

MEMBER SERVES AS BUSINESSMAN,  
AUTHOR, LEADER, ARTIST

Ron Parks, Millard Manufacturing, with "Broken Zipper," a piece he designed.

equipment for large volume industrial food processing plants. Millard Manufacturing's sister company, Millard Metal Services, is a service center that stocks a large inventory of stainless steel with a variety of specialty metal items that are available for industry. The company cooperatively designs and fabricates various types of equipment and machinery built to specification for industries throughout the United States. Each machine is custom built. "Everything is unique and different," Parks said. "We are not just a widget company." To stay at the top of his industry, Parks has purchased the most innovative equipment through the years and has implemented forward thinking practices like integrating storage and processing. The company has also been highly involved in the community by sharing experiences on short-lot manufacturing and material handling with industrial arts students at both the high school and college levels and hosting other businesses in conjunction with the recruitment efforts of the Chamber.

After decades in the business world, Parks decided to share the expertise that, in 1990, earned him the honor of being the Chamber's first Small Business Person of the Year. With his wife, Judy, he wrote *Manager's Mentor: A Guide for Small Business*. The book, which is available in bookstores and at [www.managersmentor.com](http://www.managersmentor.com) this month, is a handbook for entrepreneurs and managers. In it, Parks details the issues to consider in running a business: developing a community of employees; rooting out inefficiencies; developing the ability to anticipate and prevent problems; fine-tuning the strategic planning process; creating a business philosophy for good long-term decisions. The book is intended to help a large variety of individuals, including those who have been promoted to a management position without adequate training, those who are thinking about starting a business and those who are already in business but are looking for a path to future success. (For more information about the book, see page 6.)

Millard Manufacturing has been a Chamber member since 1985. Through the years, Parks has found that Chamber membership and affiliation with other organizations is critical to the success of business. "We are often bombarded with regulations. We need groups to help give jobs to people and protect business without regulations," he said. In addition to legislative assistance, he said, the Chamber provides opportunities essential to a growing business. "The Chamber is an excellent networking place to be," he said. "In addition, they are always working behind the scenes to help business." Parks also belongs to the National Association of Manufacturers and serves on the board of directors of the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He is the chairman of the Nebraska Community Foundation, which helps rural communities develop charitable giving programs to improve and sustain themselves. He also dedicates time and effort to studying and preserving the state's history, while encouraging a technologically advanced future.

Parks has remained busy running Millard Manufacturing and promoting *Manager's Mentor*, which he and Judy published themselves. He is also developing supplemental tools to accompany the book. However, he has still found time to pursue an avocation in art, using his experience in construction fabrication to create large sculptures of stone and metal. *PF*