Raising the Bar

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Hearthside Food Solutions' 13 manufacturing plants and 5,000 employees manufacture snack bars for some of the world's largest food companies.

Hearthside Food Solutions is a young company with deep roots. Co-founded in 2009 by a group of investors led by Hearthside Chairman and CEO Rich Scalise, the company strives to be the largest and best contract manufacturer of snacks in the country. With its headquarters in Downers Grove, Ill., and several processing facilities in Grand Rapids, Mich., Hearthside Food Solutions boasts a network of 13 processing facilities across the country.

Scalise and his investors "saw an opportunity to create a company with greater access to capital," according to Brian McNamara, Vice President of Sales and Marketing. The company was founded in the wake of Peanut Corporation of America's massive recall, and Scalise and Hearthside's new owners saw an opportunity to create a contract manufacturer with a keen eye on food safety.

So in April 2009, Hearthside opened for business, buying four operating snack manufacturing facilities from the Roskam Baking Company in Grand Rapids, Mich. McNamara calls it a "shotgun start," with over 2,000 employees "right out of the gate." Roskam's primary focus was on granola and cereal bars, which still make up a large portion of Hearthside's product portfolio.

Thirteen months after Hearthside's initial acquisition, the company purchased two additional businesses, including a cereal and granola processing facility from Golden Temple in Eugene, Ore., and the Consolidated Biscuit Company in McComb,

Ohio, which specializes in cookies, crackers and baked bars. The acquisitions tripled the size of the company.

Hearthside Food Solutions has continued to grow and now operates 13 processing facilities across six U.S. states. The latest acquisition brought Hearthside back to Grand Rapids, where the company has added a fourth Roskam facility to its stable.

With the exception of the Golden Temple acquisition, all of the Hearthside Facilities are involved in the company's primary focus, which is co-manufacturing bar and snack products for what McNamara calls "premier food companies."

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