

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Building a wind company in the U.S. isn't a quick or simple task, but Windhunter business development leader and CEO of the new North American headquarters Maciej Laz said with support of community any challenge can be overcome

By Amy H. Peterson
STAFF WRITER

Maciej Laz was in Estherville last week planning the next steps for his company to make its local launch. Windhunter specializes in measuring wind conditions for the wind energy industry. The Estherville News interviewed Laz along with Jasmin Holzinger of windtest at windtest's offices in the Iowa Lakes Community College SERT building on Friday.

Holzinger said, "We have worked with Windhunter for more than 20 years in Europe; since we have such a good connection and strong partnership with Windhunter, when they began exploring opportunities in the U.S. we supported their efforts and encouraged them to come to Estherville."

Windhunter is coming to Estherville.

At the Clean Power show in San Antonio, Texas, last May, windtest north america and Windhunter North America had business development meetings, and windtest arranged a visit last summer to Estherville for Laz to see the community first-hand and visit with several community leaders.

"We told them about the great support windtest received when we were starting our business here. We also discussed the benefits of being located in the Midwest. Our business takes us all over the country and being centrally located is ideal. And of course, Iowa has excellent wind conditions and there are wind projects all around the Midwest states," Holzinger said.

Shortly after that visit, Windhunter made the decision to start their North American visit in Estherville as well.

We are more than happy to have them here in the community with us. The proximity to each other may make things easier for the overall partnership in the U.S. as well as the realization of common projects," Holzinger said.

Laz said English is his third language after Polish and German, and each day he learns a bit more English. Windhunter has its Polish headquarters in Koszalin, Poland, a city with a population of just over 100,000 on the Baltic Sea Coast.

Since 1998, Windhunter has been building masts of increasing height in order to harness the higher wind velocity and power at greater heights.

Holzinger said, "When you explore a site where you want to develop a wind farm, you use such met masts for wind potential measurements. The met masts are equipped with different sensors. You want to know how much wind is available at a specific height."

Laz said, "This is quite a big challenge today. Fifty meters is something different from 160, 180 meters."

Holzinger said unlike other U.S. companies, Windhunter provides a turn-key solution: they design, manufacture and install the met masts, and they maintain them after the installation.

"For partners like us to deal with one company compared to other mast suppliers: where they have someone who can build the mast, then someone else who installs the mast, and someone later maintains the mast; having the same people involved in all steps who really are specialists in that construction is a plus," Holzinger said.

Data collection is important not just for planning wind farm construction, but also for finance. "We need to measure at the location for minimum one year - this is the standard," Laz said.

Commercial loan officers at an area bank asked Laz about the measurements because of financing for a wind project. The question is how much wind energy can a wind farm generate and from the measurements how much revenue can be expected from the wind farm? A potential financier may require not just one data report but three reports from independent, certified wind consul-



Maciej Laz, left, CEO for Windhunter North America, the newest branch of Windhunter Service, a Polish company, is laying the groundwork to open its North American headquarters. Right, Jasmin Holzinger, COO of windtest north America launched windtest's North American entity in Estherville eight years ago. The two say their companies' partnership has great potential in Iowa and beyond.

Photo by Amy H. Peterson

tants like windtest.

"There are two or three companies in the U.S. that can finance the wind farm by themselves. But normally it is financed by a bank - a loan or line of credit for millions of dollars to build a wind farm, and the bank requires the report," Laz said.

This is the data created from the masts and the sensors on them that measure the wind.

Holzinger said, "We need Windhunter because we are not the specialist for the wind masts but we know they are. However, we then work with the data that we get from them."

It's the reason windtest and Windhunter have collaborated in Europe for over 20 years and why the partnership in the U.S. makes sense today.

The Estherville News will continue conversations with the local wind energy industry into the inner workings of these Estherville-based companies.

For now, the questions include when? And where? Laz said the early part of next year is when he estimates a decision will be made on whether to build, to locate in an existing building, or find another solution.

Laz said he has looked at a number of properties around Estherville in which to locate the on-site office from which his team will expand to meet the challenges of design, manufactur-

ing, installation and maintenance. While the headquarters will be located in Estherville, the first operational projects Windhunter will be undertaking are located in Texas, in the mountainous area of Oregon near the California border, and in Iowa.

Laz said his ethic includes building a North American business the way he has built the business in Europe and in Africa, two to three project locations at a time. Business licensing and other regulatory issues are different from state to state. It also takes significant time to design for each location.

"The construction in the mountains of Oregon will not be the same as what we will erect, for example, in Texas, or here in Iowa. There should be bigger and stronger ones because in Oregon we are high in the mountains and expect a lot of icing on the mast and the guy wires...in California we have to take into account the earthquakes. In Texas, maybe our concern is a tornado, and in Iowa just the wind," Laz said.

While Windhunter makes further decisions, Laz departs Estherville confident and full of positive thoughts as a result of the support he has already received in the community.

Laz said his experience with Windhunter would not be what it is without the company's founder Roman Synowski. Laz said Synowski sees windtest as more than a company.

"[Synowski] is more than a boss. He is a man of great values, ethics, and open mindedness. He trusts his managers so much that

he wasn't even in Capetown (since the South African branch of the company was established). Now it's running very well; we are a leader of the market there working in sub-Saharan Africa, and he supports us fully," Laz said.

The Estherville area community showed its best skills in welcoming and opening doors for Laz while he has been in town, too.

Laz said, "In the 10 days I was here in the summer and now it's day five or six here on this visit. I feel like Estherville is home, and I can feel that everyone tries to help me here...they always ask me what I need next time I come here. I love to cooperate with the people."

Laz said he draws inspiration from John F. Kennedy's address at Rice University in 1962: "We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard..."

Laz said Windhunter chooses to come to the U.S., and specifically to Estherville not because it will be easy, but because it will be hard.

Quoting Kennedy again, Laz said, "...because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win."

Laz said, "We measure the wind and for U.S. activity, this goal will definitely measure the best of our energies and skills!"

3-DAY SALE!
THURSDAY-SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27-29

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE
Fritos & Cheetos
PP\$5.19

BUY 1 GET 1 FREE
Tombstone Pizza
12"

\$2.88ea
WHEN YOU BUY 3
Town House Crackers,
Flatbread, Flips,
Pita & Dippers
select varieties
9-13.8 oz

\$1.98
Fareway Fruit Cups
select varieties, 4 ct

\$19.99
Fareway Single Serve
Coffee Pods
select varieties, 80 ct

BUY 3 GET 2 FREE
Coke or Sprite
6 pk, 5 L bits
+ deposit where applicable

3/\$2
Fresh Avocados

\$19.99
Hickory Smoked Bacon
5 lb Value Pack

\$2.99
Bacon Wrapped
Sirloin Fillet
8 oz
LIMIT 10
USDA CHOICE

\$2.99lb
Baby Back Pork Ribs

ESTHERVILLE
You Always Get More At Your Estherville Fareway Store
WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIES.
GROCERY DEPARTMENT 362-5284
MEAT DEPARTMENT 362-7305

FAREWAY
MEAT & GROCERY
STORE HOURS
8AM-9PM Open To General Public

It's About to get **SPOOKY** Around Here!

AFTER YEARS OF HARD WORK & DEDICATION AT BANK PLUS **RON MENENDEZ** IS RETIRING!

YOU'RE INVITED TO CELEBRATE RON WITH A **RETIREMENT PARTY!**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31ST
1:00-5:00PM
BANK PLUS
1202 CENTRAL AVE
ESTHERVILLE

