

## Arrow Powerboats finds qualified workers, better land prices in move to Fort Pierce

By Paul Ivica

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FORT PIERCE — When Arrow Powerboats relocated to St. Lucie County, co-owner John Cunningham was pleased to find experienced boat builders in the area looking for work.

"Most of the workers coming in were actually really talented," Cunningham said. "Most were experienced and had worked for another boat company."

Since locating in Fort Pierce in late February, Arrow has added 26 more employees to bring its total to 35.

That's already more than the 20 new jobs Arrow promised to add to qualify for a Job Growth Investment Grant from the county.

County Administrator Faye Outlaw issued a letter of intent March 22 in support of the grant for Arrow of \$1,500 for each of 20 new jobs still filled after two years.

Arrow, formed in March 2010 as a subsidiary of New Jersey-based Frisini Motorsports, acquired the brands and boat molds of Spectre at that time and added the Sonic USA line in October.

Arrow has nine models of Sonics ([www.sonicusaboats.com](http://www.sonicusaboats.com)), four models of Spectre catamarans ([www.spectrecat.com](http://www.spectrecat.com)) and is adding a line of Frisini boats, the first of which is already in production, Cunningham said.

In February, Arrow purchased a five-acre property on Angle Road with a 30,000-square-foot building with offices and a manufacturing floor that has space to build five boats at a time.

Cunningham said he looked for a site in the Tampa area, where Spectre was located, as well as St. Lucie County.

"Fort Pierce was the better choice because it was better value for the money in real estate," he said. Five Spectre employees moved from the Tampa area, where Spectre had been operating, and four Sonic employees were kept on.

Sonic was founded in 1976 in Hollywood, Fla., but after moving to Stuart for several

years, it had already relocated to Fort Pierce when Arrow acquired it, Cunningham said.

Cunningham said Arrow has had discussions with Workforce Solutions regarding grants for new-hire training and skills-upgrade training for existing full-time employees.

Cunningham said he has 14 boats currently on order. He said he expects Arrow will build 45 boats this year.

The boats Arrow builds range in price from \$70,000 for the 26-foot Sonic Center Console model to \$645,000 for a new 43-foot Spectre model that takes two months to build and is capable of 180 mph.

Cunningham, Arrow's chief operating officer as well as director of sales and marketing, said 80 percent of the boats Arrow builds are pre-sold. The others are built to stock its dealers in Florida, Missouri, Arizona, Oregon, Germany and Italy.

Arrow's product line includes fishing boats, V-bottoms, high-speed V-bottoms and high-speed catamarans. The company is building a prototype for a family bowrider.

"What we're actually trying to create is a broad range in the market," Cunningham said. "That's what is hurting most boat builders that are a niche-builder."

He said he believes Arrow can profit with the Spectre and Sonic lines, which had been struggling under previous ownership, "because we took a lot of the fat out of the pricing."

Even though boat sales were declining nationwide during the recession, "no one was lowering their prices," Cunningham said.



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