inch thick, to create a more realistic looking log.

As a laminated product, Way said the e-log has many

advantages over wood logs. "A laminated product is always stronger than individual components," he said. "Most products are laminated and the reason they do it is because it's stronger."

With its many layers and a stable foam core, Way said the e-log will not warp, shrink or crack which can deteriorate finish stains.

In addition to being low maintenance, the e-log is environmentally friendly, energy efficient, easy to install and overall economical.

To give consumers an idea how much timber the e-log saves, Way said one eight-foot log can supply veneer for 80 e-logs.

And unlike a solid wood log, an e-log provides better insulation because the foam core retains more heat than wood.

And installing the e-log is as easy as tongue and groove siding. Lightweight at only 18 pounds per eight foot piece, e-logs can be installed using hands rather than heavy machinery.

Working in what Way described as a "one of a kind operation" is a skilled workforce of about 10 employees. Joining Way at the top are Don Neill, director of marketing and sales, and Mike Kasuske, productions opera-

tions manager. Neill has 30 years of construction experience. Twelve of those years he spent in construction management and sales within the log home industry at Town & Country.

Also a former employee of Town & Country, Kasuske has 16 years of experience in the log home industry running a production facility.

Unlike Neill and Kasuske, Way spent 25 years in Detroit's automotive business. Yet, by combining his knowledge of automotive production with Neill's and Kasuske's background in the log home industry, Way designed an innovative system to manufacture the e-log.

"We're the only ones that produce it in an automotive fashion," Way said. "We're a new idea, a new technology in a mature market."

By way of a conveyer belt, Way can assemble an e-log in 45 seconds. Beginning with the base board, the board travels down the belt where the foam core is glued onto the base. Next, the hardboard laminate is glued to the foam core and finally the wood veneer glued on top of the hardboard.

Once the layers have been



G. RANDALL GOSS/NEWS-REVIEW

Mike Way (right), owner of Pine River Inc., has designed an affordable log siding system using his product called the e-log. Working with Way is his marketing and sales director, Don Neill.

glued into place, the unfinished log travels to a vacuum press table where heat and vacuum pressure shape the log and cure the adhesive for 20 minutes.

The final product: an eight-foot log ready to be installed

and finished with a top coat by the consumer.

To learn more about the e-log — including types of woods and finish stains available — go to www.e-log-siding.com.

Pine River Inc. is located

at 05339 M-66 in Charlevoix. Hours of operation are 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. To contact the company, call 758-3400.

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Alticor to rebuild Amway brand in North America; Quixtar to be phased out

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — While Amway remains a household name after more than 40 years, Quixtar still doesn't resonate with the public nearly seven years after its creation.

So direct-sales giant Alticor Inc. will phase out its Quixtar Inc. label during the next 1 1/2 to two years and rebuild its Amway Corp. brand in the United States and Canada.

There also will be less corporate use of the name Alticor, which represents a holding company.

U.S. employees received the news last week in an internal memo from company Chairman Steve Van Andel and President Doug DeVos, a copy of which was obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press.

The Grand Rapids Press earlier reported on the memo.

"The realities of a crowded and competitive global mar-

ketplace have made us realize that we need to 'fly one flag' to put significant resources behind establishing one opportunity brand wherever we do business," the memo said. "That brand will be Amway, in North America and all over the world."

Although no public announcement was made, Ad-based Alticor confirmed the changes Wednesday.

No jobs were expected to be eliminated as a result.

The public won't see the Amway name associated with the company's North American business for another 18 to 24 months, Van Andel and DeVos wrote.

"That's because this is — this has to be — more than just a name change," the memo said. "We want other key elements of the transformation initiative to be in place before we invite customers in to see the new Amway."

The company dropped the

Amway name in the United States and Canada in October 2000 as part of an overhaul that took what had started as a door-to-door vitamin sales business into the world of on-line sales through Quixtar.

The move also was widely viewed as a way of helping

the company shed some of the negative connotations that the Amway name had acquired, such as its multilevel marketing structure being no more than a pyramid scheme. But the Quixtar label never caught on.

"Research has shown us

that the Quixtar name is weaker and less known in the U.S. and Canada than we ever expected," the memo said. "Meanwhile, even eight years after leaving North America, the Amway name is stronger and better known than we realized."

The Amway name has enjoyed a resurgence overseas as the company focused on expanding operations under that banner in Asia.

Amway China last year accounted for more than \$2 billion of Alticor's \$6.3 billion in annual sales.

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