

SKED helps Pulaski business form Economic Alliance, Save Environment

SKED NEWS

If knowledge is power, creating the right connections in the business world is a superpower.

The Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corp. has been connecting its business clients with the resources they need to succeed for nearly 40 years. The result is success for all.

Such is the case for SKED Small Business Training Director Amanda Kelly and her introduction of two Pulaski County businesses, which has resulted in an economic partnership and an environmental win for the community.

It all began when Kelly was invited to tour Play Mart, Inc./ Nature of Early Play Inc., a Somerset, Kentucky-based, and locally owned, playground equipment manufacturer, last summer. Kelly is working with the manufacturer in her role as a trainer with the Kentucky Childcare Initiative.

Play Mart is a 32-year-old, woman-owned business that employs 31 people in the region. In addition to providing jobs in the area, owner

Rebecca Beach and her staff offer "green" products and ship to customers in the United States and across the world. Its products are 100% made in the USA, and manufactured primarily from 100% recycled materials, averaging 85% recycled content per structure, by weight.

The business creates the majority of its components from scratch, including its own recycled plastic lumber. Its exclusive use of post-consumer and post-industrial plastics prevents millions of pounds per year of plastics from entering a landfill.

While on the tour, Kelly immediately thought of one of her technical assistance clients – X-Treme Bait Tanks, and its owner, Damon Melcho. He builds bait tanks and all the accessories that go with them from his location in Ferguson, Kentucky. The veteran-owned business produces tanks for fresh and saltwater needs.

"Play Mart was proud to show me their waste recycling process," Kelly said. "During the process, they take all their scrap material, grind it up, and run it through an

extruder to create their posts and decking materials. I realized that X-Treme Bait Tanks also uses the same material that Play Mart is recycling."

Kelly contacted Melcho to ask him what he did with his business waste. He said he couldn't get anyone to take it, so he just disposed of it on his own.

Kelly concluded there was a better solution that would benefit both businesses.

Following an introductory meeting, the company leaders agreed that Play Mart would place a disposal bin at X-Treme Bait Tanks to store its waste, and Play Mart staff would collect it when it becomes full. Play Mart could utilize recycled waste in its own products.

Play Mart Plant Manager Koe Bell says the partnership has been a success, and the local manufacturer looks forward to a long and rewarding relationship with both SKED and X-Treme Bait Tanks.

X-Treme Bait Tank owner Damon Melcho, right, is pictured with Play Mart's Ryan Williams.

"We are very grateful to Ms. Kelly for introducing us to Damon Melcho at X-Treme Bait Tanks," Bell said. "With her creativity and knowledge of local businesses, she devised a solution to our respective problems almost immediately. In addition to the obvious economic aspects,

this partnership is in perfect alignment with our company philosophy of being environmentally responsible.

This solution provides Play Mart with more material to recycle, and it keeps X-Treme Bait Tank's waste from going to a landfill.

Melcho says X-Treme Bait Tanks is a leader in the industry, building the lightest, portable bait tanks on the market. His tanks are custom fabricated to fit a specific space in a boat or dock. The company's motto is: All Bait, All Sizes, Fresh & Saltwater.

He says some of his success is due to SKED.

"Amanda Kelly and SKED have helped significantly expand our international exposure over the past two years," he said. "This partnership with Play Mart is just another example of her desire to help local businesses streamline and maximize productivity. After touring the Play Mart facility, it was immediately obvious that we had a lot in common, such as national distribution, the same materials, etc. However, they had one thing that we don't have, and that is the ability to put our scrap High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) to good use. We estimate that we will be able to recycle approximately 7,000-10,000 pounds of HDPE a year."

Kelly believes that helping these two small business



Submitted Photo

X-Treme Bait Tank owner Damon Melcho, right, is pictured with Play Mart's Ryan Williams.

owners connect is a winning collaboration.

"This partnership between Play Mart and X-Treme Bait Tanks is a great example of how Kentucky businesses can work together to strengthen both our economy and our environment," Kelly said. "By turning what was once waste into a valuable resource,

Play Mart is not only creating high-quality, sustainable playground equipment but also helping another local manufacturer reduce landfill waste. It's a win-win collaboration that highlights the power of innovation, connection, and community-minded entrepreneurship right here in Somerset.

Commonwealth Journal

P.O. Box 859, 110-112 E. Mt. Vernon St.,
Somerset, KY 42502-0859

Bill Atkinson, Publisher • Steve Cornelius, Editor