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Local company to sell product in Walgreens



Crown Laboratories Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bedard explains how Blue Lizard and other products are made. (Dave Boyd / Johnson City Press)

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If you forget to take your bottle of Blue Lizard Australian Suncream to the beach this year, don't fret — just head to the nearest Walgreens.

The drugstore chain has signed on to sell Blue Lizard products nationwide, marking a huge step for Johnson City-based Crown Laboratories. Blue Lizard is Crown's flagship product.

"We've been working for probably four years on getting nationwide distribution at a major retail chain," said Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bedard. "The local economy is going to be affected because we're going to add more jobs with this growth."

Bedard expects that Crown's current work force of 25 will double since an extra shift and more support staff will be added. About half a million

advertisement

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5-ounce bottles of sunscreen were made there last year.

“We’re going to have to go to 2 million 5-ounce bottles to meet demand this year,” he said.

Blue Lizard products — regular, sport, face, baby and sensitive — already are sold at local Walgreens stores, in addition to Kroger and independently owned stores. The new deal will put those, and a lip balm due out this summer, on the shelves of about 4,700 more Walgreens stores across the country within a couple of months.

Blue Lizard also will be in abundance at Infineon Raceway in Sonoma, Calif., this June when the “Walgreens 200 presented by Blue Lizard” is held.

“It’s a minor league race ... but it’s part of the NASCAR weekend in the wine country,” Bedard said. “What we’re doing in regard to that weekend is kind of a first for NASCAR.”

Speedway Motorsports Inc., which owns Infineon and Bristol Motor Speedway, is very interested in partnering with Crown to educate fans about sun-related health risks. Race fans, particularly the die-hard sort that go to each and every race, are at a high risk for skin cancer without proper protection, Bedard said.

Crown already offers free skin-cancer screenings at BMS races. In the past three years, Bedard said more than 100 melanomas have been detected.

“That’s eight or nine per 150 people,” he said. “It’s typically one to two per 150.”

Also in California, Blue Lizard is sponsoring a poster contest in local schools. The 20 children chosen as having best depicted a sun-safe day at the race track will get to attend the Walgreens 200 presented by Blue Lizard with their families.

The SHADE Foundation, Curt and Shonda Schilling’s nonprofit organization that seeks to educate kids about skin cancer, also is sponsoring the poster contest. In the upcoming Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition, an advertisement for SHADE features the Schilling family with a bottle of Blue Lizard.

To add to Crown’s busy start to the new year, Bedard said he just received preliminary data showing that Blue Lizard is the best sunscreen in the world. Crown officials were worried when another brand not available in the United States, Anthelios, was named tops by a group of doctors. So, they submitted Blue Lizard for testing, and while it’s not official, Bedard said he’s confident his product will earn the title.

“Locally, it’s pretty impressive to think that the world’s best sunscreen is made right here in Johnson City,” he said.

Crown Laboratories, located on Lafe Cox Drive, is a fully integrated

pharmaceutical company that manufactures products for dermatology, oncology, pediatric and dental markets. Under its three main branded divisions — Blue Lizard, Del-Ray Dermatologicals and Med-Derm Pharmaceuticals — Crown makes about 40 products.

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