



Rural Development • Rural Business Service • Business and Industry

## Rural Battery Manufacturer Gets Boost from USDA Business Program

Small business owners face countless challenges when it comes to finding success in the global marketplace – and for those in rural areas, the challenges are often more pronounced.

For more than 30 years, Superior Battery has been manufacturing a wide range of batteries from its plant in Russell Springs, Ky. The business is locally owned and operated, and was started by Randy Hart – an Air Force veteran and tool-and-die enthusiast – his wife and four nephews.

Over the past three decades, Superior has battled fierce competition, a disastrous plant fire and a severe economic recession. Thanks in large part to Hart’s commitment to his business, the community and his employees, the company has morphed into a major player in an industry that has seen more than 90 percent of battery manufacturers go bust.

USDA Rural Development is helping Hart maintain a competitive edge by providing assistance through the agency’s Rural Business Service.

In May 2014, Superior was the recipient of a \$10 million Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan through a local lender – Community Trust Bank – that made it possible for the company to finance efficiency improvements that are saving money, increasing profits and making it possible to save more than 160 jobs and create 25 new jobs. Those jobs are vital to a community that has been hard hit by losses in the past couple of years. Russell Springs is the county seat of Russell County, one of Kentucky’s persistent poverty



*Rural Development State Director Tom Fern, left, talks with Randy Hart, CEO of Superior Battery, during a tour of the facility on Nov. 24, 2014.*

counties and part of USDA’s StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity.

Earlier this year, Fruit of the Loom closed its local production facility which led to the loss of 600 manufacturing jobs. In a rural county with a population of less than 18,000 – and a lack of meaningful employment opportunities – the closure was devastating.

USDA’s investment in Superior Battery is intended to help the company grow its business and improve the economic climate of the community. Superior exports its products to more than two dozen countries around the world and garners more than 30 percent of its revenue from exports.

**Obligation Amount:** \$10 million

**Date of Obligation:** May 2014

**Congressional District:** Rep. Ed Whitfield, KY-1; Senators Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul

**Partners:** Caverna Memorial Hospital

**Demographics:** Russell County has been designated a StrikeForce county by USDA.

**Impact:** B&I Loan Guarantee enabled Superior Battery to finance efficiency improvements that are saving money, increasing profits and saving and creating jobs.