



Local Roots, Global Reach

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY, VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Isle of Wight County Welcomes First Micro-Distillery

SMITHFIELD, Virginia (February 15, 2017) – Blue Sky Distillery, a start-up micro-distillery celebrated its grand opening with a ribbon cutting and open house on Wednesday, February 15, 2017. The business is based in Carrollton, and production operations are co-located within the Spring Lake Bottled Water Co. in Isle of Wight Industrial Park in Smithfield.

Blue Sky Distillery produces DOG STAR Vodka, a smooth premium Vodka handcrafted in small batches with wheat from a farm near Williamsburg. Water comes from Spring Lake Bottled Water Co., and the bottles for the finished product come from a business in Suffolk.

DOG STAR Vodka was recently approved for the Virginia's Finest® Trademark Program. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) introduced the program to enhance the economic opportunities and success of Virginia's specialty food companies, processors and agriculture producers. The classic Virginia's Finest® trademark identifies, differentiates and promotes top-quality Virginia agriculture and specialty food and beverage products.

Blue Sky Distillery is owned and operated by Mark and Kim Rangos. Originally from West Virginia, Mark and Kim moved to the Carrollton area several years ago when Mark accepted a management position with Liebherr Construction Equipment Company in Newport News.

The Rangoses make their own wine and beer, but it was a visit to an Irish distillery in 2015 that brought an old family tradition to life. Mark's grandfather opened a bar in West Virginia in the 1950s that is still family-operated today. His dad also owned a wine supply shop that is also still in the family.

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Blue Sky Distillery was founded in early 2016 and received all of the necessary federal and state permits to operate by the fall of 2016. Mark was seeking a location for his business in Isle of Wight County and had the good fortune of meeting Ted Christian (Spring Lake Bottled Water Co.) whose facility was a great location to start his micro-distillery. The natural need for water for the distillery process fosters a great relationship between Blue Sky Distillery and Spring Lake Bottled Water Co.

“Kim and I moved to Isle of Wight County several years ago and felt at home instantly,” said Mark Rangos. “We are excited about starting our business here and are focused on serving high quality handcrafted spirits to Hampton Roads and all of Virginia.”

Mark and Kim have always had a love for dogs and wanted to have a product with a “dog” theme. The name “DOG STAR Vodka” was born, named after the Dog Star (also known as Sirius). The Dog Star is the brightest star in the night sky and part of the constellation Canis Major, the “Big Dog”. A print of their dog’s paw is on the back of the label on each bottle. To further pay tribute to our four legged friends, a portion of the net proceeds of the sale of each bottle will benefit the welfare of dogs.

"We heartily welcome Blue Sky Distillery to Isle of Wight and thank Mark and Kim Rangos for choosing our county to start up this unique operation, said Rex Alphin, Chairman of the Isle of Wight County Board of Supervisors. “It is our hope that this micro-distillery, the first of its kind in our area, will enjoy immense success and be the start of a long relationship within our community."

Blue Sky Distillery is currently in the process of applying to the Commonwealth of Virginia for distribution of DOG STAR Vodka through the state's ABC stores. Plans are for the product to be available in ABC stores in the summer of 2017. Watch for the product release and the progress of Blue Sky Distillery on the company website at www.blueskydistillery.com and on Facebook.

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