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Aluminum sports bottle maker begins production in Yakima Valley

Bottles first in U.S. made from 100-percent recycled aluminum

YAKIMA, Wash. (July 30, 2010) – A new manufacturing venture that produces sports bottles from 100-percent recycled aluminum has begun operations in the Yakima Valley and will create nearly 20 new jobs this year.

Liberty Bottleworks expects to deliver its first shipment of bottles in October and plans to make 300,000 by the end of the year, said Tim Andis, the company's founder. It has leased a 35,000-foot-building in Union Gap, Wash., just outside of Yakima, installed a manufacturing line and begun hiring workers.

"We've done something very unique and very special to create a bottle completely from recycled aluminum," Andis said. "We believe that most people want to do the right thing when it comes to helping each other, our environment and providing sustainable solutions."

Liberty Bottleworks is the only U.S. producer of bottles made completely from recycled aluminum. It has deals in place with outdoor retailer REI and grocer Whole Foods to sell its bottles nationwide. The bottles come in 24 and 32 ounce sizes and will retail for \$16 to \$18.

Liberty Bottleworks will employ about a dozen people initially and grow to 18 by year end, Andis said. Workers will be a mix of accounting, sales, marketing and shipping employees, and manufacturing technicians.

Andis, who has worked in the outdoor industry for 20 years, praised the Yakima Valley business community for its support and encouragement. He moved to the area 14 years ago with his wife to be near her family and has been impressed by all the region has to offer.

“I fell in love with Yakima,” Andis said. “We have some tremendous opportunities because of a lower cost of living and close proximity to major markets. We have some really great cost efficiencies, a good workforce, lower facilities costs and easy access to shipping routes.”

The Yakima County Development Association (YCDA) helps local businesses and entrepreneurs grow as part of its work to diversify the area economy. It assisted Liberty Bottleworks with its efforts to establish a manufacturing facility at the former Western RV site.

“We have put a lot more focus on growing our own companies,” said David McFadden, YCDA president and CEO. “Liberty Bottleworks is a great example of a company that has found a supportive Yakima Valley business community, bottom-line value and competitive advantages from lower business costs and work-ready employees.”

Yakima County had the best year-over-year employment gains last year for its size, according to the federal Bureau of Labor and Statistics.

Production has begun in limited quantities at Liberty Bottleworks and will ramp up over a couple months, Andis said. At full capacity, the company will make 1,200 bottles per hour.

Using a deep-drawn aluminum manufacturing process, large coils of recycled aluminum are punched, trimmed with a neck and finished with a BPA-free, food-grade powder coat. The process leaves the bottle walls with a very consistent thickness that creates a stronger, more durable container.

Patents are pending on the bottle’s unique design and winged closure system, Andis said. Bottles are customized with digitally printed images purchased from regional artists.

“We are excited about Liberty Bottleworks and what they bring to our community as a manufacturer and employer,” McFadden said. “They are proof that the Yakima Valley is right place for businesses ready, willing and able to grow.”