

Milford Project Pop-Up business turns success into expansion

*Delaware Branding Company launches screen printing segment to
make T-shirts and more*

Milford, DE – Since its inception in 2012, the Project Pop-Up program has been successful in helping 14 businesses sign long-term leases in once-vacant downtown spaces.

But some of these businesses are beginning to show a propensity to go beyond popping up from three months into a year. They are now expanding beyond their original footprint.

The latest business to do so is Delaware Branding Company, which received help with rent and advice from business advisors that allowed owners Mike and Amy Perfetti to move their enterprise into a brick-and-mortar location in downtown Milford.

Delaware Branding Company took off with its offering of graphic design, sign making, body art and DJ services, so much so that the Perfettis have now launched a screen printing production facility and is now making T-shirts, spirit gear for schools, athletic apparel, signs and vinyl lettering.

Gov. Jack Markell said the company is one of the many Delaware small businesses that have helped drive job growth in the state – growth that has far outpaced surrounding states over the past couple of years.

“Mike and Amy Perfetti represent the spirit, determination and talent of Delaware’s small business community,” Gov. Markell said. “The success of Delaware Branding Company is further evidence of why our state is committed to programs like

Project Pop-Up that help ensure our entrepreneurs have the opportunity to turn their great ideas into thriving companies. I also applaud the City of Milford and Mayor Bryan Shupe for their efforts to welcome small businesses and work with the state to enhance Delaware's historic downtowns."

Delaware Branding Company, which is located at 19 NW Front St., launched through the Project Pop-Up program alongside Patty Cakes, a specialty bakery mere minutes away that has been doing brisk business since it opened last year.

The Perfettis' business has also followed a trajectory similar to another Milford Project Pop-Up participant, Milford Massage, Wellness and Yoga. That business, which participated in 2013 and is owned by Paige Deiner, started out in a vacant space on Milford's Front Street provided by the Pop-Up program. Within months, business had quadrupled, and Deiner had to move to a larger space a half mile away. Another business, Royal Treatments in Smyrna, expanded into a vacant space adjacent to its original Pop-Up shop, which is now home to Smyrna Cards and Gifts.

"The initial success of Delaware Branding Company demonstrated yet again that Project Pop-Up works. But its recent expansion shows Pop-Up's ability to help these entrepreneurs reach a whole new level," said Ken Anderson, Director of Entrepreneurial and Small Business Support for the Delaware Economic Development Office. "Project Pop-Up is not only finding the next great small business. It's also finding the next great business on the rise. The sky is the limit for companies like Delaware Branding Company and business owners like Mike and Amy Perfetti."

The move into screen printing was a natural one for Mike Perfetti, an award-winning graphic designer who teaches screen printing to special needs students. He said the warm welcome that he and his wife received in Milford helped Delaware Branding Company expand into screen printing.

“My wife and I have both opened businesses in the past, but have never felt the kind of connection and support that we have felt in Milford. We did some local advertising, and a bit of signage, but most of our clientele have been walk-in customers and word of mouth,” Perfetti said. “We wouldn’t be here at all without the help of the city, the state and the Project Pop-Up program, which helped us get started. Our success speaks to the potential and promise that this program offers.”

The Perfettis say that they are looking into hiring their special needs trainees to work in the screen printing shop, which would give the trainees a place to socialize and allow them to work with someone who is experienced in accommodating for their special needs.

The expansion into screen printing has also allowed co-owner Amy Perfetti to create a roller derby apparel line, MeanCat Roller Derby Apparel. Amy, who has been a roller derby player for nearly a decade, is working with business partner Maureen Maher of Philadelphia to launch an online store and attend roller derby conventions.

Project Pop-Up is a joint effort between the Delaware Economic Development Office and Downtown Delaware.

“The program has done an excellent job at boosting two key elements of the state’s economic development efforts: Downtowns and small businesses,” said Alan Levin, Director of the Delaware Economic Development Office. “Larger firms will grab the headlines and generate buzz on social media, but these smaller businesses serve as the backbone of our economy.”

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