



'Made in Newark' initiative hopes to introduce visitors to city's businesses, locally made products

Published: Thursday, March 17, 2011, 7:00 AM



By Sarah Portlock / The Star-Ledger

NEWARK — Activity buzzed inside a nondescript, one-story manufacturing building near Newark's Branch Brook Park.

Workers from Unionwear carefully cut zippers to length for royal blue gym bags emblazoned with a block-lettered "Made in Newark" logo on the side. Others focused on embroidery machines, guiding threads in red, orange and yellow patterns that spelled out "Go Newark Hoop Fest" on baseball caps.

The NCAA basketball tournament starts in earnest today, with 16 games being played in eight cities throughout the country.

Next Thursday, the Prudential Center in Newark will host the tournament's East Regional. If the seedings hold true, players and fans from the University of North Carolina, Ohio State, Syracuse and the University of Kentucky will descend on the city. Now being made for them are the hats, bags and other goods that will be worn and sold during the event, produced as part of a new initiative designed to bring attention to the city's manufacturing industry.

Doris Gallardo of Newark was assembling hats at Unionwear and said she is thrilled to be working for her community.

"It generates work for us," she said. "Also, to know you are working for the place you live makes us very proud."

The "Made in Newark" initiative is five years in the making for Mitch Cahn, president of Unionwear, a garment manufacturer, and the program's driving force. Its mission is four-fold: highlight the city's 150-year manufacturing history, introduce consumers to the breadth of products made here, educate visitors about what's happening inside the seemingly-empty industrial buildings, and foster collaboration among business owners.

"We've got to do something with the manufacturers here," Cahn said, recalling his vision. "It's huge and nobody knows about it."

During the East Regional, volunteers will wear uniforms made at Unionwear and about 500 VIPs will receive Unionwear-stitched bags filled with locally produced goods. Visitors can buy "Made in Newark" logoed screen-printed t-shirts, baby bibs and hats, and there's even an iPad case made of orange fabric stamped to resemble a basketball and emblazoned with the image of Newark's skyline. The goods will be on sale at a pop-up store in Championship Plaza outside the Prudential Center, in kiosks at Newark Liberty International Airport and online at www.MadeInNewark.net.

GONEWARK HOOPFEST: WHAT'S INSIDE?

At the NCAA East Regionals tournament later this month, VIPs will receive gift bags stocked with locally-produced goods as part of a new Made in Newark initiative that highlights the city's manufacturing industry. Stuffed in the bag, which itself is made in Newark, will be more than two dozen items, including:



1. Nuts and bolts made of chocolate from Zago Manufacturing, which produces industrial parts
2. Gift card for free audio book from Audible.com
3. Pocket square with an embroidered image of the state with a red star where Newark is by Mel Gambert Custom Shirts
4. Bottle of Elan Chemical vanilla extract
5. Bottle of Frank's RedHot Sweet Chili sauce
6. Coupon for creating your own glass object from GlassRoots
7. Black and white cookies from Joey's Fine Foods
8. Tam Tam crackers from Manischewitz

Source: Mitch Cahn, Made in Newark organizer

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Affixed to everything is a small hangtag singing the praises of the city's 300 factories and 12,000 workers: "Location, labor and transit have made Newark the East's manufacturing hub for 150 years," it reads. "When you buy locally, you create value in your community."

The goal is to have as many of the products used during the tournament made in Newark by as many different companies as possible, Cahn said. Already, he estimates 50,000 items are in production or waiting for delivery. The attention paid to Newark during the event — not to mention the significant visitor traffic and dollars — has local organizations excited about the attention. City officials estimate revenue from ticket sales, hotels, restaurant and travel could reach into the millions of dollars, but Newark Mayor Cory Booker has said the actual figure is "hard to calculate."

"It's huge for us as a small business to have the opportunity to get our name and our product visible to so many people and so many different businesses," said Anthony Ferrara, general manager of ARC Tristate's Newark office, a commercial printing company that is making signage and posters. "They probably don't even realize Newark is able to do so many things locally that we're able to do."

Ferrara is printing the backdrop of a mural project that reads "Newark Live Work Play and Create" and will hang on Market Street near the Rock. Photographs of Newark's manufacturing history make up the letters of "Newark" and artists and gallery owners will paint in the letters of "create." The idea is to illustrate how the city's businesses, residents, artists and other industries work together, said Tamara Fleming, who is organizing the project as creative director at a local public relations firm, Femworks.

"It's about coming together to make this happen and to really highlight the initial origins of why Newark is what it is," she said. "The collaborative effort is something that's a true commodity, and it's one of the essences of Newark."

Matthew Gosser, a found-objects sculptor and photographer who has lived and worked in Newark for nearly two decades, said he jumped at the opportunity to help. He lined up six artists and told them they could fill in the letters however they wanted, so long as they stay within the lines and don't paint anything offensive.

The mural is "a quick sampling of what's happening in Newark," he said, noting the city's bustling art scene.

"Anything we can do to make the city look a little better for the tournament is a good thing, and it benefits everybody," Gosser added.

The Made in Newark program will continue after the tournament leaves town, and Cahn said he hopes to rekindle the pop-up stores at future events in the region, like the 2014 Super Bowl at the Meadowlands.

"We want this to be something that goes on for a long time," Cahn said.

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