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Green Mountain Coffee's Jobs, Corporate Philosophy, Welcomed to Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley

KNOXVILLE, Tenn., Dec. 11 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- An empty 334,000-square-foot building and an eager workforce explain only in part why Vermont-based Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc. (NASDAQ:GMCR) chose the Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley of Tennessee for a major expansion site that eventually will employ 300 workers.

"The central location makes us more efficient, reduces our transportation and distribution costs and shortens delivery lead times of our products," according to Jon Wettstein, Green Mountain's vice president for supply chain operations.

But he says a well-coordinated economic development community also helped seal the deal.

The Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley economic development partnership between the Blount County Chamber of Commerce, Knoxville Chamber, Loudon County Economic Development Agency, Oak Ridge Economic Partnership, the Roane Alliance, and Tellico Reservoir Development Agency, Wettstein says, "provided an incredibly efficient process."

Quality of life considerations also played a major part in attracting the socially-conscious coffee roasting and distributing company. Knoxville has fared well in recent polls by Forbes, Inc. and Site Selection magazines.

"The skilled workforce, the prospects for continuous learning, the opportunities for us to partner with the community, the quality of life for employees and the physical beauty of the area all were important factors in our decision to locate here," Wettstein said.

For their part, Innovation Valley officials welcome Green Mountain's progressive business model. RO Magazine, Forbes and SustainableBusiness.com have recognized Green Mountain as a good corporate citizen and an innovative, high-growth company.

"We think they'll be trendsetters in corporate and social responsibility - both locally and internationally," said Doug Lawyer, director of economic development for the Knoxville Chamber.

Because nearly 100 million people work in the coffee industry worldwide - many of them in developing countries - Green Mountain has ample opportunity "to distribute value more equitably through the supply chain and support sustainability in coffee-growing communities," said Mike Dupee, the company's vice president of corporate social responsibility.

Dupee said Green Mountain also places a high premium on human capital at home, has aggressive plans to reduce waste and minimize energy use, and continues to increase the percentage of its fair trade products.

"In the workplace, a chain reaction occurs when employees are safe, have the opportunity to learn and grow, and have meaningful work: ideas and innovation flow among coworkers, customers are happier with our products, profits grow, and then we have more human and financial capital to invest in sustainable business practices," he said.

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In its blueprint for the future, the Innovation Valley, which is home to Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the University of Tennessee, and the headquarters of the Tennessee Valley Authority and other corporations, targets :

- agricultural research and development
- materials science
- media technology
- nanotechnology
- renewable energy
- automotive suppliers
- pleasure boat manufacturing
- warehouse/distribution operations
- logistics services
- regional headquarters
- retirement services
- shared service facilities
- venture capital firms

For more information about the Knoxville-Oak Ridge Innovation Valley, visit www.innovationvalleyinc.org/ or call Garrett Wagley at the Knoxville Chamber, 1-865-637-4550

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