

## **Jerry Brown - RevHoney**

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin is the site of the USA Triathlon 2013 Age Group National Championships. As one of the competitors makes his run, he pops open a tube to consume an all-natural honey snack as an energy boost. Where do you suppose that honey snack came from? Would you believe, in the middle of Kansas? Today we'll learn about a Kansas company which is using natural honey as an energy food which is going coast to coast. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Jerry and Debbie Brown are owners of RevHoney Inc., the innovative business which produces these foods. Jerry's grandfather, Vernon Adee, started beekeeping in north central Kansas in 1948. Vernon's daughter Donna married Robert Brown and they started Brown Honey Farms in Kansas in 1963.

By the 1980's, Robert and their son Jerry had grown Brown Honey Farms into the largest beekeeping operation in Kansas. They sold honey commercially to packers who would bottle and sell it through large chain grocery stores. Jerry also served as Executive Director of the American Honey Producers Association.

As Jerry moved into management, he was looking for a way to add value to the product. "There has to be a better way to market it," he said. In 2006, the Browns partnered with Dr. Ron Fessenden to research the health benefits of honey compared to other sweeteners. "The results were even better than we expected," Jerry said. Dr. Fessenden went on to write a book entitled "The Honey Revolution."

The Browns decided to market their honey in an innovative way. Paraphrasing the name of the book, they titled their company RevHoney. "Our goal was to market healthy products using only natural ingredients and nature's best raw honey," Jerry said. Jerry's son Nate co-founded the company and did the initial development work.

Their first product was a flavored honey snack in a resealable cylinder they call a U-tube (sounds like a video, only tastier). It is a healthy energy snack in cinnamon, blackberry, apple cinnamon, strawberry and peach flavors.

Next the company moved into the energy drink market. RevHoney now offers a honey-based energy drink in two flavors, Berry Rain and Extreme Citrus. These also are one hundred percent made from natural ingredients.

In addition to online sales coast-to-coast, RevHoney products are now sold in more than 500 stores including HyVees, apple market stores, whole food stores, convenience stores such as Dara's, and more. In addition to the value-added products, customers are also asking for the raw honey itself. RevHoney products are also sold in doctor's clinics, gyms, racetracks, schools, and health clubs.

The company continues to innovate and develop new products, with help from K-State's food science department. RevHoney offers bottled water and is working on a sports drink.

“Our products provide natural energy for athletes and everyday consumers,” Jerry said. “We think we are in the right place at the right time, with the growing interest in natural foods and fighting childhood obesity. Our kids are eating the wrong kind of sugars,” he said.

“Raw honey has the fructose and glucose, but also the nutrients, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals our bodies need,” Debbie Brown said. “We have thousands of stories of people who benefited from these products, from age 16 to 83.” Jerry's beekeeping grandfather Vernon Adee is one of those. He lived to be a mere 97 years old. Wow.

“With natural honey and real fruit, this is the most healthy food we can give our kids,” Debbie said. “We want to be part of the healthy snacks in school initiative and the farm to school initiative.” Across the nation, sales are up sixty-five percent from a year ago. That’s impressive for a company based in the rural community of Haddam, Kansas, population 165 people. Now, that’s rural.

For more information, go to [www.revhoney.com](http://www.revhoney.com).

It’s time to leave the USA Triathlon National Championships in Milwaukee, where a contestant is using a natural honey-based energy snack from rural Kansas. We commend Jerry and Debbie Brown, Nate Brown, and all those involved with RevHoney Inc. for making a difference with innovative entrepreneurship. They provide a lot of energy, and the results are very sweet.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.