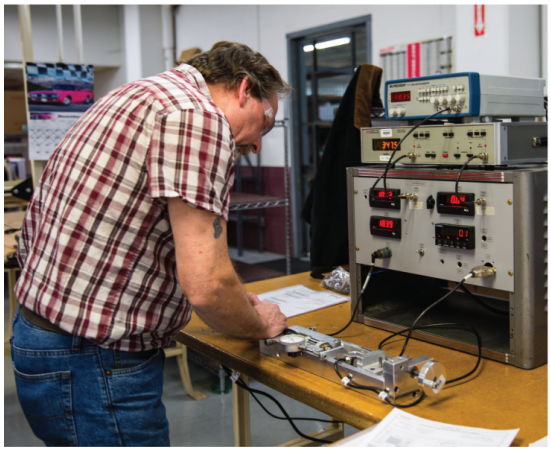
WICHITA AEROSPACE SUPPLIER CREDITS INTERNATIONAL AIRSHOWS FOR GLOBAL SUCCESS

By Emily Younger-Barnwell







"Wichita is a force to be reckoned with."

If you had asked for the perspective of Jim Barnes, Chief Operating Officer of Harlow Aerostructures LLC, regarding Wichita a mere 15 years ago, the term 'force' would likely have never graced the same sentence. Yet, the tides of perception shifted when Barnes made a bold decision to transform his distant dreams into reality.

It was around the year 2008 when Barnes said Harlow Aerostructures, a Wichita-based aerospace supplier, began searching for coastal and overseas opportunities. It was during that same time frame the Greater Wichita Partnership extended an invitation to Harlow Aerostructures to participate in the prestigious Farnborough International Airshow.

"We took a chance, rolled the dice," reflected Barnes. "I had no expectations. I was going there to support my state and my

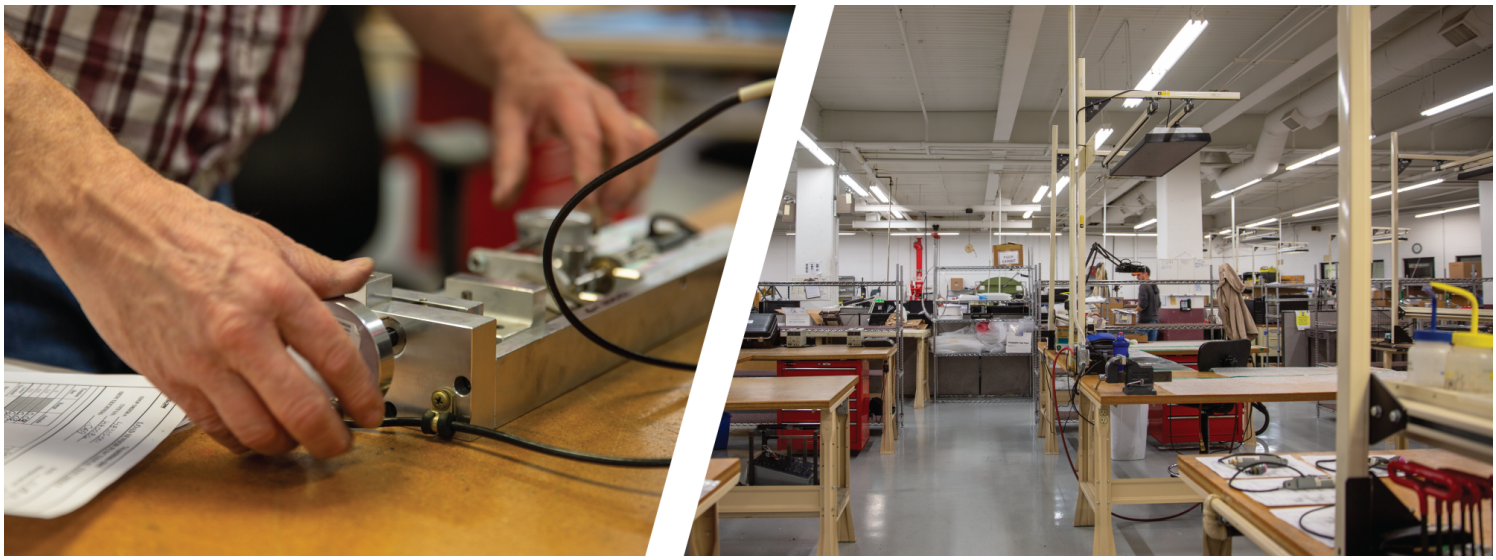
city because I had no confidence at all that any foreign country would at all be interested in what we had to offer in Wichita, Kansas and I was so wrong."





Fast forward several years later and Harlow Aerostructures is designing, manufacturing and delivering custom-made products to companies in France, Turkey and Brazil. The supplier's consistent attendance at the Farnborough International Airshow and the Paris Air Show offers a premier platform to introduce themselves to prospective clients while forging deeper connections with existing ones.

"They offer us the opportunity to see multiple customers from multiple countries in a matter of days," Barnes explained. "This all stemmed from us having the support of the Partnership, the State of Kansas and Senator Jerry Moran to go out and capture this work from other countries and bring it back to Wichita."



Today, Harlow Aerostructures employs 130 people in Wichita. Five to 10 of those employees were hired as a direct result of multi-million-dollar contracts with international companies.

“We are no longer tied to one particular customer. We are diversified over several platforms. This makes for a much more stable workforce,” Barnes emphasized.

As the leader of one of the more than 450 world-class suppliers within the Wichita aviation ecosystem, Barnes recognizes the region’s unparalleled aviation expertise and the robust workforce that defines it.

“We have the unique ability to design, test and manufacture all within 20 miles. This is just unheard of!” he said. “Wichita is no longer the aviation story of the past, but a testament to where we are today and where we will be in the future.”