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American Orthodontics Named 2009 Wisconsin Manufacturer of the Year

Sheboygan, Wisconsin – American Orthodontics was named the grand award winner at the 22nd annual Wisconsin Manufacturer of the Year Awards during a ceremony held at the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee on February 25, 2010. The company earned the top award for firms with 300 to 750 employees. The awards recognize Wisconsin companies that demonstrate a commitment to business excellence and make Wisconsin a better place to live, work and play, according to a news release.

“The success of each of these companies proves that manufacturing is alive and well in Wisconsin. These people are the backbone of the Wisconsin economy, and when manufacturing is strong, other industries will have sturdy paths as well,” said Timothy Christen, chief executive officer of Baker Tilly, which co-sponsors the awards program. American Orthodontics has come a long way since its founding in Sheboygan in 1968, award officials noted. Today, it sells more in one day that it did in its entire first year in business. “Wisconsin should be very proud of the hard working, innovative companies that call this state home,” said Chuck Yanke, who is president of Vulcan Lead Products Company in Milwaukee, and one of 15 judges who helped select the winners.

American Orthodontics, which is the largest privately held orthodontic manufacturer in the world, is recognized for its products’ innovative designs and precise tolerances, and the company benefits from an employee turnover rate that ranges between 3% and 4%. According to Michael Bogenschuetz, the president of American Orthodontics, more than 95 % of the company’s products are manufactured in Sheboygan, Wisconsin using highly automated production equipment and a skilled workforce. With seven wholly owned subsidiaries, a direct sales force in North America and a global team of distributors, American Orthodontics provides a wide range of products for the orthodontic specialty.

American Orthodontics was among the 40 Wisconsin businesses nominated for the awards. The winners were selected by an independent panel of judges, with representatives from business, education, government and the media. Investment banker John Emory Jr., who helped judge the awards, said the

company's performance in 2009 was all the more impressive because it came during an economic and industry-wide downturn. "It bears to reason that in a recession, people are going to spend less on braces to straighten their teeth than when times are better," said Emory, who is president and chief executive officer of Emory & Co. in Milwaukee. "You'd expect the company to get crushed in 2009. Instead, they're doing better." The company is proud of its achievements and is quick to mention that they have never laid off a single employee and have never seen their sales drop in any year since Chief Executive Dan Merkel founded American Orthodontics in 1968. The company announced that it had recently hired 25 new employees in anticipation of launching a new product that will boost sales even higher. For more information contact Jeffrey D. Smith, Director of Marketing.

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