

# **OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY**

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912

**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 2, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Julie A. Sears, Made in Oklahoma Program Coordinator, Julie.Sears@ag.ok.gov, (405) 522-5560

## **MADE IN OKLAHOMA (MIO) STORE continues to expand**

When you see the Made in Oklahoma brand, don't just look at the product. Look at the people behind it. In many cases they are at work well before the sun rises and end their day well after it sets.

The 2015 edition of the Oklahoma State Fair, Sept. 17-27 at State Fair Park in Oklahoma City, is the perfect opportunity to experience their dedication and their tireless commitment to the quality found in Made in Oklahoma products.

And the place to find those unique products during the Oklahoma State Fair is at the Made in Oklahoma Store in the front area of Oklahoma Expo Hall west of the Space Tower.

There's also a chance that if you're looking to find your friends at the fair, this is the store where you may locate them.

"In 2014, we set a sales goal and we hit that sales goal by the first Sunday, just four days into the fair and we went on to almost double the goal," said Kerry Barrick, an Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry Market Development Coordinator. "The Made in Oklahoma Store is a joint effort between the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry and the Oklahoma State Fair. It is a consignment store for Made in Oklahoma companies of various sizes.

"This store is a way to give the companies a presence at the State Fair who normally probably wouldn't be able to afford it or wouldn't be able to commit the time it takes to be at the fair.

"So this is a way that the State Fair can highlight Made in Oklahoma products. It's also a way that the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture can help our companies have a presence, build awareness and make some money."

Last year the store was housed in a 10 foot by 30 foot booth. But the booming success in 2014 has led to expansion into a 10 foot by 60 foot booth this year.

Last year there was one demonstration station at the Made in Oklahoma Store. However this year, there will be two demonstration stations.

“Last year it was food and this year there will be both food and gift items,” Barrick said. “Last year, the fairgoers were extremely receptive to buying Made in Oklahoma products. They also spent a lot of time in the booth educating themselves on what’s made in Oklahoma and reading about products.”

Next year, a much-anticipated 2,600 square foot store will be ready.

Again, the success goes back to the product and the people behind it.

The Made in Oklahoma Program works with Oklahoma agribusinesses at local, regional and national levels to promote retail, institutional and gourmet sales. Activities include marketing programs targeted to increase consumer awareness about the availability and quality of Oklahoma agriculture products. Promotional methods include cooperative participation at trade shows, media advertising and certainly the Oklahoma State Fair.

When you consider the businesses carrying the treasured brand of Made in Oklahoma, the success comes as no surprise.

One example from the many outstanding companies fairgoers can expect at this year’s Made in Oklahoma Store is that of Pepper Creek Farms of Lawton. This is a family-run business and they pride themselves in using the freshest, locally grown ingredients, most of them picked by hand. The family cooks in small batches to preserve the integrity and fresh flavors of their natural ingredients. This is the only way they feel they can do justice to their cherished family recipes. They believe that with this approach, customers can taste the essence of the Southwest in all of their classic condiments, pepper jellies, relishes, pickles, salsas, dips and seasonings.

And while this and other companies can be enjoyed during the fair, the Made in Oklahoma Store is really an opportunity to remind consumers to always think Oklahoma when shopping.

This year’s store will have a holiday theme. Plus, rack cards will also be available that will have a list of the store’s retailers, along with their websites.

“Once they leave the fair, they’ll have a resource about where they can purchase more,” said Julie Sears, a Market Development Coordinator with ODAFF.

And by that point, it’s highly likely that fairgoers will not only have an appreciation for the Made in Oklahoma product, but also an appreciation for the people behind it.

###

Photo caption: In 2014, the Made in Oklahoma Store at the Oklahoma State Fair was housed in a 10 foot by 30 foot booth. But the booming success in 2014 has led to expansion into a 10 foot by 60 foot booth this year.

