

NOMINEE



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Owners Rob Kelly and Cathy Siskind-Kelly show the various flavours of Black Fly vodka coolers as their latest flavour, strawberry-rhubarb, comes off the line behind them. The company is nominated, in the small business category, for a business achievement award.

Black Fly makes a splash

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London is the historic home of two of Canada's biggest breweries Labatt and Carling.

Someday it may also be famous as the birthplace of Black Fly coolers.

Owners Rob Kelly and Cathy Siskind-Kelly scored a coup in 2004 by getting the first distillery licence granted in Ontario in over 100 years. Since then Black Fly has made a splash in a sector dominated by corporate giants.

The company now distributes its vodka coolers and frozen cooler products across Ontario as well as Nova Scotia, Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon.

"We are well beyond what we dreamed or expected with

five products on the market," said Siskind-Kelly.

Black Fly sets itself apart in the premium market with distinctive, environmentally-friendly packaging and a less-sweet state. Savvy marketing has given the company a lot of exposure in both local and national media.

Last May the company moved from its downtown headquarters to a much larger plant in southeast London.

The company now has eight full-time employees and 20 part-time employees. Black

Fly has supported numerous community events and charities and despite their hectic schedule, Siskind-Kelly said the couple has been able to maintain a normal family life for their three children.

The company is launching a new product in the fall and

BLACK FLY BEVERAGE CO.

Category: Small Business

Established: 2004

Employees: eight full-time 20 part-time

Product/Service: manufacturer of vodka coolers and frozen cooler products

Distinction: first microdistillery in Ontario

hopes to eventually expand into the US market. But Siskind-Kelly said London would always be home base.

"We fought very hard to establish in London. We hope everybody here considers it their home town brand, because it is," she said.

Hank Daniszewski is a Free Press business reporter



One in a series of profiles on businesses nominated for London Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Awards. The winners will be announced at a ceremony on March 25.

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