

PakTech from A1

On the Cottage Grove PakTech site, seven large injection molding machines process liquified HDPE into precise customizable shapes for workers to sort and package. The finished product ends up on packs of bottles, cans and other products at retailers.

The company's extensive client list includes Pepsi, Coke, Procter & Gamble, Hop Valley Brewing and Ninkasi Brewing Company.

Borg, an engineer, designed all the handles made by the company.

"We're able to just design something on the computer, make a mold for it and we've got the part in hand in a week or so," he said.

Though the family-owned business started in 1991, its transition to recycled plastics only began over the last five years and production didn't set in until the last couple years. The company had previously manufactured custom plastic molds and plastic packaging items.

Headquartered in Eugene, PakTech opened operations into Cottage Grove in 2017. Borg credited the city with easing the moving process.

"The city manager here even took an inspection class so that he could come out and inspect our work and get the permits sealed up faster," he said.

The company produces its handles entirely in-house, reducing the burden of third-party errors.

"We actually have our

tool room, our designing and our injection molding all within one company," Borg said.

This year has been marked by signs of success and growth for the company.

In September, the Cottage Grove City Council voted to annex two acres of land owned by City Life Church, PakTech's neighboring property.

PakTech had inquired to the church about a strip of unused land between the two properties. The church, sitting just outside city limits, applied for expedited annexation of the land for PakTech's use.

The expansion of the site will allow for streamlined trucking access and greater efficiency.

And PakTech's momentum hasn't gone unnoticed by the community.

The Vision Keepers, a local committee which tracks the progress of community goals, awarded the company with the Pioneering the Future Award at an Aug. 29 city council meeting this year.

"Paktech not only deserves this award for their Earth-friendly approach to creating state-of-the-art packaging handles and materials, but they strive to use as many recycled materials as they can," said Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Travis Palmer at the meeting. "And they also invest in their employees by helping to pay for their employees to get continued education and move on with their careers — that's really pioneering the future."

The company has also invested locally by spon-

soring the Mayor's Ball for the past two years, an annual event which has been raising funds for the continuing restoration of the Cottage Grove Armory.

Since the company's expansion into Cottage Grove, PakTech has grown to employ around 70 workers.

Supervisor Brooke Feurer has been with the company for five years and moved from Eugene to take a promotion at the new Cottage Grove site.

Feurer's experience with the company has been overwhelmingly positive.

"They really take care of their employees," she said. "I've never had any company treat their employees the way they do."

Perhaps most notable among the list of benefits, PakTech reimburses employees for unlimited college credits and other expenses in their educational pursuits providing they maintain a "C" grade average.

"It's nice to work for a company that helps you get an education," said Feurer.

"I was thinking about taking advantage of it and do-

ing some business courses. I have known employees who have done that."

Of the roughly 70 employees, the majority are from Cottage Grove and the surrounding areas.

Currently, space allows for three more machines to be added as business picks up. At capacity, Borg speculated around 100 employees could be working at the site, bringing further economic and workforce growth to the town.

Borg also feels that PakTech's contribution to the recycling demands of the area may have larger legislative implications.

"We're using enough plastic to where we're getting noticed by people who can sway policy," Borg said, hopeful that he may have the ear of enough government officials to move legislation through the state. "I think we should do something along the lines of what Germany does, which is identify a new color bin for just plastics — and stop putting cardboard in the same bin as plastics."

The mixture of cardboard and plastics is a

problem for PakTech's handles.

Despite the handles being #2 plastic, large sorting machines tend to miss them when separating cardboard and other recyclables. These sorting errors can lead to a contaminated cardboard stream.

"So even if you wanted to recycle them, you pretty much can't," said Borg. "That's one of the things we're looking at — seeing if the county is willing to get

a separate recycle bin for plastics."

For the time being, PakTech takes back its own handles on site in Cottage Grove and sends them to a materials recovery facility, an option which Borg says is still not entirely efficient and could be improved with facilities dedicated to plastics.

Even so, Borg encourages people to collect

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