



## FEATURE STORY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### South Dakota's Power Couple gets Firearm Cluster Started

*Editor's Note: This is the second in a 2-part series on South Dakota's firearm company cluster.*

So how did this firearm cluster, now encompassing 10 companies ranging from rifles to pistol barrels to custom machining, get started in Sturgis, South Dakota?

Ask that question to just about anyone in the Sturgis area and you'll probably get the same answer: Don and Norma Allen. And this power couple is recognized by more than just those in Sturgis—the Allens' strong ties throughout the firearm industry have made them ambassadors for South Dakota's business climate for the last 30 years.

In 1985, Don and Norma relocated to Sturgis, bringing with them vision, enthusiasm and a firearm business named Dakota Arms. They shared a love for the Black Hills and appreciated the values and work ethic of South Dakota's strong workforce.

Together, Don and Norma helped develop Sturgis' presence at the annual SHOT Show in Las Vegas and are credited for recruiting several businesses to the Sturgis Industrial Park, including Peter Pi's COR®BON and Irving Stone's Bar-Sto Precision.

Beyond that, the Allens were invested in their staff, training and educating a number of them on various machines and techniques. In fact, some of Don and Norma's original staff are still employed at Dakota Arms, now owned by Remington. And some, like Allan and Dale Mack, even took what they learned from the Allens and opened their own business, Horizon Machine, right down the street in the Sturgis Industrial Park.

Don passed away a few years ago, but Norma still lives in Sturgis and frequently volunteers for various organizations.

"Honestly it was just a matter of getting prospective companies here once to show them the beauty of the Black Hills and then they're hooked," Norma said. "It really sells itself—but the population of similar people helps, too."



Pat Kurtenbach, president, Sturgis Economic Development Corporation



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Sturgis Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) president, Pat Kurtenbach, agrees.

“The Sturgis firearm industry continues to progress. It’s ambassadors like Don and Norma who have been some of our best salespeople,” Kurtenbach said. “When we talk to people in the firearm industry, we mention the Allens names and people instantly know who we’re talking about. Don and Norma really are the backbone of the Sturgis firearm cluster and SEDC is working hard to carry on that legacy.”

The entire Black Hills region has seen a boom in the firearm industry in recent years and its momentum isn’t slowing down. Lehigh Defense, a bullet and ammunition manufacturing company based in Pennsylvania recently announced it is expanding its operations to Rapid City.

For more information on the firearm industry in Sturgis and in South Dakota, visit <http://sdreadytowork.com/Key-Industries/SHOT.aspx>.

The South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development will be exhibiting at the 2016 SHOT Show once again. Look for our booth, #2950. Connect with us on social media—@SDGOED via Twitter and South Dakota Governor’s Office of Economic Development on Facebook.