



• Come **Grow Globally** •

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Existing industry feature: International Greetings USA

LIBERTY COUNTY, GA - In 1996, when The Gift Wrap Company, a United Kingdom-based manufacturer of gift wrap and accessories, relocated from Massachusetts to the Midway Industrial Park, the Liberty County Development Authority (LCDA) could only dream how successful the company's Liberty County location would become.

Almost 15 years later, The Gift Wrap Company, now called International Greetings USA, is thriving in Liberty County. The company ultimately chose Liberty County, GA over several other southeastern United States locations due in large part to an available 50,000-square-foot speculative building in the Midway Industrial Park that could be easily expanded to 100,000 square feet. Since locating, International Greetings has expanded their original building several times, as well as has purchased two additional buildings, now occupying three buildings in the Midway Industrial Park totaling over 500,000 square feet.

Rich Eckman, chief operating officer for International Greetings USA, attributes the company's growth in Liberty County to several factors. "New market share, acquisitions of the Stephen Lawrence and Glitter Wrap lines, and just overall business growth have led us to expand our presence in Liberty County," Eckman states.

Along with the facility growth, International Greetings' employment has grown. When the facility opened in 1996, the company employed 65 in Liberty County. Today, between the three facilities in the Midway Industrial Park, International Greetings has 135 full-time and 60 seasonal employees.

Out of their Liberty County location, International Greetings employs all of their company functions with the exception of design, which is based in Atlanta. Positions at their Liberty County facilities include: machine operators, printing technicians, order packers, customer service representatives, human resources and finance professionals, and information technology specialists.

Eckman gives the Liberty County workforce high marks. "The area workforce is good. We have particularly had great success with military retirees and spouses. We have very little turnover at our Liberty County location," Eckman says.

Employees at International Greetings' Liberty County location are supporting both manufacturing and distribution operations. In addition to printing approximately 300 million linear feet of wrapping paper per year off of their two printing presses, the company's Liberty County facilities are distributing products like tissue paper, stationery products, gift bags, and gift cards that are imported from overseas.

Naturally, International Greetings' peak season is in advance of the holidays. "Our busy season runs from May to October each year," Eckman states. "We actually start printing holiday wrapping paper in February."

For several years, International Greetings has hosted a warehouse sale just prior to the holiday season. This year's sale will occur on Saturday, November 20th from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

In addition to the warehouse sale, International Greetings regularly sells products out of their factory outlet store, which is located in one of their three buildings in the park. The store is typically open the first and third Friday of each month from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM with additional sale dates during the holiday season.

"The local community can really get some outstanding deals at the factory outlet store," Eckman says. "We discount the merchandise in our store 70 percent less than the typical retail price."

The products sold in the factory outlet store are the same products that are sold to International Greetings' major customers. International Greetings' customer base includes companies ranging from Macy's and Bloomingdale's to Wal-Mart and Target.

International Greetings sells to approximately 90 percent of the top 50 retailers in the United States. The company's best selling brands are The Gift Wrap Company, Stephen Lawrence, and Pepper Pot.

Eckman credits Liberty County's pro-business community as one of the reasons the location has been so successful. "We have had an outstanding working relationship with the LCDA," Eckman states. "Specifically, as we have continued to grow and need additional space, the LCDA facilitated the process as we expanded our initial facility several times and acquired additional buildings in the park."

"In addition, we have found the community as a whole to be very welcoming and supportive," Eckman says. "We look forward to many more years together."

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