

TRI-STATE ▾

http://www.telegraphherald.com/news/tri-state/article_1c05fa76-bca9-5120-bbb2-2ca064433af9.html

Verena Street opens new Dubuque facility

BY JEFF MONTGOMERY jeff.montgomery@thmedia.com 7 hrs ago



Verena Street Coffee Co. has opened a facility in Dubuque Industrial Park Center South. The business, which began in 2010, now has more than 34,000 square feet of space. It also has a pair of new roasters, which allows it to have more than four times its previous capacity.

MIKE BURLEY

[Buy Now](#)

Verena Street Coffee Co. opened in December 2010 with a small footprint and modest expectations.

In less than six years, the Dubuque company has achieved considerable growth.

Located in Dubuque Industrial Center South on the north side of Seippel Road, Verena Street's new 34,000-square-foot facility is four times larger than the previous location on U.S. 52. The new building features two new roasters and has quadrupled the company's roasting capacity.

And, co-owner Eric Gantz said this growth might represent only the tip of the iceberg.

"We have room to add on here as well," he said. "It is not a matter of if (we will expand further), it is a matter of when."

EARLY SUCCESS

As for now, the co-owners of Verena Street Coffee Co. — Eric and his cousin, Michael Gantz — are focused on making sure this expansion project proceeds smoothly.

Michael said the new facility has been operational for ~~TELEGRAPH HERALD~~ final piece of equipment — an automated packing line — arrived last week.

“We’re starting to get all the kinks out and get everything up to speed,” Michael said.

Dozens of local community members visited the location during a grand opening event last week.

Dan McDonald, vice president of existing business for Greater Dubuque Development Corp., was among those at the gathering.

“To think they just started producing a little more than five years ago, that is phenomenal growth for that amount of time,” said McDonald.

McDonald noted that Michael and Eric are not the first people in the Gantz family to start a successful business.

The family’s history in Dubuque can be traced to 1916 and the founding of Gantz Bottling Works.

“I think what you are seeing here is the secret weapon of Dubuque, which is the great family-owned businesses,” McDonald said. “This is the fourth generation of the Gantz family to operate businesses here. Those are the types of businesses many communities like to have.”

ACHIEVING GROWTH

Roasting Solutions, the parent company of Verena Street, received a \$721,800 acquisition grant that covered half the purchase price of the industrial park property.

The company also received a 100 percent rebate — minus debt service, the School District Physical Plant and Equipment Levy and the Instructional Support Levy — on the incremental increase of the new property tax for 10 years.

In return for these incentives, Roasting Solutions agreed to hire 10 new full-time workers — bringing the total to 17 full-time equivalent positions — by Jan. 1, 2020.

Eric Gantz said Verena Street now employs the equivalent of 15 full-time workers.

The new facility and expanded workforce is helping the company keep up with a growing number of orders.

“The fourth quarter is always our busiest time,” said Eric. “Right now, we are just trying to keep up with the demand.”

He indicated the company will likely surpass its job addition requirement, noting that the company intends to add two to four more workers each year for the foreseeable future.

EMPHASIS ON QUALITY

Eric said the new building was designed in a manner that will allow the public to take a close look at the operation.

The lobby houses a small store and tasting room. This area also contains a “viewing window,” through which visitors can see the roasting portion of the facility.

Tours also will be available by appointment, Eric said.

Those who see the new facility will encounter equipment that came from near and far.

Michael said the roasters were built in Germany and an automated packing line was constructed in Italy. Other equipment in the facility came from Midwest locations like Marion, Iowa, and Sauk Valley, Wis., he noted.

Given the size of some of the machinery, Michael admitted that getting everything in place brought its fair share of challenges.

“It was a feat getting everything in here and installed,” he admitted.

He acknowledged that some people might look at the growth and question whether the growth will compromise quality. But he insisted that won't be the case.

"Some people seem to think that if you get big you start to cheapen your product," he said. "I think, if anything, this expansion will change our product for the better."