The business Development of Sharpsville Furnace Ltd. got its start selling slag from the long-gone blast furnaces of Shenango Furnace Co. and later Shenango Inc. in Sharpsville. The forgotten byproduct has proven to be a gold mine in sales of the material as aggregate for construction and roads.

The new daily grind at DFS

By Michael Rolnick
Herald Business Editor

Most business owners would be devastated to learn that their products got crushed by equipment. Patrick Zoccole, on the other hand, is delighted.

As president of Development of Sharpsville Furnace Ltd., Zoccole oversees an operation that is a heavy duty contractor’s version of making lemonade out of lemons — without tossing away the lemons.

Using a recently acquired piece of equipment — officially called the 30/42 Jaw Crusher — it can take a 30-by-42 inch block of concrete and pulverize it down to anywhere between 3½ inches in diameter all the way down to fine dust.

Like a giant with a hungry appetite, it quickly munches the concrete down with a growl.

“Even with the big blocks of concrete it doesn’t slow down,” Zoccole said.

Costing $1 million for the crusher and its setup, that’s just a glimpse into the cost of operations. In order to feed the Jaw Crusher material a huge front loader is needed where a single tire replacement runs $3,000 for a re-tread and a fluid change fetches another $5,500, he notes.

Instead of running on diesel, the crusher is run on three-phase underground electrical lines that feed into its 150-horsepower engine. Getting the crusher started is so expensive on energy costs, it isn’t shut off until quitting time.

“Even when the guys take a lunch break you don’t turn it off,” Zoccole said.

A giant flywheel is put into action whereby the rubble concrete blocks crush each other inside the bowels of the machine.

In the end the final product is a money maker. Known as a “clean” material, it’s used by PennDOT and contractors as a base for roads and highway construction. It was used on the Broadway corridor project this past summer in Farrell and Wheatland. Other uses include stone beds.

Patrick Zoccole, president of Development of Sharpsville Furnace, shows the finish product that comes from old concrete. His new rock crusher turns slabs into sizes ranging from gravel-like to powder.