

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Lean Transformation Gains Contract for Winslow Life Raft**

LAKE SUZY – Undergoing a Lean transformation under the direction of the Florida Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) has helped the Winslow Life Raft Co. to gain a contract to service all life vests and evacuation slides for a major U.S. airline.

“Without the effort this company made to undergo a Lean transformation, it is unlikely we would have been able to win this contract and hire another 24 people for our company,” said Allen Goldman, vice president of operations for Winslow.

“The project managers at the Florida MEP bent over backwards to help us,” Goldman said, “and I can’t say enough about the assistance we received while we went through the Lean process.”

“We are always pleased to receive testimonials such as that,” said Maria Alfano, director of operations for the Florida MEP. “My project managers take great pride in helping companies solve problems, increase production and efficiency and reduce waste.

“In this instance, Florida MEP project managers worked with Allen and his staff to help create a strategic plan for a company-wide Lean transformation. We also coordinated a Kaizen Blitz event and focused on workplace organization, plant layout, batch reduction and point-of-use storage.

“Everyone involved in this project considers it a great success,” Alfano said.

Goldman certainly agrees. “We looked into the Lean process just to see what it was,” he said. “But once our employees got involved, it just gained momentum and things fell right into place.”

What fell into place was transforming Winslow’s 31,000 square-foot building into two separate operations. “We had utilized all that space to manufacture our life rafts,” Goldman said. “However, by undergoing the Lean process, we were able to free up several thousand square feet to service the airline’s vests and slides.

“Without the help of the Florida MEP and the Lean process, we would not have been able to even consider going out to bid for that contract,” he added. “We just didn’t think we had the space.”

Winslow Life Raft Co. now has a workforce of about 100 and is best known for manufacturing marine and aviation life rafts. The company’s Super-Light and Ultra-Light life rafts have been rated #1 in every independent life raft evaluation in which they have been included. These life rafts are used by world-renowned sailing competitors and power boaters, many government agencies and Fortune 500 companies, and are standard equipment on many yachts and corporate aircraft.

“Servicing life vests and evacuation slides seemed a logical progression for us,” Goldman said, “since we are well versed in inflatables and our employees have extensive experience in dealing with those types of products.”

Goldman said the MEP Lean Workshop opened a new way of thinking for the people at Winslow. “It got us concentrating on a process flow analysis and value added manufacturing,” he said. “It also got many of our employees involved in the process and helped them feel more part of the company.”

While it took Winslow about one year to undergo a complete transformation, Goldman said it was completely worthwhile. “People usually freak when they hear there is going to be change,” he said. “That didn’t happen this time. The employees saw the process as a way to offer input to the company that results being better for everyone.

“Our employees now know they can say something now without feeling they are bucking the system,” Goldman added. “In fact, in the past two months, suggestions have come from the bottom up that have resulted in savings for the entire company.

“That thinking and action is a great bonus when it comes to the Lean process and what the Florida MEP offers,” he said. “The truth is, we could never have accomplished all this without the expertise and assistance of the Florida MEP.”

The Florida MEP is an affiliate of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The national MEP is a network of manufacturing extension centers that provide business and technical assistance to smaller manufacturers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Through MEP, manufacturers have access to more than 2000 manufacturing and business “coaches”

whose job is to help firms make changes that lead to greater productivity, increased profits, and enhanced global competitiveness. For more information on the Florida MEP program call 321-939-4000.