

# Marinette Marine showcases 'leaner' ship production



Nathan Phelps, Press-Gazette Media 5:05 p.m. CST February 9, 2015



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MARINETTE — Officials working on a U.S. Navy shipbuilding program in Marinette say they continue to refine production processes aimed at delivering ships on time and on budget.

Marinette Marine Corp. has undergone a massive, multimillion-dollar expansion in the past few years, including work processes implemented to make serial production of the Littoral Combat Ship more efficient.

The yard held a keel-laying ceremony for the future USS Wichita Monday.

"This is the first ship with serial production in place," said Jan Allman, Marinette Marine Corporation president and CEO. "We're leaner and more efficient in building this hull than any of our past hulls."

The ceremonial event marks the start of new ship construction. The future USS Wichita is one of six Littoral Combat Ships under construction in Marinette.



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"Every ship we finish here, the schedule we're working to and the budgets we have ... is a step forward proving what our commitment is to the program," said Joe North, Lockheed Martin's vice president of Littoral Ships and Systems. "(Wichita) is the one that showed what we can do and what we're capable of in the future."

Work is wrapping up on the future USS Milwaukee, and construction is expected to get underway on two more ships this year.

The Littoral Combat Ship program has followed a convoluted path. Two versions of the ship are being built, one by Lockheed Martin in Marinette, and another design by Austal USA in Mobile, Ala.

The Department of Defense has plans to beef up the basic design of the LCS in later versions of the ship, offering among other things, increased firepower and survivability. The Navy also plans to call at least some of the ships "frigates" rather than Littoral Combat Ships.

Lockheed Martin said it will bid to build the revamped version of the ship at Marinette Marine, a yard owned by Italian shipbuilder Fincantieri.

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The Littoral Combat Ship is designed to operate in shallower waters performing a number of missions including anti-submarine operations and mine detection. The average cost for the first 10 ships built by Lockheed Martin is \$360 million per ship.

The Navy has said it could buy more than 50 of the ships.

Allman said the yard continues to look for improvements.

"There's still a lot of opportunity and we're going to continue to get better," she said. "We're going to give (the Navy) the best quality product at the lowest cost."

Author Kate Staples Lehrer served as Wichita's sponsor at Monday's event. The vessel will carry a metal plaque bearing her initials.

Lehrer is married to journalist, and Wichita native, Jim Lehrer.

— *nphelps@pressgazette.com* and follow him on Twitter @nathanphelpsPG or on Facebook at Nathan Phelps Press-Gazette