

Made in Eastern Iowa: Verena Street Coffee and Cheryl's Fresh Salsa

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A-B-C's World News features businesses that employ workers here in the United States. They're focusing on what's Made in America.

But we've been looking around to see who in Eastern Iowa is succeeding at making products and expanding their businesses here.

We found two businesses that started out small, and are hoping to make it big with their products.

Verena Street Coffee in Dubuque is going grande. Run by brothers Eric and Michael Gantz, Verena Street is a hometown coffee company.

"We had two other guys, then up to four, and now we're up to six employees," said Michael Gantz.

Their story starts growing up playing as kids on Verena Street in Dubuque, and now they've got their feet "grounded" in the local economy. They've been craft roasting coffee beans from all over the world since January of 2011. That means coffee roasting is done in small batches.

"Nobody out there can create another Nine Mile Sunset or Julien's Breakfast blend. That's Verena Street's own," said Michael Gantz. Right now their business plan is brewing bigger for the future.

Gantz says "We started with 0 customers back in January 2010. We're now found in 190 Grocery stores, all throughout Iowa City, Davenport, Waterloo, Dubuque, Des Moines."

From your morning jolt to your afternoon Snack, Cheryl's Fresh Salsa in Wellman mixes fresh veggies and fruits into a salsa fresh and fruity, sweet and smoky, to mild and scorching hot.

"We can make 5 to 600 gallons a day," said Cheryl.

Cheryl and her husband Ken started selling salsa in vending machines, moved on to Farmer's Markets, and then worked their way into a distribution center. What's funny is... Cheryl doesn't even like super spicy food.

"You'll find our mild is more like extra mild...because I don't like my mouth burning. So the medium is more like I like it," she said.

Cheryl's 9 different salsa recipes are top secret, but came from taste testing them on her friends and family. Friends and family are fired up to work together, filling a local need.

"You couldn't get a good fresh salsa at the store. You could at the restaurant, but not at the store," she said.

Crafting Coffee... And Scrumptious Salsa. And it's Made in Eastern Iowa.
