



# Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation

## **Newsrelease**

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### **For Immediate Release**

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Contact: Tamara Watson

845463.5450

[tamara@dcedc.com](mailto:tamara@dcedc.com)

### **The Story of a Retirement That's Not a Retirement and a Coffee Shop That's More than a Coffee Shop**

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY – Mixing retirement with entrepreneurship is not unusual these days, and it appears to be working for Ken Kraft, owner of Poughkeepsie's newest coffee and tea shop called the CraftedKup, located at 44 Raymond Avenue, in the Poughkeepsie/Dutchess Empire Zone.

The CraftedKup is more than a place to stop for a quick cup of coffee or tea. The shop also serves 100% fruit smoothies, local baked goods from Bread Alone, Wild Hive Farm Bakery, and Enterprise Bagels, plus gluten-free products from Soul Dog, another successful Poughkeepsie enterprise.

Focusing on local products is only part of the intent of this busy and committed entrepreneur. Says Kraft, "I've made a concerted effort to promote

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environmentally conscious, sustainable, green products and behaviors as part of my business.”

Kraft adds, ““I have chosen to ally myself with certain companies—Bread Alone, Harney & Sons fine teas, and Wild Hive Farm Bakery because of their strong commitment to organic, green, and sustainability. Many of the products we sell at the shop are organic, in addition to being local.”

All the coffee at The CraftedKup is organic, and Kraft notes that his suppliers are going in the direction of including a greater number of fair-trade products: “Harney & Sons offers some fair-trade and organic teas, and their desire and goal is to go in that direction.”

For Kraft, being *green* includes a commitment to making it easy for customers to recycle products that they purchase in the coffee shop as well as setting an example by recycling the shop’s own refuse. The CraftedKup maintains a recycling bin, and Kraft and his employees encourage customers to use it through example, by disposing of the shop’s waste in the same bin. The shop’s hot paper cups are compostable along with the sleeves for the cups, their cold drink cups are No. 2 plastic and recyclable, and the bottles containing Harney & Sons chilled teas are also recyclable. The store’s throw-away food and coffee grounds are composted at Vassar Farms.

The CraftedKup was formed as a business in January 2007 and celebrated its seven-month, open-for-business anniversary the week of June 9. A

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Poughkeepsie/Dutchess Empire Zone business, the CraftedKup has one full-time employee and two part-time employees.

States Kraft, "Being in the Empire Zone has been good for my business, and I would recommend that any entrepreneur look into locating his or her business within the Poughkeepsie/Dutchess Zone. The Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation's EZ staff are always ready to assist. and the Zone tax-incentives are well worth the effort of applying."

Says Theresa Kelly, Empire Zone Coordinator with the Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation, "The CraftedKup is a terrific example of a Zone business that has brought additional vitality to a neighborhood that is steadily increasing its public appeal by diversifying its slate of businesses."

Kraft has invested over \$100,000 in his Raymond Avenue business, including equity of 40 percent. This figure is not unusual for an early-stage business.

Readily admitting that he has no prior experience in food service or in running a shop, Kraft believes that his years of public service instilled a work ethic and realistic expectations that are helpful in his current entrepreneurial venture. He began his career as an Engineering Aid in the Putnam Highway Department and worked his way up the career ladder to achieve the position of Superintendent of Public Works for the Village of Croton-on-Hudson Department

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of Public Works. He cites the patience learned from the 11 years that he devotedly worked without a raise, while building his skills and relationships which eventually resulted in promotion and a notably successful career.

When choosing a retirement business investment, Kraft sought a venture that would allow him to continue to pursue his avocation of being a track and field official. Kraft is the President of the Dutchess County Track Officials and Coaches Association (DCTOCA) and is First Vice President of the New York State Track Officials. Says Kraft, "The coffee shop fits well into my life as it is now. I am able to devote time at the shop to handling the voluminous correspondence necessary when planning track meets, such as the major cross-county meet that the DCTOCA is currently planning, which will take place in the fall at Bowdoin Park."

The recently retired Superintendent of Public Works for the Village of Croton-on-Hudson Department of Public Works, Kraft chalked up 36 years in public service. He firmly believes that the experience of hard work, which includes a willingness to begin the work day early, and a long-view perspective when it comes to financial goals are serving him well in his new career. Kraft observes, "I could be making more money than I am now and be out every day on the golf course, but I would not be happy unless I was involved in the community and meeting new people."

Kraft is fond of saying that he "used to be a public servant" and now he "serves the public." About his love of public service, he relays that as he

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approached retirement, he was looking for a way to stay involved in public service. He began by contacting key people in the City of Poughkeepsie to let them know he was interested in public service. He first spoke with Steven Wing and then met with Former Mayor Nancy Cozean. Ultimately, he became a member of the Poughkeepsie Planning Board, a position he has held for three and a half years.

Like most successful start-up businesses, the CraftedKup is planning for growth and change. Currently catering to a diverse group of customers anchored by college students and faculty from nearby Vassar College, the CraftedKup's future plans include the possibility of opening a space for readings and also potentially for political forums and discussions. These and other decisions await the arrival of fall and the return of students and faculty.

Assisting Ken Kraft in the business is his wife Janet, a Dietetic Technician at the Wingate Nursing Home and a lifelong resident of Poughkeepsie.

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The Poughkeepsie/Dutchess Empire Zone was designated by New York State in July 1994. Its purpose is to spur growth in economically impacted areas. The Poughkeepsie/Dutchess Empire Zone is administered through the Dutchess County Economic Development Corporation.

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