



## Bellavance Beverage Co.

From left: Joe Bellavance, president; TJ Ebol, general manager; and Dave Burke, operations manager

Over the past 118 years, Bellavance Beverage, a family-owned beverage distribution company, has survived Prohibition, the Great Depression, recessions and continued to grow. A global pandemic wasn't going to stand in its way.

This is a business that knows how to adapt. During Prohibition, the company pivoted to selling soda and hand-rolled cigars. A century later, the Londonderry-based company, now run by the fourth generation, moved into new facilities, which include the state's largest roof-top solar array, helped small local breweries launch new products and initiated relief efforts for their community.

Joe Bellavance IV, president, attributes the company's longevity to its values. "The fundamentals are hard work, being honest and trustworthy, taking care of customers and being loyal to employees," he says, adding it doesn't hurt to be in an in-demand industry. "When times are good people drink beer and when times are bad people drink beer," he says, noting the pandemic contributed to 2020 revenue that was "a bit ahead of 2019."

To help out during the pandemic, Bellavance Beverage donated to the NH Hospitality Employee Relief Fund to assist servers and bartenders who lost shifts or jobs. It also donated grocery store gift cards to hospitality workers in need. When they had a surplus of product that was about to expire due to restaurant closures, Bellavance donated it to Doire Distilling in Derry, which

converted it to hand sanitizer. They also donated their refurbished iPads to hospitals and assisted living facilities so that patients and residents could FaceTime with families. And they donated and delivered more than 630 cases of non-alcoholic beverages and snacks to nine hospitals and medical centers, as well as 100 meals, to thank front-line medical teams.

One of the other things they did was offer bonuses to employees who worked in the field.

"We've always been a family business. When times are tough, you take care of your family," Bellavance says. "We were fortunate to be operating and have a healthy team. We knew there were customers and others who were struggling, and we better get out there and help them because that's what we do."

Bellavance kept his plan to move into new headquarters in Londonderry this past January and he's proud of the solar array the company added, which will offset 115% of their annual electricity and increase the state's overall solar production by about 1.5%.

Bellavance has steadily grown over the years. Recent acquisitions include taking over Great State Beverage in Hooksett in 2016 and Clark Distributors in Keene in 2017, which has expanded the company's territory from 30 to 100 communities, servicing more than 1,500 retailers and doubling its workforce.

"We take a longer-term view and try to position things for future generations. The generations before me had that same view and set the business up for success," Bellavance says. ■

