



FROM A TO ZINC: From left, Reade Advanced Materials Director of Marketing Elisabeth Reade Law and controller Amanda Reade Sturgeon hold a couple pieces of zinc while on a recent plant tour visiting zinc dust suppliers. COURTESY READE ADVANCED MATERIALS

Fifth generation keeps Reade sourcing chemicals for clients

BY NOEMI ARELLANO-SUMMER | Contributing Writer

READE ADVANCED MATERIALS has been a family business for five generations. It was established in 1773 and has been sourcing specialty chemical solids ever since.

Working with a range of customers from academic research and design teams to giants in the manufacturing world such as Tesla Inc., Reade Advanced Materials was originally based in Wolverhampton, England, before moving to East Providence.

President Emily Reade, who began working to professionalize the company's administrative side after leaving a bank job in 1989, feels that family has always been tied up in the business. She remembered that family dinners always included some element of business talk. Her two daughters, Elisabeth and Amanda, now make up the fifth generation of family to work at Reade Advanced Materials, and Reade remembers giving them small jobs to do around the office when they were young.

"Business and family have been coupled together in my life for as long as I can remember," Amanda Reade Sturgeon, a controller at Reade Advanced Materials, said in an email.

Elisabeth Reade Law, who works as the company's director of marketing, said, "I gained business tips before I was old enough to work. I've always had a love of manufacturing and minerals from my father, and it's great to be a part of that."

The company specifically sources dry specialty chemicals, as opposed to wet chemicals. It works with ferrous and nonferrous alloys and powders, with materials shaped into bars

and rods or crushed into powder.

Reade said she feels strongly about keeping the family legacy going. She recalled that her husband, Charles, has always said he plans to keep the business running for the next 100 years.

"I'm proud of the family legacy we've worked for and with, and it's time to look to the future," she said.

The pandemic and supply chain issues wreaked havoc on the company, though both Law and Reade felt the company landed on its feet.

"We've been fortunate, but we have had a hard time keeping up with demand for raw materials," Law said.

Some suppliers had difficulties, so Reade Advanced Materials made a point to stay flexible and was able to find new sources of requested materials. Law said that demand has been high for carbonites, materials for water filtration, alloys used in 3D printing, and magnetites.

One goal for Reade Advanced Materials now is to branch out further into sustainable, biobased products. Law mentioned pecan, almond and walnut shell products, which are currently used in water filtration projects.

The company is expanding its Rhode Island office space and plans to complete that work by next year. Reade Advanced Materials is also

updating its website, product line and marketing plan, aiming to shift its vision slightly and launch a more streamlined product list.

"I was surprised that we were prepared to face the pandemic," Reade said. "But we worked remotely and carried on with little disruption."

The company made the fortuitous decision to upgrade its information technology programs just before the pandemic hit, which proved immediately useful when every employee needed to work remotely. Starting to use Microsoft Teams, Reade said, was a "minor update in a normal world but amazing then."

Both Law and Reade feel that they have a more cohesive team since they began bonding through remote meetings.

Law began connecting with other women who work in their families' manufacturing businesses over the course of the last few years, specifically a woman who is with one of their suppliers.

"We've had great camaraderie, as we're both trying to keep businesses running," Law said.

Reade said that supplier has worked with Reade Advanced Materials for generations, adding that her husband had a good relationship with that woman's father.

"There's a bond among family businesses when generations work together," she said.

Both Law and Reade feel strongly about keeping the business and the family legacy going. Law said proudly that she and her sister are both "part of that ongoing story." ■



'There's **a bond among family businesses** when generations work together.'

EMILY READE, Reade Advanced Materials president