

LOCAL & STATE NEWS

TURNING SKILLS INTO SUCCESS

The Rise of Limestone Manufacturing

CHERYL MEADOWS
SKED COMMUNICATIONS

What began as a leap of faith has grown into a thriving advanced manufacturing business for a young Somerset entrepreneur.

Winston Crawford entered the automation industry in early 2020. Shortly afterward, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, he was laid off. Still intrigued by his new skills, the then 20-year-old used a stimulus check in 2020 to buy his first piece of equipment.

Crawford started Limestone Manufacturing LLC in 2021. He bought a 1993 HAAS VF3 in early 2022. He soon realized he could profit from his skills, and his business took off.

Limestone Manufacturing offers comprehensive services from design and product development to the production of completed parts and assemblies. The company offers CNC machining, fabrication, 3-D printing, automation and reverse engineering.

Growing up on a family farm, Crawford learned that versatility is a strength, a lesson he applies in his company.

"I would describe my business as versatile," Crawford said. "We have experience in many different processes and techniques. That flexibility lets us address a wide array of projects. I believe versatility is essential for a small shop in our industry. My motto as an entrepreneur is, 'There is always a solution.'"

For two years, the 26-year-old operated solo, slowly gaining orders from nearby companies as his skills became known.

"It just kept growing from there," he said.

In 2023, Crawford attended the SEED Contract-

ing Symposium. SKED and Kentucky's Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers developed this program. There, he learned about the industry and met industry representatives. These connections gave his shop momentum.

He connected with contractors from various levels and introduced his shop to representatives of global prime contractors.

"Where do I start with what the SEED symposium has done for me?" he said. "I've made priceless connections, received industry insight, earned customers and met many people I now call friends."

Crawford says he has gained at least one customer each year since he began attending the symposium in 2023.

"I've made connections with other businesses in our area that provide services that complement ours," he explained. SEED has helped us tremendously with widening the projects we can target. SEED does a great job of putting people who can all gain something from each other in the same room."

Congressman Rogers said Crawford's contracting business success is a good example of hard work meeting opportunity.

"Limestone Manufacturing is a testament to the ingenuity and work ethic of small businesses in our region. When you couple the skills of a business owner like Winston Crawford with SKED's investments, certification training, and federal network, we can turn vision into reality," said Congressman Rogers.

"We're working diligently to prepare more manufacturers in southern and eastern Kentucky for federal contracting opportunities, and SKED has paved the runway for our businesses to take off with job growth across our region."

Much of his work is confidential. Contracting with the defense industry requires discretion.

"We now prime the majority of our contracts. Although we cannot talk about specifics, we have made things that operate underwater, on land, and in the sky. The certifications we have worked hard to obtain allow us to work directly with all government departments."

The guidance and direction from his partnership with SKED and SEED proved pivotal, helping him complete the certifications needed to meet industry standards.

Since then, he has earned several certifications, including HUBZone, SBA Small Business, and ISO 9001:2015. He also qualified for the Joint Certification Program. His business recently earned its AS9100 QMS certification, required by the aerospace industry.

"Having a good relationship with SKED is like having a supporter always on your side," Crawford said. "Their staff has always been an advocate for the business, and they do not hesitate to recommend us to anyone they can. The connections and insights they've gotten us are invaluable."

Now, five years in, Crawford is looking to the future. Sustainability and autonomy remain important goals for him as the company moves forward.

Limestone Manufacturing currently employs three full-time and three part-time men and women.

My vision over the next five years is to continue expanding Limestone's capabilities. In this industry, many projects involve multistep, post-processing requirements. The more we can do in-house, the less reliant we are on others. My goal is clear: deliver seamless, start-to-finish service to a broader range of customers and industries.

SKED Executive Director Brett Traver has worked closely with Crawford over the years.

"Winston has the ingenuity and desire to build his business and its capabilities," Traver said. "He just needed help getting his foot in the door. We are very proud of his work. We are here to help make those connections."

Another valuable connection Crawford made was with the Kentucky APEX Accelerator, a program funded in part by the Department of Defense (DoD) to coach and train Kentucky-based companies on how to successfully procure local, state and federal contracting opportunities. Eric Byrd, the program's Senior Procurement Consultant for the Eastern Kentucky region, has been working with Crawford since 2023 to help position Limestone Manufacturing for prime defense contracts.

Byrd said, "From our very first meeting, Winston was highly motivated to work directly with the defense industry. We walked through what would be required, including compliance objectives and how to go about the next steps, such as obtaining federal certifications, completing federal registrations, preparing business proposals, and reviewing countless contract opportunities that matched Limestone Manufacturing LLC's strong capabilities."

"It has been an absolute pleasure to see Limestone Manufacturing LLC's business expand as a manufacturer that supports DoD and U.S. military agencies. SKED and the Kentucky APEX Accelerator work well together to find, develop and refer motivated businesses like Winston's to participate in SEED and form those vital relationships in the defense industry."

Crawford's company is not the only business to have grown as a result of his participation in the SEED contracting symposium. However, his willingness to develop and pursue certifications has put him on track to be among the most successful.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Somerset entrepreneur Winston Crawford has been operating his own business since 2021, Limestone Manufacturing LLC, which is located on Highway 39 in Somerset, Ky.

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ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

WESTERN PULASKI COUNTY WATER DISTRICT, SOMERSET, KENTUCKY

Separate Sealed BIDS for construction of the Lone Oak Subdivision - Phase 3: Overlook Drive Water Line Extension, consisting of approximately 720 LF of 4-Inch PVC water line and appurtenances, will be received by the Western Pulaski County Water District, 2128 West Highway 80, Somerset, Kentucky until 5:00 PM, local time, May 19, 2026, where then, at the said office they will be publicly opened and read aloud.

The CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be examined at the following locations:

WESTERN PULASKI COUNTY WATER DISTRICT, 2128 W. Highway 80, Somerset, KY 42503
MONARCH ENGINEERING, INC., 556 Carlton Drive, Lawrenceburg, KY 40342

Copies of the CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be obtained at the office of Monarch Engineering, Inc., 556 Carlton Drive, Lawrenceburg, KY 40342, upon request in writing and payment of \$50.00 non-refundable for each set. Bidders must purchase plans from the Engineer and payment shall be made via check in the name of the Bidder. Plans purchased by one party and bid by another party shall not be accepted. Plans will be available for purchase until 3:00 p.m., (E.D.T.), Friday, May 15, 2026.

Each Bidder must accompany his bid with a BID BOND in amount of not less than five (5) percent of the base bid. No Bidder may withdraw his bid for a period of 90 days. The Bidder awarded the CONTRACT shall furnish insurance as required, in the GENERAL CONDITIONS. CONTRACT shall be completed within 60 calendar days after date of authorization to start work. Liquidated damages shall be \$1,000.00 per calendar day.

Attention of bidders is particularly called to the requirements as to conditions of employment to be observed and minimum wage rates to be paid under the contract, Title VI, Section 3, Segregated Facility, Section 109 and E.O. 11246. Local firms, minority firms, small and female businesses are particularly encouraged to participate. Also, if BIDDER anticipates the use of subcontractors as a part of this project, the use of local firms, minority firms, small and female businesses are encouraged. Any bid that is obviously unbalanced may be rejected. The Western Pulaski County Water District reserves the right to reject any and all bids and waive informalities.

Federal law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, religion, age, handicap and sex in this project.

WESTERN PULASKI COUNTY WATER DISTRICT
BY: Joel L. Wilson, Chairman

365 Data Centers eyes Kentucky expansion

GLOBE NEWSWIRE

NORWALK, Conn. — 365 Data Centers, a leading provider of high-density colocation, connectivity, and AI-enabled cloud services, has formed a strategic partnership with Aphorio Carter, the critical infrastructure and data center division of Carter Funds to develop about 200 megawatts of AI-ready data center capacity across key U.S. markets. Through this partnership, 365 and Aphorio Carter plan to identify,

convert, and develop a portfolio of high-density data center facilities, with the first projects under letter of intent in Colorado and Kentucky.

365 is initially evaluating six sites where it would serve as the long-term operator, with projects expected to come online over the next 9 to 24 months. The facilities are being designed to support high-density liquid to chip infrastructure to meet growing AI and high-performance computing

workloads. The company has initiated letters of intent (LOIs) for two priority locations: Aurora, Colorado, and Simpsonville, Kentucky. The company will subsequently pursue additional LOIs for sites in Trumbull, Connecticut; Louisville, Kentucky; Harrisonburg, Virginia; and Columbus, Ohio as part of an initial phased expansion strategy.

"Through this partnership, we're in an ideal position to create a new class of high-density infrastructure

designed specifically for AI-era workloads," said Derek Gillespie, CEO & CRO of 365 Data Centers. "Working with Aphorio Carter will allow us to create new value in existing assets while bringing new capacity online to support today's demand."

Each facility is expected to support cabinet densities ranging from 50 to over 200 kW, positioning the portfolio to meet the requirements

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