

In the Know: EmCyte transforms former bounce house into corporate headquarters

A former bounce house has been transformed into a manufacturing plant of medical products that help prolong lives.

Patrick Pennie, founder and owner of EmCyte Corporation, enlisted Seagate Development Corporation to convert what had once been a Fort Myers haven for children's birthday parties into offices, storage, a production facility and a teaching component that has been limited in usage because of COVID-19.

At 4331 Veronica Shoemaker Blvd., between Colonial Boulevard and Winkler Avenue, Pennie has been presiding over about 40 employees who make PurePRP, a system that extracts blood and stem cells and then concentrates it before doctors reinject it into patients, many of whom are looking to prolong having joint replacement surgeries or are recovering from torn cartilage and other sports-related injuries.



EmCyte makes about 200,000 of these devices per year, which sell for \$225-\$500, depending on the exact type. The company is constantly tweaking its devices to improve them. EmCyte has seven patents so far and has invented four generations of the product.

PRP stands for platelet rich plasma, a therapy Pennie has helped pioneer since founding the company in 2008.

Since then, EmCyte outgrew its Plantation Road facility, moving it to the current location in 2016, which Seagate has continued to further renovate and expand.

Seagate completed the most recent project this summer, a 30,000-square-foot headquarters, finishing what began as just 11,314 square feet of renovation.

"It was the bounce house, and it was a limousine business at the back of the building," Pennie said. "The building was really designed to lease out to individual businesses. I saw it as a property to acquire the entire space."



Pennie purchased the property for about \$1.7 million in September 2016, property records show. He then bought the adjacent lot in January for \$335,000.

"It takes a lot of planning," Matt Price, CEO of Seagate, said of retrofitting the existing buildings instead of starting from scratch. "It takes a lot of making sure that you can create the environment you're looking for at the end. It's very similar to what we do with our houses.

"We take an old house and retrofit it to bring it into a new house. You're looking for ways to make things work. We specialize in solving problems for people. There were a lot of moving parts here."

More: [In the Know: Joe V's Farm Market coming to Cape Coral](#)

The next phase will be building an 11,000-square-foot warehouse on the vacant land next door. The new warehouse will connect to the existing headquarters.

"I can compete with Chinese manufacturers with the devices we make here," Pennie said. "It's all made here, in Fort Myers.

"We have close to 100 distributors all across the country. And our products are in Europe, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, other regions in Asia."



The location is ideal for EmCyte, with relatively easy access to Interstate 75. Pennie paid between \$5 and \$7 million for construction, a figure that would have perhaps tripled had he built it from scratch.

"I think because of the industrial part of it, the manufacturing part of it, it's the perfect location," Pennie said. "We have trucks

coming out of there every single day. There's really nothing around us, and it allows us to do the things we need to do."

More:[In the Know: Bonita Breeze Auto Condos can be purchased to store cars and RVs](#)

Pennie, 53, was born in Trinidad and Tobago and raised in New York City. He moved to Fort Myers in 1993 as a perfusionist, meaning he would assist heart surgeons by keeping their patient's blood flowing and other bodily functions moving during the surgeries. Pennie later shifted his focus to the PRP therapy.

"We are still innovating," Pennie said. "We can continue to change with the market."

NeoGenomics under way

The 150,000-square-foot laboratory and corporate headquarters for NeoGenomics, which specializes in cancer diagnostics, is well under way and visible just west of I-75 and north of Alico Road.

More:[NeoGenomics to build \\$50 million world headquarters west of I-75 near Alico Road](#)

Seagate Development is doing that project, too.

"As of right now, we're on schedule and on budget," Price of Seagate said. "The design is finished. We are on the third tier of the office building. We're rolling along. We've been lucky with the weather this year, knock on wood."

That project should be finished within about a year.

Scotlynn headquarters under way

And yet another Seagate project, that of building Scotlynn's corporate headquarters, has broken ground adjacent to the NeoGenomics project.

Scotlynn will have an address of 9597 Gulf Research Lane.

More:[In the Know: Scotlynn Group building headquarters off Alico Road, I-75](#)

By November, the walls will start going up, as the concrete slabs have been poured.

The panels will be 30 to 61 feet high and about 7 to 19 inches thick. By the end of this year, Seagate is slated to top off the third deck of the Scotlynn headquarters as well as begin interior construction and an industrial-feel design of the first, second and third floors.

Scotlynn's facility will be 60,000 square feet and will be completed in 2021. The company specializes in transporting perishable foods like produce. Amenities will include a gym, basketball court, cafeteria, walking track, and an indoor/outdoor recreational space with an eating area.

The Hub reopens

The Hub at SWFL Inc., is reopening today. The office space will be available between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays at 25071 Chamber of Commerce Drive, Bonita Springs.

"All we ask is that you bring your mask, use the provided hand sanitizer before picking a seat, and be respectful of everyone's personal space," a news release said.

The community workspace had been shut down because of COVID-19 since March 17.

Lee County PPE distribution

The Lee Board of County Commissioners approved local business leaders to receive up to 200 facemasks and a case of hand sanitizer.

The distribution sites will operate 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weather permitting and while supplies last at each site:

- Tuesday through Thursday, Sept. 15 to 17 at Veterans Park, 55 Homestead Road South in Lehigh Acres
- Sept. 22 to 24 at North Fort Myers Recreation Center, 2000 North Recreation Park Way
- Sept. 28 to Sept. 30 at Estero Recreation Center, 9200 Corkscrew Palms Blvd.

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