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## TODAY'S WEATHER



**HIGH**  
**79**  
**LOW**  
**54**

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## A CLOSER LOOK

# Sweet addition to business park

Ferrara Candy Co. opens new 1.6 million-square-foot distribution center

By KATIE FINLON  
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DeKALB – More than a year after the project was announced in early 2020 and before the COVID-19 pandemic hit northern Illinois, Ferrara Candy Company officially opened its long-awaited distribution center during a Wednesday ribbon-cutting ceremony.

According to a news release from the state of Illinois, the facility will provide more than 500 local jobs. The project, located in the city's Chicago West Business Park off Gurler Road, also creates one of the state's largest distribution and warehousing centers, according to the release.

DeKalb Mayor Cohen Barnes said it's "absolutely wonderful" to have Ferrara as part of the community. He said the City of DeKalb is looking forward to being a continued partner with the company.

"We're really excited to just continue our partnership that we have and look forward to mutual success in this particular endeavor," Barnes said during Wednesday's ribbon-cutting.

Ferrara, headquartered in Chicago, has an operational network of 20 locations in North America, including the DeKalb complex, and employs more than 6,000 people – the majority of whom are based in Illinois, according to the state's news release.

Ferrara Chief Operating Officer Mike Murray said Wednesday the facility's size is 1.6 million square feet. To give a better idea of how large that is, he said, "21 NFL football fields would fit inside this building."

Murray also said hundreds of trucks will come and go from the DeKalb facility.

"This is a milestone event for Ferrara, it's a milestone event for DeKalb, it's a milestone event for the state of Illinois," Murray said. "And I'm excited to be here."

Paul Borek, executive director for the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, said he was "thrilled" to be at the state-of-the-art distribution facility on Wednesday. He said the project "represents the largest project in recent memory, if not the history of the City of DeKalb and DeKalb County."

"This huge project is a significant economic development driver, already producing jobs, tax revenue and incredible opportunity for the county," Borek said.



Photos by Mark Busch – mbusch@shawmedia.com

**ABOVE:** Mike Murray, (right) chief operating officer at Ferrara Candy Co., talks to State Rep. Jeff Keicher, R-Sycamore, during a tour of the newly opened Ferrara Distribution Center in DeKalb. Officials from DeKalb and Illinois were on hand to join Ferrara in celebrating the opening of the new facility. **BELOW:** Ferrara officials lead a tour Wednesday of the newly opened Ferrara Distribution Center in DeKalb.

Ferrara Candy Company, based in Chicago and known in the U.S. for making items such as Lemonhead, Trolli, Nerds and Red Hots, announced earlier in 2020 that DeKalb won the bid – beating out a city in Wisconsin – and will invest \$100 million in the city with a move into the facility near Interstate 88 by the end of 2020. The deal is expected to bring about 1,000 temporary construction jobs and about 1,000 total employees by the time the distribution complex is completed.

Countywide municipalities, including city of DeKalb staff, for months prior to the early 2020 announcement appealed to Ferrara by offering property tax abatements, financial assistance in looping water main, grants from the Illinois Department of Transportation for roadway improvements and incentives from the DeKalb County Enterprise Zone.



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## • CANDY

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Thanks to an intergovernmental agreement approved by countywide governing bodies, Ferrara will receive 50% of their property taxes abated over the next 15 years. According to the incentive agreement, the company will have two years to reach 1,000 jobs, and if they drop below 80% of that, they'll have to give back a prorated share of the tax abatements. If they fall below 50%, the abatement will be suspended.

Gov. JB Pritzker was not present for the Wednesday event. However, he said in video-recorded comments for the ribbon-cutting that he was excited to see the company continue to expand in the state with the opening of its newest distribution center – “and during a pandemic, no less.”

“I’m so glad that we can celebrate the impact of investing in our state’s economic development, creating more opportunities for job growth in DeKalb,” Pritzker said in the video.

Sylvia Garcia, acting director for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, said the state is excited for Ferrara’s investment in Illinois. She said Ferrara has been no stranger to the state, with the company getting its start as a family owned venture more than 100 years ago in the Little Village community in Chicago.

“We’re really excited to see that long-term economic growth here in Illinois,” Garcia said. “I think, after the last year [with the COVID-19 pandemic], we’re really excited to go from emergency response to economic recovery and seeing that expansion happening.”

The ribbon cutting event was fol-



Mark Busch – mbusch@shawmedia.com

DeKalb Mayor Cohen Barnes speaks Wednesday during a ribbon cutting ceremony and tour of the newly opened Ferrara Distribution Center in DeKalb. Officials from DeKalb and the state of Illinois were on hand to join Ferrara in celebrating the opening of the new location.

lowed by a tour of the facilities, which are typically kept at a cool temperature of 60 degrees.

Vince Ippolito, senior distribution director for Ferrara, said that’s to ensure the candy – namely, anything chocolate – doesn’t melt at the distribution center.

“That drives the whole temperature of the building,” Ippolito said.

Founded in 1908, Ferrara is related to The Ferrero Group – a Luxembourg-based confectioner known for making Nutella – and was formed in 2012 after a merger between Illinois-based Ferrara Pan Candy Company and Minnesota-based Farley’s & Sathers Candy Company.

Ferrara acquired a portion of Nestlé’s U.S. candy line April 1, 2018,

which included taking over operations for lines such as Sweet Tarts, Nerds and Laffy Taffy, Ferrara executives previously said. On July 29, 2019, Ferrara completed a second acquisition, this time worth \$1.3 billion from Kellogg Company, and included brands such as Keebler, Mother’s and Murray Cookies and Famous Amos. The Keebler acquisition also included Little Brownie Bakers, supplier to the Girls Scouts of America.

State Rep. Tom Demmer, R-Dixon, said after the ribbon cutting one of the key components to make a project like this work is the infrastructure around the site, including surrounding roads, access to sewer and water and electrical hookups.

“Once you lay that groundwork, you also open up new spots for development,” Demmer said. “So when you’re able to get those pieces in place for Ferrara, we then have those pieces in place for Facebook – you have those pieces in place for other developments nearby.”

State Rep. Jeff Keicher, R-Sycamore, said he and Demmer have been focused on making sure the county has “an economic shot in the arm” so it can further “grow and prosper to the potential that it truly has.” He said he believes the ribbon cutting represents the first concrete step in moving that objective forward.

“I’m excited that we have so many world renowned organizations that are finally seeing the potential of DeKalb County,” Keicher said. “And we’re welcoming them into our community.”

On Oct. 28, 2019, the DeKalb City Council approved plans for a facility that would provide 1,000 jobs at the 343-acre site between Route 23 and Gurler Road, with an additional 466,000-square-foot food packaging center, which will be Phase 2 of the project.

Former DeKalb Mayor Jerry Smith said he was glad to be able to take part in the ribbon-cutting after the city of DeKalb brought the company into the area.

“This may be the end of construction of this campus, it certainly is not the end of economic development,” Smith said. “And the city of DeKalb and with the leadership of DeKalb Mayor Cohen Barnes and Bill Nicklas, our city manager, and the City Council that is, in fact, firmly entrenched in expanding economic development, I think bright days continue for us.”

• *Daily Chronicle editor Kelsey Rettke contributed to this report.*

## OBITUARIES

### DWAYNE J. SCHMALTZ

**Born:** October 11, 1926

**Died:** June 24, 2021



Dwayne J. Schmaltz, 94, of Waupun, WI passed away June 24, 2021 at home with family by his side.

Dwayne was born October 11, 1926 in La Crosse, WI, the son of William E. and Evelyn Ledman Schmaltz, the big brother to five sisters. He attended La Crosse schools and was a graduate of La Crosse Central High

School. On October 11th of his senior year he was drafted into the U.S. Army. By Christmas he was on his way to basic training at Camp

Joseph T. Robinson near Little Rock, AR. He served two years with the U. S. Army in the Pacific Theater during WWII. Dwayne attended UW La Crosse where he received his Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education. On August 21, 1948 he married Margaret Balmer in West Salem, WI. He started his professional career in Middleton, WI, teaching 7th Grade and later becoming principal of Sauk Trail Elementary School. Dwayne continued his education at UW Madison where he received his Master’s Degree in Administration. A career move took him to Pardeeville, WI where he was District Administrator for Pardeeville area schools from 1965-1969. In 1969 he became CESA 13/6 Administrator, moving to Waupun in 1975, and retiring in 1992. In 2006, Dwayne’s wife Margaret passed away. On November 11, 2007 he married Jane Fay in DeKalb, IL. Dwayne was very active in the Waupun community where he was a current member of Kiwanis, Gideons, American Legion Post #210 of Waupun, and the elder

board of Edgewood Community Church. Past community involvement included coordinator of the Salvation Army, member of the Waupun School Board, and a Board of Director for both the Christian Home and Waupun Memorial Hospital. In the various communities in which Dwayne lived, he was always active on various boards of the churches he attended. He was a founding, charter, and active member of Edgewood Community Church in Waupun. In April of 2017, escorted by his veteran grandson Dallas, he had the privilege of attending the Old Glory Honor Flight.

In addition to a busy work life and community involvement, he was a family man, a reader, a thinker, and a doer. He was an avid gardener, a builder, and a traveler. He didn’t care about the destination as much as he did the journey and the people along the way. His home was filled with singing.

Dwayne is survived by his wife, Jane; four children: Jon (Mary) Schmaltz of Waupun, Gretchen (Mark) Pluim of St. Charles, MN,

William (Sharon) Schmaltz of McDonough, GA, and Holly (Jerome) Narloch of Oconomowoc, WI; nine grandchildren; twelve great-grandchildren; Jane’s family of three sisters: Jackie Fay of GA, Marcia (Robert) Dempsey of IL, Linda West of WI; three brothers: Robert (Nina) of CO, J. Thomas (Anna) of CA, and James (Ginger) of IL; and many nieces and nephews.

Dwayne was preceded in death by his parents; his first wife, Margaret Schmaltz; a daughter, Teresa; a son-in-law, Douglas Werner; a sister, Lois Ann Wohlhoefer; and sister-in-law: Joanna Fay.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, July 24, 2021 at 11 a.m. at Edgewood Community Church in Waupun with Roger Knowlton officiating.

Werner-Harmsen Funeral Home of Waupun and staff are serving the family. Please visit our website at [www.wernerharmesenfuneralhome.com](http://www.wernerharmesenfuneralhome.com) for further information and send condolences.