



Hartville Hardware empire relies on Christian values

BUSINESS, 1D



The Daily Record

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2021 | THE-DAILY-RECORD.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

'Infinite demand'

Pandemic leads to massive growth, new jobs at Wooster Purell maker Gojo



Gojo employee Nicole Goolsby works on the assembly line at the company's plant in Wooster. COURTESY GOJO INDUSTRIES

Alexander Thompson Special to Wooster Daily Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

WOOSTER – On March 3, 2020, the leading figures of the region's industries gathered for the Wayne County Economic Development Council's annual breakfast.

The keynote speaker that morning was Carey Jaros, the new CEO of Akron-based Gojo Industries who had assumed the reins of the company known for manufacturing Purell hand sanitizer a little more than two months earlier.



Jaros

Tom Pukys, the executive director of the council, said a couple of attendees asked about the mysterious virus gripping China, but the conversation over breakfast centered on the basics of the company and learning about its new CEO.

"The discussion really wasn't about the pandemic," Pukys said.

However, Jaros told the crowd that her company's sales were up "significantly," and they had shifted into "high response mode" as they had for previous demand spikes. A team at Gojo was keeping a watchful eye on the global outbreaks and the handful of cases in the U.S.

"In past demand surges, this is a typical pattern," Jaros said at the time. "So, you see out-of-stocks and then supply catches up and everything kind of calms down."

As it turned out, COVID-19 is not typical. Everything did not calm down. Not for Gojo. And not for Jaros.

Gojo couldn't keep up with demand for hand sanitizer

Demand for the company's products went, quite literally, off the charts, igniting expansion in Stark County, Cleveland and Ashland. People were buying so much Purell so quickly Jaros dubbed the phenomenon "infinite demand." No matter what the company did to increase supply it could never catch up.

The pandemic has fundamentally changed the 75-year-old, family-owned company's trajectory

See GOJO, Page 2A



Though many people know Gojo for Purell, the company has historically focused on selling industrial soap and sanitizer to businesses and institutions. MIKE SCHENK/THE-DAILY-RECORD.COM

"Without Wooster we could not have done what we did in 2020, and we could not do what we're planning in 2021. It is an essential part of our ability to respond to the global pandemic."

Carey Jaros
CEO of Gojo Industries

Virus cases in nursing homes plummet

Max Filby
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nearly two months into COVID-19 vaccinations, cases appear to have dropped or at least leveled off in one of the hardest hit places: nursing homes.

Newly reported cases per week dropped from a high of 10,189 on Jan. 7 to 1,846 as of Wednesday, the most recent week for which data is available from the Ohio Department of Health. That marks an 82% drop in four weeks, data shows.

Time will tell whether the current drop is a trend or an anomaly. The last time cases were consistently below 1,000 a day was in late October, according to data provided by the Ohio Department of Health to The COVID Tracking Project, an online state-by-state virus database created by the publication The Atlantic.

Regardless, long-term care facilities are excited about what for now feels like a victory, said Ursel McElroy, director of the Ohio Department of Aging.

See PLUMMET, Page 6A

DeWine proposes Ohio vehicle fee increase

Jackie Borchardt
Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK

The cost of registering your car or truck every year in Ohio would go up under a proposal from Gov. Mike DeWine.

Ohioans would pay \$10 more for motor vehicle registration fees and \$2 more for the title fee under DeWine's two-year budget plan unveiled Monday.

The registration fee hike would bring in an estimated \$127 million each year for the Ohio Department of Public Safety, with most of it supporting the State Highway Patrol and some going to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

Annual registration fees start at \$31 for passenger vehicles before local fees, often \$20 or more, are applied. Current fees generate about \$466 million a year. The original fee was established to make up for declining revenues from the gas tax, spokeswoman Kristen Castle said, and hasn't been adjusted for inflation.

"Without this additional funding, dramatic and unprecedented reductions in staffing and services would be required overwhelmingly within the patrol," Castle said. "The community and our local, state, and federal partners consider these services critical and have come to rely on

See VEHICLE, Page 6A

USA TODAY

Navigating the evidence: Senate looking at issues coming in impeachment trial. 7A

Not just power tools

Building & Trades students learn life lessons. 3A

Weather

High 17° | Low 9°
Cold, frigid. Forecast, 2A

Volume 122 | No. 239
Home delivery pricing inside
Subscribe 888-424-8742
©2021 \$1.50



Gojo

Continued from Page 1A

from steady, measured expansion to breathtaking growth almost overnight. And Gojo's boom has proved providential at a time when many Northeast Ohio employers have shed jobs.

'Infinite demand' for Purell

Especially early on in the pandemic, consumers rushed to stores and cleared hand sanitizer off the shelves; domestic hand sanitizer sales to individuals shot up by about 600% last year, according to the Nielsen Corporation, a market research firm.

Many of the bottles they were grabbing were Gojo's Purell, which controlled a dominant 25% of the hand sanitizer market before the pandemic, according to Forbes.

Though widely shared internet memes suggested that Purell's executives were swimming in vats of gold Scrooge McDuck-style, that was far from what was really happening at 1 Gojo Plaza in downtown Akron.

In a series of meetings every morning, the company was desperately trying to determine where the scarce shipments of sanitizer were needed most, Jaros said on an NPR podcast in October.

However, rationing was just a short-term solution. Though Gojo could never hope to meet the "infinite demand" they needed to ramp up production as fast as possible.

The company went from two shifts five days a week to three shifts seven days a week at its plants in Cuyahoga Falls and Wooster in the early months of 2020. It still was not enough.

Company expanding to Ashland

Gojo opened two new facilities: Navarre in Stark County and Maple Heights in Cuyahoga County. In the fall it rented 700,000 square feet for storage in Cleveland's I-X Center and will soon open a new storage and distribution center in Ashland. It spent \$400 million on capital investments in 2020, 10 times more than an average year.

In total, Gojo grew from 2,500 employees before the pandemic to about 3,000 today.

"It's probably the hardest year of my professional life. It's also one of the hardest years of my personal life, because this has just been a really difficult time for all of us," she said in an interview with The Daily Record. "And at the same time, it's been one of the most rewarding years of my professional life."

The CEO said she feels now more than ever that she's doing vital work; Gojo's products are critical to keeping schools open and health care workers safe.

Presiding over what is by some measures the company's largest and fastest expansions ever, all of it in her native Northeast Ohio, has been gratifying.

"Have I worked a lot of hours?" she said. "Yes. All of our Gojo team members have probably worked three years in one year."

Jaros, who joined Gojo in 2014, does find time to unwind. She begins every day at 5 a.m. by practicing yoga and said her husband and children help keep things in perspective.

Workers needed at Gojo Industries

Increasing production is not as simple as flipping a switch. A lot of ingredients, packaging and shipping



Gojo Industries, founded in 1946, is headquartered in Akron. PROVIDED

are needed to get a bottle of Purell from raw materials onto your hands.

Shortages of hand sanitizer wreaked havoc on the supply chain causing shortages of everything that goes into it, Jaros explained.

"The company had to get creative. They either need to have suppliers who are flexible like them and can increase the supplies to them or they have to find alternative supplies," Kent State University Professor of Management Dean Porr said.

Gojo's suppliers could not ship enough bottles and pumps so the company improvised, putting hand sanitizer in everything from rubbing alcohol containers to dish soap bottles. The company also set up plastic blow molding and precision molding divisions to make its own bottles and pumps.

At the Wooster facility mix production still greatly exceeds bottle and dispenser production, but new equipment is coming online every month.

Once the company overcame most of its supply problems, a new problem cropped up: Not enough workers. Jaros said it is still the company's biggest challenge.

Recently, for example, there were 34 open positions at the Wooster plant.

"I think our ability to find and attract and retain talent continues to be our priority," Jaros said. "That's not to say it's an impossible challenge by any stretch."

Most Purell made in Wooster

Gojo arrived five years ago in the hulking former headquarters of Rubbermaid. It was a wise investment. Pushed to its limit by the pandemic, Jaros said, the Wooster facility proved critical.

"Without Wooster we could not have done what we did in 2020, and we could not do what we're planning in 2021," she said. "It is an essential part of our ability to respond to the global pandemic."

Gojo had intended to slowly expand across the 1.3 million-square-foot plant, but the pandemic accelerated those plans.

"We expected that we would take many, many years to build out that facility fully," Jaros said. "By the end of 2021 we will have built out much of the facility."

The Wooster plant had about 500 workers last March and has since added 270 additional employees, producing a majority of all the Purell sold in the U.S., according to a company spokeswoman.

New Gojo products on the horizon

Jaros believes that the pandemic has permanently changed hand hygiene habits.

"We also think that the effects of the pandemic even over the next couple of years will cause that (demand) level to be even higher than where it may ultimately settle," she added. "So we have no plans at the moment to do any kind of scaling back. We are still full steam ahead."

Gojo's lofty predictions are widely supported by market analyses that show demand slackening slightly as the pandemic recedes but remaining far beyond what it was in 2019 well into the future.

KSU's Porr agrees. "It appears as though this is not going to be a short-lived phenomenon that people are worried about sanitizer," he said.

Seat belts are now features of every car and earplugs are available at every construction site after the public realized their importance, Porr said. Much the same could happen with hand sanitizer.

Gojo is also using the pandemic to expand its presence in the consumer market.

Though many people know Gojo for Purell, the company has historically focused on selling industrial soap and sanitizer to businesses and institutions.

Now the company is planning to launch two new consumer focused products, a heavy-duty sanitizer and a two-in-one sanitizer and moisturizer.

"We're going all guns a-blazing after the consumer market," Jaros said.

Northeast Ohio economy booster

The CEO said that throughout the pandemic the company has been guided by its values of saving lives and making life better.

That is not just a corporate slogan, Jaros insists; the company puts its money where its mouth is.

Gojo has not raised prices on its vital products since the beginning of the pandemic, and any change in sticker price reflects the decision of retailers.

Additionally, every new warehouse, factory and job the company has created since the pandemic has been in Northeast Ohio.

The company, owned by the Kanfer Family of Akron, plans to keep it that way.

Those jobs have been desperately needed as pandemic lockdowns and uncertainty threw thousands out of work.

"Lots of service sector jobs started to really go on hold and be paused like in the retail and restaurant industry," Pukys from the economic development council said. "So (Gojo) really gave the people who had lost their jobs there the opportunity to work in a plant and make very good money."

Gojo was one of the main reasons Wayne County was able to ride out the pandemic economically, Pukys said.

"It's a tremendous economic engine," he said. "I mean it's hard to put a value on that."

HAIR DESIGNS

BY MARIAN CRAFT

Roller Sets • Razor Cuts
Perms • Color

Gift Certificates Available

New Year... Time For A New Look.

330-988-8094

Inside Cutters Hair Studio
611 Quinby Ave. • Wooster

Advertise

Your Message Here

Call
330-264-1125

Ask for the Advertising Department

Today	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
COLD			COLD	
Mostly cloudy and frigid	Mostly cloudy and chilly	Cloudy, a little snow; chilly	Cloudy and very cold	Icy mix in the afternoon
17 9	27 22	28 8	21 19	25 24

AccuWeather

Plan your week | Get the NEW app

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2021

Local Weather in Detail

Mostly cloudy and frigid today. Overcast and bitterly cold tonight; frostbite to exposed skin within 15 minutes. Mostly cloudy and chilly Monday. Tuesday: cloudy and chilly with occasional snow and flurries, accumulating up to an inch; storm total snowfall an inch or two.

Wooster Area Forecast:

TODAY
High/low 17/9
*RealFeel Temp. high/low 11/7
Chance of precip. 20%
Relative humidity (4 p.m.) 62%
Wind Chill (4 p.m.) 5
Wind (4 p.m.) WNW at 6-12 mph
Pressure (4 p.m.) 30.17"
Visibility (4 p.m.) 10 miles

*The patented AccuWeather.com RealFeel Temperature™ is an exclusive index of the effects of temperature, wind, humidity, sunshine intensity, cloudiness, precipitation, pressure and elevation on the human body.

Lake Forecast

Wind west-northwest at 8-16 knots today. Seas 2-4 feet. Visibility under 2 miles in a morning snow shower. Water temperature: 35.

Lake Levels

Readings through 7 a.m. Saturday (in feet above sea level)

Current Level	24 Hour Change
Charles Mill 994.23	up 0.03
Pleasant Hill 968.08	none
Lake Erie 572.62	up 0.34

National Forecast for Today

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

-10s -0s 0s 10s 20s 30s 40s 50s 60s 70s 80s 90s 100s 110s

Shows: T-storms Rain Flurries Snow Ice Cold Front Warm Front Stationary Front

A quick-hitting winter storm will produce a swath of accumulating snow across the mid-Atlantic and Northeast today. The coldest air mass so far this winter will settle into the northern Rockies, Plains and Midwest. Along with the cold, snow will fall as well.

Almanac

Temperatures

(Readings from Wooster through 4 p.m. Saturday)

High/Low	24/10
Average	17.0
Lowest wind chill	-4
Record high	56 in 1938
Record low	-11 in 1906
Normal high/low	36/19

Precipitation

24 hrs. ending 4 p.m. Sat. trace
Month to date 0.11"
(above/below normal -0.33)
Year to date 1.59"
(above/below normal -1.14)

Heating Degree Days

(Index of fuel consumption indicating how far the day's mean temperature was below 65 degrees.)

Saturday	48
Season to date	3492
Last season to date	3338
Normal season to date	3771

Today's Ultraviolet Index

The higher the AccuWeather UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

9 a.m.	0
Noon	1
3 p.m.	1

0-2, low; 3-5, moderate; 6-7, high; 8-10, very high; 11+ extreme

Sun & Moon

Sunrise today	7:31 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:53 p.m.
Moonrise today	4:18 a.m.
Moonset today	1:37 p.m.

Moon Phases

New

First

Full

Last

Feb 11 Feb 19 Feb 27 Mar 5