

People make the difference for new manufacturer

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MARK BOXLEY

When the Hokumo America Corporation was looking for a site for its new injection molding manufacturing plant, the community and the people of Bardstown made the difference.

"There was a good connection with the people," Yoshikazu Masaki, vice president of HAC, said. "It was obvious to company officials when a decision had to be made that Bardstown would be the final choice."

Mayor Dixie Hibbs agreed with Masaki.

"This community has a lot of good committed people," she said. "It's not because we have the best site, it's the people."

This is the first time the Japanese company has ventured overseas and after a two-year search, it has chosen Bardstown as its new home.

The company, which is already producing, makes terminal blocks for cars' transmissions and blinker lights.

At a groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday, the owners of the plant and executives of the corporation were welcomed to Bardstown and a tour of the new facility was given.

To continue to remain active in an ever-growing international market, Kentucky needs to continue to attract foreign businesses, Gov. Paul Patton said.

"This is an excellent example of the diverse types of business and industry that Kentucky must continue to attract if we are to remain competitive in the global economy," he said. "The teamwork between Hokumo, the State of Kentucky and Bardstown and Nelson County, has proven to be a true 'formula for success.' Everybody has contributed and everybody has received the benefits of the wins."

The executives of HAC looked throughout Kentucky for a suitable facility and location for the plant. The efforts of local people also helped the company choose Bardstown.

"I actually went apartment hunting with them," James Hayden, the facility owner, said. "It's easy to work with great people. We became great friends."

The building, leased from Hayden, currently houses 10 employees and three machines, with room to add three more, plant manager, Bobby Cecil, said.

The building was an unused warehouse before HAC came.

"We came into an empty building and we built it from the ground up," Cecil said.

The floor of the building was painted and new lights as well as an over-head crane system were installed.

The choice of Bardstown by HAC comes as no surprise to Kim Huston, the president of the Bardstown Industrial Development Corporation.

"Economic development in Bardstown is very strong right now," she said.

The opening of the plant was still a point of excitement though.

"We are thrilled they have chosen Bardstown and Nelson County as their new home," Huston said. "We look forward to working with them."

Expansion is hopefully in the future, Cecil said.

"We foresee 20 to 25 machines in the next three years," he said.

While a dollar figure was not available, Masaki said within 10 years, the sales of the company are estimated at \$30 million.

"We are starting small and hope to expand gradually," he said.

Hayden has leased HAC 10,000 square feet of the 30,000-square-foot building for the plant.

"It will (expand) if the market is there because they have a great part and great people," Hayden said.