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Southwest: Business updates

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Jim Offner

Just the Best Ltd. rolls dice with casinos

Santa Fe, N.M.-based wholesaler Just the Best Ltd. Co. is building on its casino business, said Stacy Wilson, sales and marketing director.

In 2012, Just the Best added the Hilton-owned Buffalo Thunder Resort in Santa Fe to its customer roster. Buffalo Thunder is the wholesaler's second casino customer — Sandia Casino in Albuquerque, N.M. — has been a customer for four years, Wilson said.

"They are two of the top five customers," she said. "The volume is significant — about \$10,000 a week."

Kodiak Fresh builds up sales staff

Phoenix-based distributor Kodiak Fresh LLC, doing business as Kodiak Produce & Storage, recently doubled its sales staff, from three to six, said Blair Hillman, owner.

Hillman declined to identify the new hires, but he said surging foodservice sales prompted the need for more help.

"There's optimism in the air, should I say," he said. "Maybe it's just we're getting better at what we do."

Legend Distributing adds cold storage

Glendale, Ariz.-based Legend Distributing is adding 15,000 square feet to its existing 40,000 square feet of cold storage, said Rick Crispo, a partner.

"That will complement our local grown veg that we're going to introduce in 2013," he said, adding that the extra space will provide "various temperature zones to work with."

The project is expected to be completed by the end of March, said Barry Zwilling, another partner.

Legend also reported a successful launch of its watermelon program, which it had technically started in limited volumes a year earlier, Crispo said.

"We probably tripled the volume from the light introduction in 2011. It was very successful all year in watermelons and expanding on that," he said.

Produce Brokers of Arizona gets new fleet

Produce Brokers of Arizona Inc., a Phoenix-based broker, repacker and distributor, has a new five-vehicle fleet, said John French, owner.

"We have a seven-year lease on all of them, and they're all due at the same time, so we get a whole new fleet every seven years," he said.

The 24-foot trucks make deliveries across Arizona, French said.

Quality Fruit & Veg builds up N.M. business

El Paso, Texas-based jobber and foodservice distributor Quality Fruit & Vegetable Co. is looking for more opportunities in New Mexico, said Nick Delgado, owner.

"We're just scratching that surface right now," said Delgado, whose company has government contracts to deliver through New Mexico "all the way to the Colorado line."

Finding more customers along the route makes sense, he said.

"I think we need to get more into the restaurants and foodservice-type customers out there," said Delgado, who also has some chain store customers in Albuquerque. "There's more that can be done there (in Albuquerque) also."

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