

Companies use loans to cut waste, create jobs

By Anne Kallas

Originally published 04:52 p.m., October 13, 2011

Updated 05:08 p.m., October 13, 2011

Thursday's presentation of two loan checks to local companies Oxnard Pallet Co. and Trupart Manufacturing to help them expand is a hopeful sign, Assemblyman Das Williams said.

"These are the kind of stories that do not get told. We need to tell people," Williams said at a presentation ceremony at Oxnard Pallet's facility, which is in a converted lima bean warehouse on Pleasant Valley Road.

"Getting out of the economic doldrums is a psychological thing. We need to tell businesses it's OK to hire," he said.

Business owners Beatrice and Elias Vasquez of Oxnard Pallet and Shane Prukop of Trupart Manufacturing said the loans will help them buy equipment to increase their manufacturing capabilities, providing more jobs.

The owners said they also were thankful for the assistance of the Economic Development Collaborative, Ventura County, which along with the Ventura County Recycling Market Development Zone collaborated to help both companies successfully apply incentives.

The loans from the recycling development zone were for \$290,000 to Trupart Manufacturing and \$145,000 for Oxnard Pallet.

Prukop said the loan would let his company buy a laser-cutting machine.

"What this means to us is huge," he said. He described his company, which is in Ventura, as "a job shop/production facility/research and development" and said that by getting the latest equipment, he can undercut overseas manufacturers on prices and bring some jobs back to the United States.

For example, one manufacturer left Trupart because the per-item price was 0.2 cent lower in China, Prukop said. When Trupart was able to beat that price, the business came back.

"That's 260,000 pieces," he said.

Trupart, which employs eight people, is working with Patagonia to create grips for shoes for fly fishermen and could be hiring up to four people in the next year, Prukop said.

The new laser-cutting equipment lets the company work more efficiently, allowing more items to be cut from a sheet of raw material and significantly reducing waste.

At Oxnard Pallet, which took over the old lima bean processing warehouse in 2008, the loan money is being used to buy two pallet-making machines and a heat-treating machine.

Elias Vasquez said his company recycles wooden shipping pallets, which traditionally have been thrown away after use. Oxnard Pallet breaks down and reuses the pallets. Wood that cannot be salvaged is ground into chips and used for mulch.

Vasquez said the quality of lumber used in pallets is very poor and untreated, which makes it ideal for recycling.

"The heat chamber allows us to heat the pallets at 140 degrees for 30 minutes to kill any living organisms in the wood," Vasquez said, adding that international buyers insist all outside wood be treated.

Oxnard Pallet employs 20 workers, and Vasquez said the new machines added five more people to that total — two people each to run the new pallet building machines and one person to run the heat chambers.

Bruce Stenslie, president and CEO of Economic Development Collaborative, Ventura County, a private nonprofit that serves as a business-to-government liaison to help county businesses, said the loans will let the two businesses grow using sustainable, "green" practices.

"I didn't play up the recycling side as much," he said. "I couldn't be more proud to be surrounded by public/private leadership, but mostly private leadership."

Stenslie that while his group connects business to available resources, he remains amazed at the innovative solutions the companies use.

For details about the services available to small businesses through Economic Development Collaborative, Ventura County, contact Stenslie at 384-1800, ext. 21, or bruce.stenslie@edc-vc.com or visit <http://www.edc-vc.com>. The recycling development zone program combines recycling with economic development to fuel new businesses, expand existing ones, create jobs and divert waste from landfills. The program provides loans, technical assistance and free product marketing to businesses that use materials from the waste stream to manufacture their products.

For information, contact David Goldstein at 658-4312 or david.goldstein@ventura.org or visit <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/RMDZ/CentralCoast>.

