

New biodiesel facility open for business

Wednesday, 07 October 2009

A new biodiesel facility—which some feel will lead the effort toward energy independence in the United States—has opened its doors in Isanti.

by Rachel Kytonen

Isanti County News

A new biodiesel facility—which some feel will lead the effort toward energy independence in the United States—has opened its doors in Isanti.

Dr. Clayton McNeff explains the Mcgyan process at the grand opening of Ever Cat Fuels, a new biodiesel facility in Isanti. The technology to create the fuel was developed at Anoka's SarTec.

Photo by Rachel Kytonen

Over 200 people gathered on Monday, Sept. 28, to celebrate the grand opening of Ever Cat Fuels' new biodiesel facility.

Guests from all across the world and country, including Germany, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois and Louisiana, got a first-hand look at the new facility, featuring the first of its kind world-showcase using the revolutionary "Mcgyan Process."

WCCO-TV news anchor Don Shelby served as host of the two-hour celebration.

"This new facility is leading the charge for energy change in the United States, and that energy change, I'm proud to say, begins in this room," Shelby said. "This place is in Isanti for a reason, and one of the reasons is because of Mayor George Wimmer, who has worked very hard to get this facility here. This facility is at the center of the universe, and this man has served the community incredibly."

The facility began operations on Sept. 11 using the Mcgyan production process—developed at SarTec labs in Anoka—that uses inedible plant waste oil.

The discovery of the Mcgyan process began at Augsburg College a little over three years ago when Professor Arlin Gyberg and then student Brian Krohn contacted Dr. Clayton McNeff and Dr. Ben Yan at SarTec Corporation.

The plant is designed to produce up to three million gallons per year, doesn't use any water or chemicals and doesn't produce any waste products.

Isanti Mayor George Wimmer was introduced to the project at a chamber dinner in 2007 during a conversation with Landmark Community Bank President Kevin Johnson.

"I will never forget my first meeting with the McNeffs," Wimmer said. "We met at city hall, and the initial details of the process and facility were explained. The fact that it was cost effective, not water intensive and eliminated the food or fuel choice, I was sold on the concept."

Wimmer acknowledged the partnerships it took to bring the facility to Isanti.

"This project has already fostered an environment of intergovernmental agency cooperation and will continue to create and enhance these partnerships, as the project evolves and grows into the future," Wimmer said. "The end result only proves what can be accomplished if we all work together and if the lines of communication between us all are open. The result is a successful project that may be an example to others."

Wimmer acknowledged several community partnerships with entities such as the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar, East Central Regional Development Commission, State Sen. Rick Olseen and State Rep. Rob Eastlund.

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar praised Ever Cat Fuels and the city of Isanti for the opening of the production facility.

"This is on the cutting edge of energy," Klobuchar said. "When I see something like this...it's everything I'm hearing about in Washington."

The Isanti facility employs a total of 20 people at the 24/7 operation.

"The Ever Cat Fuels facility means a great deal to the city of Isanti and our region as a whole," Wimmer said. "The demonstration plant not only provides good paying local jobs in a developing industry, it also has brought state and national attention to our community. Only a project of this nature could bring together the group we have assembled here today. Isanti's ability to bring private and public sector resources together has truly been realized on this project."

The Mcgyan process is named for the three scientists officially credited with the discovery, Dr. Clayton McNeff, Dr. Arlin Gyberg and Dr. Ben Yan.

Ever Cat Fuels' Chief Science Officer Dr. Clayton McNeff gave the audience a virtual tour of the plant and explained the Mcgyan Process.

The Mcgyan process uses a simple, fixed bed continuous reactor to quickly and economically catalyze the production of biodiesel fuel from a variety of low cost feedstock materials, including inedible plant waste oils. Ever Cat Fuels initial facility is based in Anoka.

McNeff said the process has undergone a full research and development cycle over the past three years, including small scale production on a lab scale model plant and long term endurance testing.

“Energy is really one of the most pressing issues facing the United States and the world,” McNeff said. “The Mcgyan process really opens up a new doorway, and I think today is a significant day in terms of energy independence and to grow our own energy.”

The Mcgyan process has also undergone over one year of pilot scale production testing.

“I would like to express my sincere gratitude for everyone coming out here today,” McNeff said. “It’s a great day for all of us as we celebrate energy independence for the future of the United States.”

Wimmer is excited about the publicity surrounding Isanti and the new facility.

“The potential economic development spurred by this facility and the attention it brings to Isanti is exciting,” Wimmer said. “Personally, I take great pride in knowing that our city has played a small part in helping to reach energy independence in an environmentally sensible way.”

Sen. Olseen is excited about the biodiesel plant opening.

“Who would have thought Isanti County and District 17 would be a leader in renewable energy,” Olseen said. “I’m so proud of the mayor of Isanti and the entire city council for bringing this here. I’m so thrilled.”

Blake Chaffee spoke on behalf of Oberstar.

“It is with great joy and satisfaction that we’re here today celebrating the opening of Ever Cat Fuels new facility,” Chaffee said. “The technology that was developed in Minnesota has gained significant national and global attention. Today we recognize the hard work and spirit of everyone who made this possible.”

Shelby said he’s been following the Mcgyan process since the beginning.

“They have tested hundreds of feedstocks throughout this process, and for the most part the results have been incredible,” Shelby said. “You’re talking about a renewable resource to the likes of which we’ve never seen before. The future of the Mcgyan process has been franchised all over the world.”

Wimmer thanked the McNeff family and the entire Ever Cat Fuels family for their dedication and hard work.

“Their perseverance in making this project a successful reality is an inspiration to us all,” Wimmer said. “They have been a joy to work with on this project and are the highest professional and ethical individuals that I have had the pleasure to work with.

“From March of 2007 to the fall of 2009, we have faced a number of interesting challenges and at each and every hurdle we have found excellent solutions. Through their genius of invention to their tenacity to bring positive change to the world, we all thank you and look forward to your next great invention,” Wimmer added.

Shelby took great pleasure in being a part of the grand opening celebration.

“We’re seeing history being made here today,” Shelby said. “The truth of the matter is we had to find something else, and we found it. All eyes will be on Isanti, and all eyes will be on the Mcgyan process.”

For more information on the Mcgyan process and Ever Cat Fuels visit www.evercatfuels.com .

Licenses for the patented pending Mcgyan production process are available through McNeff Research Consultants. Contact Dave Wendorf at 763-432-2743 or davewendorf@mcneffresearchconsultants.com for more information.