

Food Industry Leader Retires from FAPC Committee

STILLWATER, Okla. – Food industry leaders across Oklahoma have been putting time and effort into serving on the Food & Agricultural Products Center Industry Advisory Committee.

One of these leaders is Don Ramsey, president and owner of Blue & Gold Sausage Co. of Jones, Okla. After numerous years of service to the FAPC, Ramsey retired from the Industry Advisory Committee.

J. Roy Escoubas, FAPC director said Ramsey's leadership in the food industry was the model for his leadership on the Industry Advisory Committee.

"Don began a start-up food business in Oklahoma and, thus, recognized the needs that start-up businesses face," Escoubas said. "He grew and developed his business so that it became a significant business in Oklahoma, thus, understanding the growth and planning process and needs of food businesses."

As a result of his support to the FAPC, Ramsey was awarded an official citation signed by Gov. Brad Henry for his meritorious service to the FAPC.

According to the citation, "Don was a visionary leader 25 years ago when he and a small group of food industry leaders and Oklahoma legislators realized the opportunities for value-added food and agricultural commodity products in Oklahoma. Don's vision for a food processing center has been a sound investment for Oklahoma."

Ramsey said he was elated and happy to receive the citation signed by the governor.

"To see the process of the FAPC grow to what it is today gives me a great deal of pleasure," Ramsey said. "The FAPC is a great contribution for Oklahoma."

Ramsey served on the first Advisory Committee in 1989 when the early planning was underway for the FAPC. He also was one of the first members named by the governor to the FAPC Advisory Committee in 1996 and has been reappointed to this committee four times.

"Don was a visionary promoter and founder of the FAPC because he understood what the FAPC could be to Oklahoma," Escoubas said. "He was an avid advocate, supporter and leader on the Industry Advisory Committee for these reasons."

The mission of the FAPC is to discover, develop and deliver value-added products and processing technologies for the food and agricultural industries of Oklahoma. Since inception in 1997, the FAPC has assisted more than 800 Oklahoma businesses with more than 1,000 value-added food and agricultural projects, giving rise to more than 100 start-up companies in Oklahoma.

An economic impact study completed last fall indicated that those businesses, which the FAPC assisted, accounted for more than 21 percent of all Oklahoma direct-food processing jobs or more than 8,000 jobs and more than 31 percent of all direct-food processing revenue or more than \$500 million in Oklahoma.

Ramsey's company, Blue & Gold Sausage, has been family-owned and operated since 1969. Blue & Gold Sausage Co. provides fundraising opportunities for more than 800 groups, such as FFA chapters, bands, youth groups and non-profit organizations in Oklahoma and surrounding states.

The concept of the company began in the early 1960s when Ramsey, an agricultural education teacher at the time, was faced with the responsibility of raising money for his FFA chapter to fund on-going projects.

As a result, Ramsey began processing pigs raised by his FFA members and making breakfast sausage for the students to sell. The sausage fundraiser grew popular, and a number of other groups began to participate. That was when Blue & Gold Sausage Co. was born.

In addition to producing sausage, the company now also produces bacon and chicken tenderloin fritters. All products are sold exclusively through groups and currently generate more than \$1 million annually for organizations.

According to the Blue & Gold Sausage Co. Web site, the recipe for fundraising success is simple: Provide patrons with products of unsurpassed quality and value. It is the company's desire that people buy Blue & Gold Sausage products not only because they are helping raise money for a worthy cause, but they also want the products in their refrigerators.

Escoubas said Ramsey's business has been successful because he recognized a need and developed a business to fill that need.

"He was constantly sensitive to the needs of his client base, allowed his client base to be a part of his business by giving back to them a portion of his profits each year and giving of himself to the causes and needs of his clients," Escoubas said. "Don brought these experiences and this mind set to the oversight committee of the FAPC, and the committee was better for it and certainly the FAPC is better for it."

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