

FOCUS on business

KO Distilling Opens in Manassas



KO Distilling, Co-Founders Karlson and O'Mara

Long-time friends Bill Karlson and John O'Mara—who were classmates at the United States Merchant Marine Academy many years ago—are passionate about their second careers as owners of **KO Distilling** in Manassas. After establishing their venture in May 2013 as Karlson & O'Mara Distilleries LLC, they worked diligently to complete all permitting and licensing requirements, while finessing their recipes and manufacturing process to begin making products in May 2015. Bill and John fulfilled their goal of bringing their products to the general public with the opening of their distillery this past September. Additionally, plans

are underway to have their Battle Standard 142 Gin (Navy Strength) available in 100 Virginia ABC stores beginning next month.

Located in the City of Manassas, KO is the first distillery to produce spirits within the city since Prohibition. Their 12,000-square-foot facility features a state-of-the-art distilling plant, including a 550-gallon Vendome copper pot still and a large storage area, where they currently have 100 oak barrels full of aging spirits. In addition, the 2,500-square-foot visitor's center is open for guided tours, tastings, distilled spirit product sales, merchandise sales, and special events—including private functions.

As one of only 1,000 craft distilleries in the U.S. and only the 19th in Virginia, John and Bill are excited about their new venture. "This has been the fulfillment of a long-time dream for both of us," Bill says. The friends are also proud to report that KO Distilling recently received *Virginia's Finest* certification for their best seller—Virginia Moon White Whiskey—from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In addition, the whiskey received a bronze medal at the recent New York International Spirits Competition, in which approximately 500 distilleries from all over the world competed. At this same competition, KO Distilling was also honored as the 2015 Virginia Moonshine Distillery of the Year. 🍷

~ Sarah Smarrelli