

BOYD AIMS TO FILL THE VOID OF MINORITY DISTRIBUTORSHIPS IN MARYLAND

By Teddy Durgin

"To our knowledge, we are the only African-American liquor distributorship in the state. That in and of itself is unique. So, you want to build around that. If you can get a niche in this business, if you can carve something out that's special, then you can be successful."

So said **Dr. Gerald Boyd Sr.**, the principal owner of Legacy Partners Distribution LLC (LPD), during a recent interview with the *Beverage Journal*. With many years of entrepreneurial experience, Boyd recognized the need for a small wholesaler that would be built on great customer service in the Washington metro area. That was three years ago. Today, LPD is licensed to do business in Maryland, including Montgomery County; Virginia; and Washington, D.C.

The idea for launching such an enterprise came soon after Maryland legalized full-fledged casino gambling in 2012. Way before groundbreaking, MGM National Harbor in Prince George's County specifically agreed to award at least 30 percent of its contracts for the landmark property to minority-owned businesses. "We started three years ago and had our sights set on the MGM, which hadn't opened at that point," Boyd recalled. "But they had a Community Benefits Agreement. In talking to some of the people involved, they said one of the areas of opportunity for minority vendors was liquor distribution."

He continued, "It was a process to meet the licensing requirements, the warehouse requirements, and establish relationships

with some manufacturers. By the time we did all of that, about a year had passed. We started in March 2014, and our first order and drop-off of product was January 2015."

So far, LPD's products have been well-received. One of the most popular brands it distributes is AnestasiA Vodka. Handcrafted in the United States, it is touted as "smooth with a spring water feel and a silky crème brûlée finish." The 94 point rated vodka is distilled five times, filtered five times, and is naturally gluten-free. El Decreto's tequilas ~ Blanco, Reposado, and Anejo ~ are authentic, high-quality and bottled in hand-made blown glass. And LPD has recently expanded its product portfolio to include Talero organic tequila and craft spirits from Wisconsin's Driftless Glen Distillery.

"As a new distributor," Boyd stated, "you definitely look for products that are sellable. For instance, AnestasiA has a beautiful bottle and a great presentation. The romance is in the bottle, and the marriage is in the taste. And our tequila, El Decreto, ranks with any of them although it is not as well-known as others in its competitive set. People rave about it."

People also rave about Gerald Boyd Sr. He grew up in the Anacostia neighborhood of D.C., and began his professional life as a public school teacher. Federal government work followed, and he eventually took an early retirement from the U.S. Department of Education to focus on his entrepreneurial ambitions. He has owned a couple of nightclubs, but is perhaps best known for DB Consulting Group Inc., an IT company he co-founded with his son, Gerald Jr., in 2000.

His nightclub experience prepared him somewhat for LPD. "I went into this pro-



cess aware we couldn't compete head-to-head with the large established distributors," he remarked. "Maryland is an exclusive rights state. You have only one supplier to a brand. It's one of the reasons why so few people try to start a distributorship. Obviously, if I was able to come out of the blocks selling a nationally known brand, I'd be able to move thousands of cases monthly. But when you're new, you don't have that luxury. So, you have to use a different approach."

He added, "It's a business that is built on relationships. If we can establish those relationships and back those relationships up with customer support and a win-win philosophy, we'll succeed."

Looking to the future, Boyd and his colleagues feel they're just getting started. There is a sense of purpose and optimism that permeates the entire LPD operation. And Boyd Sr. sounds like a hungry entrepreneur just starting out when he says, "We've only scratched the surface. But we think we've done a good job establishing ourselves so far. We have a solid relationship with three of the big casinos [MGM, Maryland LIVE, and the Horsehoe], and we haven't even approached the other three in the state yet because we are small. We have to be smart about where we pocket our resources, because we can't be every place. So, you create zones. You use different metrics to figure out where you think you can be the most successful with your products. Then as you grow, you become more known and hopefully more profitable."



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