

ORMOND BEACH **O**bserver

Business grows, thanks to aloe plant

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Tim Meadows, president of Concentrated Aloe Corporation, holds a mask presented to him by the people of Vanuatu, an island nation in Melanesia. The mask provides good luck to the traveler. In back is a painting that was done in Santa Domingo. Meadows, a formulation chemist, travels the world to find plants to use in his local business.

Local company to buy last lot at the Airport Business Park

Who would have thought that there is a vegan candy bar, made with kava, a root from the South Pacific, made right here in Ormond Beach? Or tamanu oil and butters, from a tree in Southeast Asia, that can help heal tattoo scars?

These are just two of many products made by Concentrated Aloe Corp. in the Ormond Beach Business Park on Orchard Avenue, a growing company that is planning to construct bigger facilities at the Airport Business Park.

As their name suggests, their main products come from the aloe, a plant native to Africa now well established in this hemisphere including Ormond Beach. Known for centuries as a soothing agent for burns and cuts, aloe is now used to make dietary supplement juice sold in health food stores and large national chain stores.

In fact, selling aloe gels to manufacturers is 40% of CAC's business.

Their aloe comes from Guatemala, where they buy the plants from a farm cooperative and process them in a plant where they employ about 55 Guatemalans.

Tim Meadows, president and founder, who has been operating the business in Ormond Beach since the early 1990s, said the aloe is an easy plant to grow. Originally from Africa, the aloe has no natural pests, and cows and goats do the weeding in the fields while also providing fertilizer.

There are no aloe farms in Central Florida because the plant is susceptible to freeze.

'Our mission is to support people'

Meadows takes pride that they are a certified fair trade company, which means they abide by fair wage guidelines and give back through community involvement. He believes providing business and jobs is more beneficial to the third world countries than traditional mission work.

"Our mission is to support people," he said. "I believe we're truly helping. They're glad to have us."

Meadows is a formulation chemist, originally from New Jersey, whose work history includes some time with local suntan legend Ron Rice when he started using aloe along with the rest of the industry.

Meadows' present company is growing not unlike aloe plants that spread wherever they grow.

"Aloe vera is getting fairly mainstream," he said. Their herbal extracts, oils and various kava products are also doing well.

That's why the company is purchasing Lot 2 in the Airport Business Park for \$164,000. The price has been reduced to \$154,000, after the reduction of a site plan credit, approved by City Commission on Aug. 5. The credit will help to offset site plan approval, impact fees, etc., according to Joe Mannarino, city economic development director.

Meadows plans to start building a 40,000-square-foot manufacturing plant by January.

They not only need more space than their present 16,000 to 18,000-square-foot facility, but also need a building with an electrical supply and design that will support their boiler and other processing needs.

Meadows said they have been jury rigging equipment in their present location.

Job growth expected

The company now has 25 employees in Ormond Beach and 55 at the processing plant in Guatemala, and expects 30% growth in the next few years.

The capital investment of the building is approximately \$2 million, according to city records.

Mannarino said the lot they are buying is the last lot left at the airport business park, although there is some land that could be subdivided.

On Sept. 1, the City Commission will consider another incentive for the company: no city property tax for five years. Mannarino said this type of incentive is well worth keeping the company and its jobs in the city.