

Freeform eyeglass-lens manufacturer to open in DeWitt

By Kristina Martino

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DeWITT — On March 3, three brothers will open U.S. Optical LLC, an eyeglass lens-prescription manufacturer, specializing in freeform lenses.

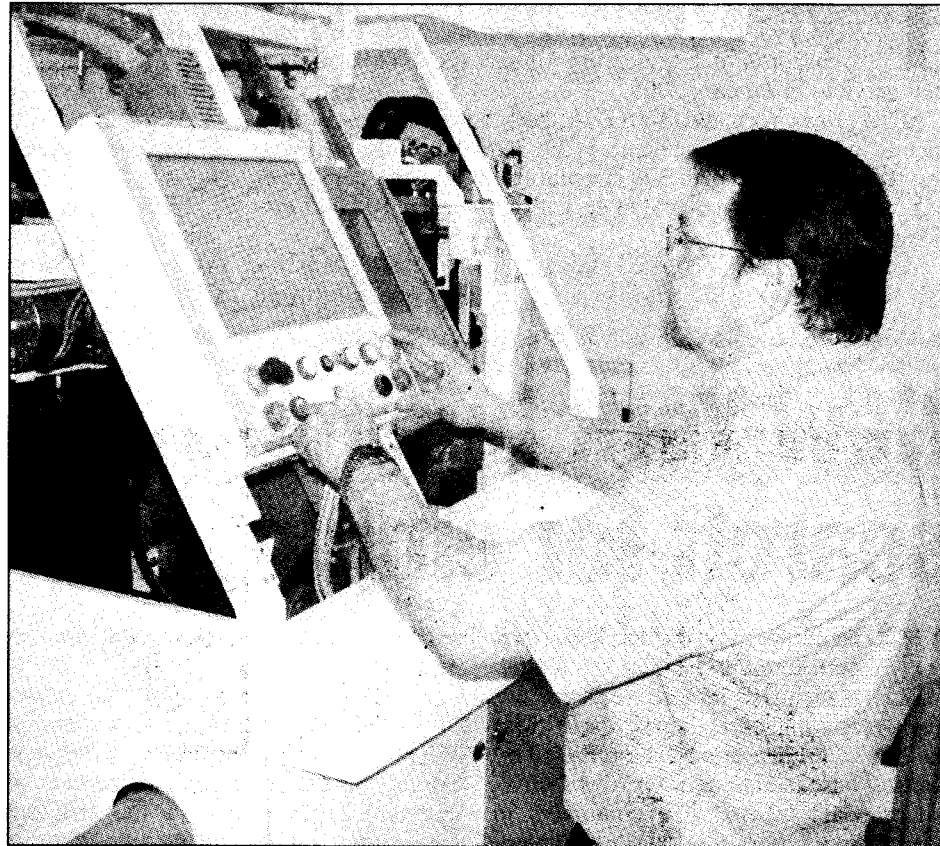
The lenses provide better vision than traditional progressive lenses, also called no-line bifocals, the Cotran brothers say.

Robert, Ronald, and Ralph Cotran are equal owners of U.S. Optical LLC, located at 6848 Ellicott Drive in DeWitt. The brothers — through an LLC named Ellicott Drive LLC — purchased the one-story, 12,000-square-foot facility Aug. 13, 2007 from James P. Downey for \$386,000. Since then, they have renovated the site into offices and a lens-manufacturing area. They declined to disclose the cost of building renovations.

“The reason we’re opening is because we’re entrepreneurs, we like the business, and want to own our own company again,” says Ralph Cotran, vice president.

The Cotrans bought Onondaga Optical in 1986 and changed its name to Optogenics of Syracuse Inc. soon after purchasing it. Optogenics supplies all types of prescription eyeglass lenses.

Optogenics is located at 2840 Erie Blvd. East. The brothers sold Optogenics in 1999 to Essilor Laboratories of America, Inc., based in Dallas. Essilor is a subsidiary of a France-based company



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A U.S. Optical LLC employee works on one of the machines the company uses to create its freeform lenses. The company will open on March 3.

called Essilor International, S.A. The partners declined to comment on why they sold the company.

After selling Optogenics, the broth-

ers continued managing it until March 2007 when they decided to leave to start a company that specialized in freeform technology and manufacturing.

“The advantage [of freeform lenses] is that they are closer to your eye,” says Robert Cotran, president.

Freeform lenses place the complete design of a progressive lens with a patient’s prescription on the back surface of a lens unlike the common method of transcribing it on the front of the lens, U.S. Optical says. The lenses are more accurate because the complete prescription is molded on the back of lens and closer to the eye.

Satisloh, based in Switzerland, developed freeform technology in 2006. U.S. Optical LLC is one of the first companies in the United States that will manufacture lenses with this technology, according to the Cotran brothers. U.S. Optical has invested about \$1 million for the purchase of freeform equipment from Satisloh.

In its first year of production, U.S. Optical aims to produce 1,000 lenses daily, Ralph Cotran says. He couldn’t provide a revenue goal for the first year.

U.S. Optical financed building renovations and the purchase of equipment with personal funds and bank loans.

The company plans to hire 15 employees and will target clients in the United States.

Along with freeform lenses, U.S. Optical will also manufacture traditional progressive lenses, polarized, trifocals, bifocals, single-vision, and transition lenses. □

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