

# FORGED IN KILGORE: Local manufacturer crafts precision pieces for global aerospace.

*Wieland Lone Star Casting & Machine demonstrates East Texas city's economic diversity.*

KILGORE, TX, UNITED STATES,  
December 18, 2024 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- The harsh heat of the foundry and the din of noise in the machine shop at [Wieland Lone Star Casting & Machine](#) is a precisely-controlled, vertically-integrated, carefully-orchestrated production of essential aviation components.

And it's homegrown in Kilgore, Texas.

Launched in 2005 by James and Sherri Vanderslice, the local aerospace operation was acquired by Germany-based Wieland in 2023, expanding its workforce, equipment inventory, output, and role as a key supplier of centrifugally cast aluminum bronze bushings for clients around the globe.

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*Ryan Rector, Operations Manager*

“Lone Star’s reputation for quality parts and on-time delivery has allowed us to be a main player in the industry,” says Operations Manager Ryan Rector. “In the past year, we have nearly doubled our workforce, introduced a second shift, and integrated over half a million dollars in new equipment.”

At [Kilgore Economic Development Corporation](#), a key priority is continued diversification of Kilgore's economy, and an active aerospace manufacturer like Lone Star is a

feather in the community's cap.

“Kilgore is widely recognized in the area for its stronghold in the manufacturing space,



Time and again, Lone Star has found the right hires from the workforce in Kilgore and broader East Texas.

particularly in oil and gas," Rector says. For Lone Star, "I appreciate that we serve a very niche market that is bushings for the aerospace industry. There are not many companies, globally, that can do what we do. Even less companies in the United States and even less so in Texas.

"We're a great example of Kilgore's diversified economy."

About two decades back, Vanderslice founded his endeavor in a small building in his backyard, drawing up plans, researching equipment, and refining his vision alongside his wife before establishing the company on Maverick Drive in the North Kilgore Industrial Park.

"They strongly believed that of the many parts that make up a business, its people are the most important," Rector says. "What started with a handful of people grew to a full production shop that offers everything in-house, including heat treat and mechanical testing."

The company's 3102 Maverick Drive home was originally constructed for a manufacturer of cast iron kitchenware. Lone Star owns about 12 acres and currently utilizes about a third. There's approximately 25,000 square feet combined between three linked buildings.

"We are currently expanding under roof by adding equipment and people. Expansion on the rest of our property is a possibility - time will tell."



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The Kilgore EDC team helped facilitate Lone Star's original expansion and is poised to offer more assistance as the infusion of resources from Wieland spurs more growth – Kilgore has long since proven itself as an attractive location for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects, and the community checks a lot of boxes for companies in the manufacturing realm.

"Kilgore EDC has shown they want to help [existing industries](#) grow here," Rector agrees. "They want us to be productive and profitable, and we're going to continue to use available resources and assistance as we grow in the future."

With its vertical integration and precision focus, Lone Star is a minimum-waste operation. The Kilgore company's machinists constantly monitor the consistency and quality of the material. Cylindrical castings are machined to tailored sizes according to client drawings, shining with their own polished hue.

"Our machinists do a great job of meeting our customers' requirements," Rector says, and their output is substantial: "The addition of our second shift in the machine shop has resulted in more product being shipped."

Time and again, the company has found the right hires from the workforce in Kilgore and broader East Texas, a pool of talent that can be trained, upskilled for a broad spectrum of tasks. Employees' health and safety is paramount – in a complex work environment, the company aims to minimize accidents, injuries and health concerns, part of Wieland's global safety strategy: employees go home safe every day.

"Our employee retention rate is great, and it helps maintain the culture that makes this a special place to work," Rector says. Wieland's investment in Kilgore has a broad benefit, for the operation and for the area. "Lone Star is helping to offer quality jobs for Kilgore residents and other East Texans. We're all continuing to improve everyone's quality of life in the area."

The company is adding a second shift in the foundry to keep up with demand.

According to Rector, "We hope to cut our lead time in half."

People beyond the community recognize the Wieland name, especially in Europe. That name recognition on Foreign Direct Investment projects helps Kilgore EDC as the organization continues to hold up Kilgore as a location for myriad industries, whether in the U.S. or outside. It shows the economy is strong and attracting a level of companies that helps in overall efforts to attract new businesses.

"We're able to show this community can compete at a much higher level than many small communities can," Rector says. "It elevates Kilgore, and I think we'll continue to have a significant impact here as Lone Star continues to grow."



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