



THE SCEDC NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE SEWARD COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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SCEDC KICKS OFF 2014-15 MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

The Seward County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) launched its 2014-2015 fiscal year on July 1 and is currently engaging with Seward County companies for its 2014-2015 membership campaign. The SCEDC is a public-private partnership (501c6 nonprofit organization) made up of both public and private sector members. Through financially supporting the SCEDC, members are provided various benefits, which are partially dependent on the level (amount) of support given.

The 2014-2015 membership campaign marks the second in the SCEDC's history. The organization began pursuing private sector memberships as a priority in 2013. The original campaign yielded 36 private sector members and excelled in membership financial contributions.

In 2014, the SCEDC sought another increase in membership numbers. By the end of this September, almost 40 private sector companies have joined the SCEDC or renewed their memberships. The private sector membership financial contributions exceeded the total from the past fiscal year.

The SCEDC is continually supported by four public sector members that partnered together to form the organization back in 2006. These public sector members include Seward County, the City of Milford, the City of Seward, and the Village of Utica. They provide funding support for the SCEDC as well as elected official representation on the SCEDC board of directors.

At the recent SCEDC annual meeting held on Friday, September 26 in Seward, 6 private sector members were elected by their fellow members to serve on the SCEDC board of directors. Their board commitment will be year long and include setting strategic direction and providing financial oversight for the

SCEDC. For more detailed information about the SCEDC's membership and board of directors, please visit the organization's website at: SewardRegional.com.

The SCEDC is thankful for its members past and present. The financial support from members has directly assisted the SCEDC in pursuing new development projects for the county and provides daily economic development services to companies and entrepreneurs inside Seward County.

The SCEDC will work hard to provide economic development services in the years to come and will need the continued support of private and public sector members to achieve it. Therefore, the SCEDC will continue to market the benefits of membership through this current fiscal year to encourage more businesses to take advantage of the services and benefits of membership with the organization.

The SCEDC executive director, Jonathan Jank continues to personally meet with private sector companies all over Seward County to better understand their business needs.

"Daily I work with businesses to better understand what their barriers are to growing. This allows the SCEDC to provide specific services that help facilitate more job creation and new capital investments in Seward County."

Jank hopes that through listening to their needs and in turn providing assistance, he will be able to approach them with the opportunity to join as members of the SCEDC. It is the intent of the SCEDC for its membership program to foster cooperative business relationships between the corporation and members. Jank believes that the designed membership program has already done this for many of its members.

"We're fortunate to have many engaged businesses as members of the SCEDC that serve as our primary job creators in Seward

County. As members of our organization, we've been able to build lasting relationships with them to better serve their business needs as they anticipate growing over time."

Jank also believes that the benefits included in the membership packages serve members well.

"The membership benefits provide critical networking opportunities for our county-wide businesses. It also bridges the gap between the public and private sectors and helps them better understand the needs of the other."

Membership to the SCEDC includes benefits such as: company recognition on all SCEDC marketing materials mentioning membership, access to the SCEDC job board (through the website), receiving a quarterly SCEDC newsletter, eligibility for election to a vacant seat on the SCEDC board of directors, the ability to participate in SCEDC board committees to provide strategic direction for the organization, and more.

Before beginning to design this year's campaign, the SCEDC conducted an online survey with its current members to help evaluate the value of its membership program. The survey yielded numerous helpful responses and assisted the SCEDC to realize which benefits were most important to its members.

"We're a member-focused organization. This allows us to intimately know and build relationships with our county-wide job creators. Working together with member businesses will help to grow the economy of Seward County in the future."

Jank believes that further membership participation will only continue to foster beneficial relationships building between county-wide businesses. The SCEDC is grateful to the community for their support and hopes that it continues to provide generously for economic development services in Seward County.

A NEW BUSINESS IS BREWING IN SEWARD

Gerald Homp came to the SCEDC executive director Jonathan Jank a year ago chasing a chance to start something new and interesting.

“Coming up with the idea of starting a brewery was easy,” Homp said. “Putting it in motion and making it reality is the challenge. But it’s a challenge that has been fun and exciting.”

Homp has lived in Seward with his wife since 1997. Both graduated from Concordia University.

“Seward has that hometown feel,” he said. “It’s a place where you can wave and greet everyone you see, and it’s a great place to raise children.”

Homp had the idea of starting a brewery in Seward when he approached Jank in August of 2013. He had spent a lot of time researching the brewing industry and Seward demographics to see if the concept was a good fit for the city.

He said that the craft brewing industry only controls 8 percent of the market, while the larger beer companies claim the remaining 92 percent. “Even with that small piece of the pie, right now the craft brewing industry is currently growing at an average rate of 18 percent,” he said.

“Nebraska is very young in this arena.”

“The craft beer industry is a growing cultural and social movement that is sweeping much of the nation, but there are no breweries within a 20-mile radius of Seward.” Homp said that the Fourth of July City is the perfect place for this kind of business.

Homp sought after the business brains of fellow Seward resident Jason Berry to join in.

“As this idea was born, I knew I needed help. I needed to find someone with experience starting a business. I had known Jason Berry for many years and knew he was an entrepreneur,” he said.

After approaching Berry with the idea of starting a brewery, the two partnered on the venture. “It was a match made in heaven,” Homp said.

“After talking for three hours, we knew we would be partners in this endeavor. It was the beginning of a great partnership,” he said.

After creative deliberation, the two settled on Bottle Rocket Brewing as the name for their new business. Although Bottle Rocket Brewing was already in use, the two contacted the owner and were able to purchase the web address. Soon after, Seward’s

Bottle Rocket Brewing was filed and trademarked with the State of Nebraska.

“The fuse of Bottle Rocket Brewing was lit,” Homp said. The next challenge was to find a location for the project. Homp said that it was challenging and took longer than expected to find a site.

“Although it was challenging, we learned a lot about the Seward community during this time,” Homp said. “Listening and speaking with the people of Seward and hearing their stories was very rewarding.”

After learning that Flower Mill owner Diane Welsh was planning to retire and close the business after 20 years, Berry and Homp held conversations with Welsh about purchasing the building. Bottle Rocket Brewing became the owner of the property on August 22.

While the two were settling on a location, they realized that they would also need someone to brew their beer. After some online research, the pair met and spoke with different people about the opportunity. “But after meeting Ryan Koch, we knew he was the right man for the job,” Homp said.

“To keep this long story short, his beer is amazing and

those who have sampled it after us have agreed. We approached Ryan and asked him if he would be our brewmaster and partner with us.”

“The ‘Bottle Rocket Boys’ then became a reality,” Homp said.

Bottle Rocket Brewing is currently in the construction process at the location of the old Flower Mill.

“Bottle Rocket Brewing’s vision is to focus on building a strong community where patrons can enjoy high-quality beer in a unique historical setting. It will be a destination for people from within and from outside the Seward community that offers a variety of services and experiences.”

“Built around a historic grain mill within a block of the city square, the facility will highlight the rich history of the community of Seward with an atmosphere that celebrates the significance of agricultural development and illuminates why Nebraskans all over can be proud of the town designated as the state’s Fourth of July City,” Homp said.

Bottle Rocket Brewing has been helped in its startup by the SCEDC.

“Jonathan has been a huge catalyst for me and a huge help giving me options and ideas to start a business in Seward. Specifically, he had provided guidance with contractors, possible locations, and economic development programs available.”

Bottle Rocket Brewing Co. is a member of the SCEDC.

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