

April 23, 2009

Contact: Nancy Engel, Executive Director, Economic Development Council, (941) 748-4842, ext. 127, nengel@ManateeEDC.com

Aharon Friedman, Founder, Healthy Chocolate Florida LLC, (941) 301-7744, afriedman@4NoGuilt.com

Healthy Chocolate manufacturer gears up new plant in Manatee County

Bradenton, FL – A company that hopes to revolutionize the chocolate business is gearing up a new, 6,000 sq. ft. research laboratory and manufacturing facility in Manatee County, according to Nancy Engel, executive director of the Economic Development Council, Manatee Chamber of Commerce (EDC). Healthy Chocolate Florida LLC founder Aharon Friedman, Ph.D., said that pending government inspections, the company's management team will begin testing the manufacturing line in April and production will ramp up in May.

"We are eager to start production using our patent-pending process to create a high-quality, sugar-free chocolate that includes natural ingredients to help people control blood sugar levels and reduce hunger," said Friedman, who expects to add seven production employees by the end of May for a total of 12 full-time and two part-time employees. "We have been able to finish out and move into our facility faster than I expected by being part of Manatee County's Rapid Response permitting program facilitated by the EDC. We completed our permitting in record time."

"Healthy Chocolate Florida exemplifies the kind of innovative research and manufacturing business that Manatee County continues to attract," Engel said. "The company's clients – from nutritional supplement makers to pharmaceutical companies – represent diverse and global opportunities. With Manatee County Government's cooperation through the Rapid Response permitting program, we are able to help companies like Healthy Chocolate make capital investments quickly, move in and begin hiring."

Friedman, a physicist whose background is in academia and high technology, founded the business after he developed diabetes and began researching his condition and the prevalence of obesity among U.S. children. He wanted to create a dietary supplement that would be palatable to children and that would help control blood sugar levels and reduce hunger using natural ingredients. According to Friedman, the company's formulation of chocolate is the first successful commercial venture using Xylitol as the primary sweetener and bulking agent for chocolate. Xylitol is used in chewing gum to retard the growth of bacteria that causes tooth decay. The naturally occurring ingredient doesn't behave like sugar in the manufacturing process, so Friedman and his partner were challenged to develop a new process for making chocolate from raw ingredients.

The company's first product, Healthy Chocolate, was withdrawn from the market because of problems with out-sourcing the manufacturing, he said. Once production has started at the company-operated plant, the product will be sold online at www.4NoGuilt.com and through a network of physicians, nutritionists and chiropractors. Friedman is also in discussions to introduce the product to consumers through providing it to hotels to use in their turn-down service.

"We use all organic materials as we are able to get them, including using Xylitol harvested from organic trees," Friedman said. "And by the end of 2009, we expect to be using most of the organic cocoa grown in the world. We are talking with people in two South American countries about increasing their organic cocoa production."

About the EDC

The Economic Development Council, a division of the Manatee Chamber of Commerce, is the sole organization responsible for developing and implementing programs designed to attract new value-added businesses and to assist in the retention and growth of targeted existing businesses in Manatee County. Information: www.ManateeEDC.com.

#