

SchillingBridge Winery and Microbrewery

Outline Of Need: Mike and Sharon Schilling began growing grapes in 2002 on nine acres of their picturesque country property near Pawnee City, Nebraska. They have since produced numerous award-winning wines and, in 2007, began producing their own hand-crafted beers. Their microbrew line includes the 70 SchillingBridge Scottish Ale as well as Git-R-Done® Golden Lager, coined from the catch-phrase of Pawnee City native “Larry the Cable Guy”.

The microbrews were being marketed on-site or through various bars and restaurants via kegs. The Schillings knew that small bottling packaging of their hand-crafted beers would reach an entirely new market and expand their income possibilities.

How Rural Development Helped: The Schillings worked with their local lender, the State Bank of Table Rock, who provided a loan of \$81,707 guaranteed by USDA Rural Development through its Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan program and the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). The guaranteed loan helped to purchase a new bottling machine and bottle labeler which were needed to expand the business’s marketing into the small bottle packaging.

The Results: SchillingBridge Winery and Microbrewery are now able to package their hand-crafted brews in small packaging. Beer sales have increased in the double digits and are now going to retail stores in six packs. Additionally, the Schillings were awarded the honorable Nebraska Distinguished Entrepreneur Award in 2010 for their substantial growth as a small business and contributions to the economy of the local community.



Schilling Bridge celebrates their success with Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman and the area’s state senator, Lavon Heidemann.

“We couldn’t have done what we have or we wouldn’t be able to continue what we had planned without acknowledging entities such as USDA Rural Development and their Business & Industry program. This particular program has been instrumental in being able to achieve our goal of entering into small packaging in the beer distribution channels earlier than previously thought by providing our company a loan for our bottling machine. Even though we are in an “economic recession” we continue to see a substantial increase in our overall sales with our beer sales increasing double-digits in part to being able to get our Git-R-Done Golden Lager and our 70 SchillingBridge Scottish Ale to the retail shelf in 6 packs. So thank you all again for believing in our project and our vision. You have our promise that we will offer to our rural community our commitment for generations to come!” --Sharon Schilling, President SchillingBridge Winery and Microbrewery