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## Sign of the times: Jones on move nationwide

Local company expands plant, doubles number of workers

By Sarah Butrymowicz

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LAWRENCE — John Mortensen may have purchased Jones Sign Nationwide on April Fool's Day in 1982, but the growth the company has seen since then is no joke.

Jones Sign Nationwide was founded in 1910 by Andrew Jones. He turned the company over to his son, K.C. Jones, in 1957. When K.C. Jones retired, he sold the company to Mortensen.

"It was kind of a smaller company at the time," Mortensen said.

The company moved to a new location, 1711 Scheuring Road, Lawrence, about 30 months ago from its former facility at the Packerland Industrial Park.

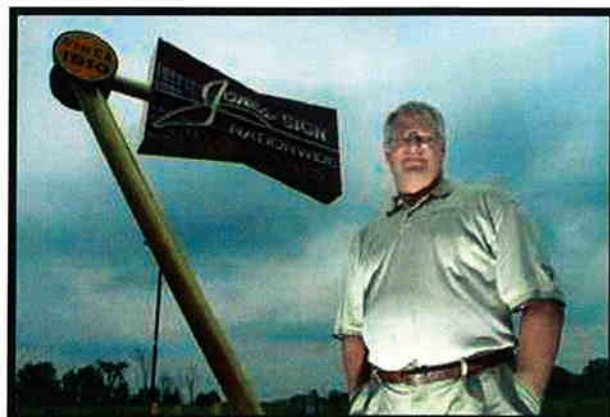
"We needed the space," Mortensen said. "That was a 40,000-square-foot building and this is 110,000 square feet."

The company has taken advantage of increased space and additional growth to double the number of its employees from 70 to 140.

Mortensen has no plans of stopping there. "We're in a growth mode right now," he said. "We're planning on doubling again in the next three years."

Jones Sign makes signs for small, independently owned businesses, chain stores, large venues such as stadiums, arenas, major malls and government buildings. "We do every kind of sign there is," Mortensen said.

For small-scale projects, Jones Sign stays in the Midwest, but for large projects, the company works all over the country. Right now, the company is working on the Sprint Center in Kansas City, and an addition to the Miami Dolphins' stadium, and it plans on doing the signs for the Indianapolis Colts' new stadium, Mortensen said.



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Jones Sign Nationwide president John Mortensen stands outside his company in the town of Lawrence. Mortensen designed the sign.  
Photo by Corey Wilson/Press-Gazette

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### Multimedia



[Jones Sign International location](#)

### Jones Sign Nationwide

- Address: 1711 Scheuring Road, Lawrence
- Phone: (920) 983-6700
- Fax: (920) 983-9145
- Web site: [www.jonessign.com](http://www.jonessign.com)
- Employees: 140
- Products/services: Designs, creates and installs signs for small, independently owned businesses to major venues throughout the nation.



"We go all over the country, even outside the country, for big projects," he said. In addition to work they have done in Canada, Mexico, and even the Netherlands, Jones Sign is currently working on a project in the Cayman Islands.

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Sakhonh Vongsouvanh installs LED lights and transformers inside the lettering of a Linens & Things company sign at Jones Sign in the town of Lawrence. Photo by Corey Wilson/Press-Gazette

For these big projects, the work that Jones Sign takes on is all-encompassing. "When we do something for a venue, we'll do everything from the major signs out on the highway, getting people to the place, down to the restroom signs and everything in between," Mortensen said.

To create this multitude of signs and still have them fit with the concept of the building, the company works with the architects and developers. It will use plans for a venue to "make a number of designs for a sign system," Mortensen said.

The developer then selects final designs from the concept drawings.

In a few steps, these concept drawings move to 100 percent drawings "where every sign is shown in detail," he said.

Prices are then agreed upon and the fabrication and installation process can begin. From design to installation, the process usually takes about nine months to a year.

Mortensen has been in the sign business since 1975. He recently showcased his expertise by creating a sign for his own company. "We've got designers, and I didn't let them do it," he said. "I wanted to do that one."

Located across the street from the facility, which is just off U.S. 41, the 500-square-foot, 50-foot-tall sign stands out. "It's different," Mortensen said. "It's a perforated background, so it's a see-through sign."

The materials also set the new sign apart. For instance, it has about a quarter of a mile of gold neon on it as well as gold anodized wrap around the frame. Because of this, it looks different at night and during the day.

In total, the sign was expensive, according to Mortensen. "Our internal costs were over \$100,000," he said.

Mortensen wanted to put the sign up right after the company's move. They had an obstacle in their way, however.

"The town of Lawrence would not allow a sign that big. So we had to go through this process of getting the sign ordinance for the town of Lawrence all rewritten," Mortensen said. "That took two years."

During those two years, Mortensen had plenty of time to design the sign. "I kept thinking about it for all that time," he said. "It's probably the 20th version of it that we ended up with."