

Eye on the environment: Green business strategies thrive

Staff Reports

Saturday, October 8, 2011

Two companies in very different industries have a surprising amount in common when it comes to their business strategies.

Through waste reduction, reuse and recycling, both have managed to grow during this recession, and both recently received assistance from the Economic Development Collaborative-Ventura County and the Small Business Development Center. They secured low-interest loans from the Ventura County Recycling Market Development Zone to fund purchases of new equipment.

The companies are Trupart Manufacturing and Oxnard Pallet Co.

Trupart makes parts for other companies' equipment. It reduces waste through precision design and cutting, finding clever ways to make the maximum number of pieces from the smallest possible amount of raw materials. It also saves the scrap it generates, along with flawed or leftover materials. It carefully stores and inventories much of these materials, using them to cut new pieces.

Trupart also does an outstanding job of using recycled material. For example, it makes unusual products such as jewelry from recycled surfboard resin, and simple products such as oil pump gaskets from recycled paper. This green business strategy has garnered great success, with the company growing 25 percent in each of the past two years.

The Recycling Market Development Zone program, administered by the county Integrated Waste Management Division, provided a \$290,000 loan at 4 percent interest for 10 years to fund a laser cutting device for Trupart. The Economic Development Collaborative and Small Business Development Center are helping Trupart reorganize its shop floor, obtain incentives for new hiring and plan for further expansion.

The Oxnard Pallet Co. received a \$145,000 development zone loan and purchased new equipment, enabling it to reduce waste and reuse more. Most pallet-reuse companies cannot handle off-specification or broken pallets, so many are disposed. Oxnard Pallet's new equipment enables employees to tear pallets apart and reuse the pieces.

Additionally, the company purchased a device to heat-treat wood, enabling it to certify

the pallets as "insect free" and therefore suitable for use by exporters. To operate the new equipment and handle an anticipated increase of 4,000 tons of pallets per year, Oxnard Pallet will hire two new employees.

Trupart and Oxnard Pallet each had about 300 business customers last year. By keeping their eyes on the environment, both are able to improve the sustainability of many other businesses.

Celebrating that success, the economic collaborative and zone program are organizing an event for 10 a.m. Thursday at Oxnard Pallet. Assemblyman Das Williams will present a giant check to Trupart for its new loan. And representatives of Assemblyman Jeff Gorell, state Sen. Tony Strickland and county supervisors Steve Bennett and Kathy Long will present commendations and see a demonstration of the equipment Oxnard Pallet purchased with its funding.

In keeping with the spirit of the event, all polystyrene plates and cups used for lunch will be compressed and heated into a block, to be recycled into flower pots and curb stops by Western Recycling Technologies. Additionally, McConnell's Fine Ice Cream will collect its ice cream bowls at the event, and those containers — made from tapioca and bamboo — will be composted.

The public is invited.

David Goldstein is an environmental resource analyst for the county of Ventura. Representatives of government or nonprofit agencies who want to submit articles on environmental topics for this column should contact Goldstein at 658-4312 or david.goldstein@ventura.org.



© 2011 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online