

# Cooking up a recipe for success

Starting with nothing more than a concept, Tom Leaverton is producing a product that could have an unlimited number of applications. His is still a small company but he's counting on a "Big Cat" to help him grow.

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Chemist Tom Leaverton was much like a chef looking for the perfect recipe when he was working on his formula for polyurea eight years ago.

Polyurea, a plastic-like coating sprayed on surfaces for waterproofing, was first developed by Texaco 20 years ago, but the original formula was rigid.

"I wanted to find something that was more flexible and elongated (stretchable)," Leaverton said.

It took three years of research and development to perfect his Poly Pro polyurea in the lab before the company he founded in Monroe – Pro Set – was finally ready to market his product primarily as a waterproofing agent for roofs.

Now, five years later, Pro Set has applied Poly Pro polyurea to such high profile projects as the roof of a building in the Pentagon complex and the roof of an International Paper plant in Pensacola, Fla. It has more than twice the elongation as the original product.

He's even been in contact with United Nations officials about the possibility of using his product to waterproof temporary buildings that would house refugees in Afghanistan.

"It's pretty exciting to finally get a chance to begin showcasing the product," Leaverton said.

The company has grown slowly. Leaverton still mixes Poly Pro polyurea at a small, dilapidated warehouse off of Frontage Road past Sam's Warehouse.

He has partnered with longtime friend Ernie Ladd, an NFL and pro wrestling legend, to help market the company.

"I learned very early that when



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Prior to the Sept. 11 attacks, the company was awarded a contract to apply its polyurea product to the roof of the Pentagon.

you have a brand new product with no track record, it's hard to make people believe it's going to work," Leaverton said. "That's where Ernie came in. He has contacts all over the country."

Ladd had worked with Leaverton

on an earlier project, so the former Grambling State University football player knew what to expect from his partner.

"There are two things about Tom that inspire confidence," Ladd said. "He's won't be outworked and he is

## Company looks to cover the world with its product

absolutely relentless."

As Leaverton kept working with his product, he became convinced that it would take off if it was marketed properly.

"After I finalized the formula even I was surprised at how many things it works on," he said.

Even though the polyurea is used mostly to coat roofs, it can also be used to protect from contaminated areas or waterproof walls and decks.

He's demonstrated the product by spraying everything from rocks to tiles. "Six companies make this product, and we're the only ones, as far as I know, who also apply it – or spray it," Leaverton said. "That's our advantage."

Yet even though he created and makes the product in Monroe, most of his jobs have been outside Ouachita Parish.

"I want to do jobs around here, but I just haven't been able to

break through yet," he said.

Ladd believe their company, which few in Ouachita Parish are familiar with, will one day be a household word in its hometown.

"People in Monroe really don't know yet how good this product is, but they will," Ladd said.

"This has great potential to be a lucrative company that's growth will benefit the community."

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Tom Leaverton