



March 19, 2026

CONTACT: Kristi Bailey, Director of Communications & Marketing
St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce
816-364-4108 or bailey@saintjoseph.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VAN-AM EXPANDS IN AEROSPACE FIELD AND IN ST. JOSEPH

(St. Joseph, MO) -- Van-Am, a leading metal fabricator in St. Joseph, Mo., is expanding further into the aerospace industry and growing in St. Joseph. The expansion will initiate a new product line that expands the company's capability and capacity offerings in the defense and aerospace industries. In particular, the expansion will support a new defense contract award associated with the MK-41 weapon system, a cutting-edge technology component currently used by the U.S. Navy.

The company will invest an approximate \$1.5 million in new manufacturing-related machinery and equipment and will spend another \$150,000 on upgrades to its St. Joseph facilities necessary to be a supplier in the defense and aerospace industries. The growth includes the addition of at least 17 new full-time positions within the next two years, with an average starting wage of at least \$62,288.

"We're thrilled to see Van-Am expand its defense and aerospace operations here," said Natalie Hawn, President and CEO of the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce. "It's a strong vote of confidence in our workforce, our infrastructure, and the future of our region."

St. Joseph was competing with another city for this expansion.

"We're proud to see Van-Am expand its operations in St. Joseph," said Mayor John Josendale. "Investments like this create high-quality jobs, strengthen our local economy, and demonstrate the confidence businesses have in our community."

The St. Joseph Economic Development Partnership and Chamber of Commerce coordinated efforts between the company and local and state agencies to make this expansion a reality in St. Joseph. The project includes a forgivable loan from the Buchanan County Economic Development Loan Fund.

"The purpose of the Buchanan County Economic Development Loan Fund is for projects just like this," said Scott Nelson, Buchanan County Presiding Commissioner. "Simply put, the County likes to help established businesses in manufacturing/production in our area expand their scope of operations and create new jobs for our community. We call this taking care of our own. This is an efficient use of our limited funding."

The Missouri Department of Economic Development also provided the company assistance through its Missouri Works Program.

"Van-Am has been an important part of Missouri's manufacturing landscape for more than four decades, and we're excited to see the company investing in its future," said Michelle Hataway, Director of the Department of Economic Development. "This \$1.5 million capital investment in Buchanan County and the creation of 17 new high-paying jobs reflect the strength of Missouri's advanced manufacturing sector. Van-Am has demonstrated a strong commitment to our state and we're proud to support the company's continued growth and success."

Governor Mike Kehoe sees the expansion as a signal of Missouri's manufacturing strength.

"Missouri's manufacturing sector continues to play a vital role in strengthening our nation's defense and our state's economy," said Governor Mike Kehoe. "The expansion of Van-Am and its new partnership with the U.S. Navy highlight the advanced capabilities of

Missouri companies and the highly skilled workforce that powers them. We're proud to see Van-Am continuing to grow, create jobs, and contribute to the critical products that help keep our nation safe."

Under the leadership of CEO Keith Mills, a long-time advocate of the project, Van-Am continues to expand its capabilities and production capacity to meet increasing industry demand. The company's technical expertise and commitment to quality position it for continued partnership opportunities across defense, aerospace, and other industrial sectors.

"This new technology will expand our capabilities and increase our capacity," said Keith Mills, CEO of Van-Am. "This component, used by the U.S. Navy, is equipment we stand by, and it will provide more opportunities for collaboration and partnerships."

About Van-Am:

Founded in 1981, Van-Am has built its reputation on strong customer partnerships and a commitment to delivering high-quality manufacturing solutions. From the beginning, the company has supported customers with expertise in tooling, stamping, machining, and engineering while providing the precision and reliability required in today's demanding industries.

Today, Van-Am employs more than 100 team members and continues to grow as a vertically integrated manufacturer. In 2022, the company expanded its operations with the addition of a second facility dedicated to paint and additional welding capabilities. In 2024, Van-Am further strengthened its presence in the defense sector through the acquisition of a facility in Waverly, Iowa.

As an ITAR-registered manufacturer, Van-Am is proud to support customers in industries where quality, security, and precision are critical, including programs connected to the United States Department of Defense.

About the Chamber and St. Joseph Economic Development Partnership:

The St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce has been the catalyst for economic growth and development in Northwest Missouri since its inception in the mid-1800s. The Chamber serves as the unified voice of business that advocates, promotes and inspires the St. Joseph area. The Chamber's mission, supported by more than 1,200 members, is to create an environment that allows business to thrive and the community to prosper. The Economic Development Partnership is a public/private partnership responsible for recruiting new businesses to the community and assisting existing businesses in an effort to retain jobs and provide expansion opportunities.

###