

Hiring is cooking at Kettle Cuisine

By Thor Jourgensen / The Daily Item | Posted: Friday, February 20, 2015 3:00 am

LYNN — Kettle Cuisine Chief Financial Officer Trent Shute on Thursday called the soup maker's move to Lynn a success reflected in a sharp increase in the number of people hired by the Lynnway firm during 2013 and 2014.

“As we reflect on our decision to move to Lynn, we can say to ourselves we made a good decision,” Shute said.

Kettle Cuisine's Lynn workforce included 17 local residents in 2013. That number jumped to 47 local residents — a 176 percent increase — by the end of 2014, Shute stated in a letter sent this month to the city Economic Development and Industrial Corporation along with Kettle Cuisine's annual report.

“And these jobs are well-paying jobs — with the average hourly wage being 50 percent above the minimum wage,” Shute said.

Kettle Cuisine's \$22 million investment in Lynn is visible just past 330 Lynnway where the company makes 150 kinds of soups, as well as sauces and oatmeal. Company sales include products sold to the food services industry for use in restaurants. Smaller-sized serving products are sold to stores.

After the company outgrew its Chelsea plant, Kettle Cuisine executives decided to move to Lynn because of the opportunity to build a plant right next to refrigerated production space. The company pulled local building permits in February 2013 and spent 2013 renovating and building on the Lynnway. The new factory became fully operational last July.

EDIC Director James Cowdell said the improvements Kettle Cuisine and its employees bring to Lynn stretch well beyond adding a new building on the Lynnway.

“They have done a ton of hiring of Lynn people, which we think is great,” Cowdell said.

Shute in his letter to EDIC officials noted how Kettle Cuisine has involved the company in the local Food Project program, participated in job fairs, made cash and food donations to local organizations and hired local vendors to build its Lynnway headquarters.

The firm even hosts its company picnic and holiday party in Lynn.

“I must say Lynn has welcomed us and we have tried to reciprocate by not just being located here — but by becoming involved,” Shute wrote to EDIC.

He said company revenues grew by 34 percent in 2013 and 2014. Company forecasts estimated

workforce expansion from 138 to 248 employees over five years proved to underestimate, Shute stated. Kettle Cuisine added 104 jobs by December 2014.