

# Green Energy Biofuel Tackles Many Challenges Over 14 Years to Emerge Stronger Than Ever

*Setbacks in the early years provided this small biodiesel producer perspective to reevaluate its business model and come out as a premier feedstock supplier.*

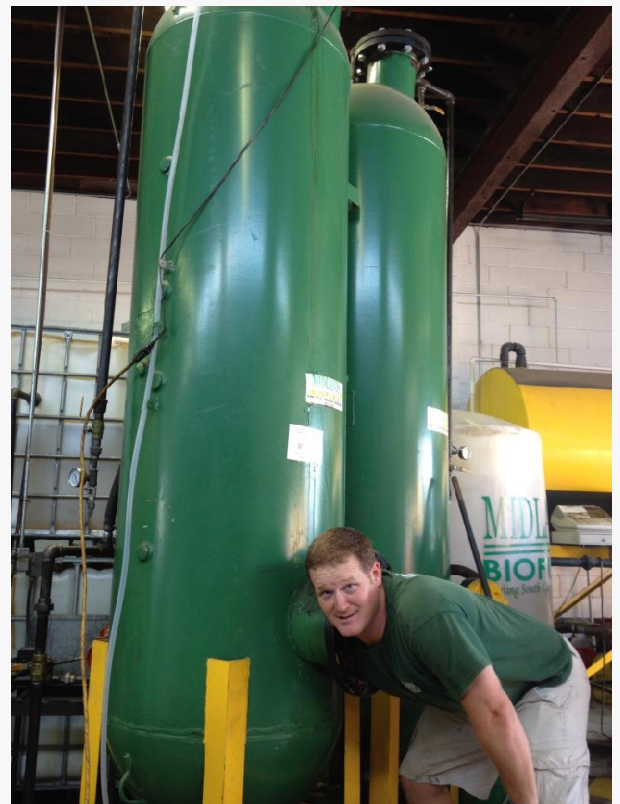
WINNSBORO, SOUTH CAROLINA, USA, November 23, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- South Carolina-based grease and organic waste recycling company [Green Energy Biofuel](#) turned 14 years old this month, and the company is bigger, more capable and economically stronger than ever. But these achievements didn't come easily.

In the early years, the personal and professional challenges faced by its owners helped shape the future of the company and its current business model. Through these struggles the Renwicks persevered, creating opportunity from adversity and turning obstacles into pathways to success.

Green Energy Biofuel was founded in Winnsboro, South Carolina, as Midlands Biofuels in 2008 by BioJoe Renwick and Brandon Spence. Created as a community-scale grease collector and biodiesel producer, Midlands Biofuels made a name for itself as a local business that bootstrapped itself into existence thanks to the ingenuity of its founders.

In 2008, the U.S. biodiesel industry was on the tail end of a major boom following enactment of the federal blenders tax credit. Midlands Biofuels was one of dozens of biodiesel plants built during this time. The market was developing fast, and the possibilities seemed endless.

Then came 2010. The tax credit expired for the first of what became numerous times in the ensuing years, and the financial crisis from the housing-market collapse lingered.



BioJoe Renwick during setup of the ion exchange resin towers at Midlands Biofuels' biodiesel plant in Winnsboro, South Carolina.

“A lot of biodiesel plants went bankrupt that year,” Renwick says.

But the hardships faced by Midlands Biofuels were just beginning. In the fall of 2010, Renwick’s wife, Dr. Beth, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. A week later, Renwick was in a serious accident when a propane pig cooker exploded and burned his head, chest, arms and lungs. He spent days in the burn center and lost 30 to 40 percent lung capacity.

“These incidents resonated with us,” Renwick says. “We were forced to step back and reevaluate our lives.”

Then an opportunity arose from the ashes of their personal and professional lives.

US Foods contracted Midlands Biofuels to build and operate a grease-processing plant in South Carolina. The facility was designed and built in-house from start to finish in just three months, with no contract labor except electrical.

“This was our second plant, but it was under exclusive contract with US Foods,” Renwick says.

The facility purified used cooking oil (UCO) and other grease obtained from US Foods. Once refined, the material was sent to another larger biodiesel producer in South Carolina to convert the high-grade feedstock into biodiesel, which US Foods used to fuel its fleet.

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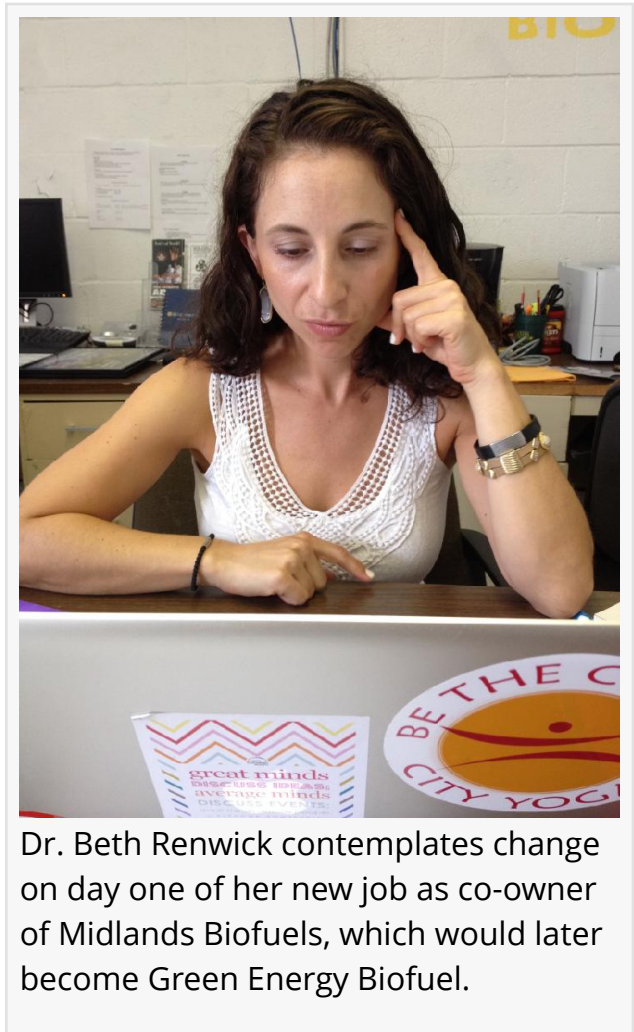
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*BioJoe Renwick, co-founder,  
Green Energy Biofuel*

After the US Foods plant was operational, Renwick and his partner Spence parted ways. Spence retained the US Foods contract until that too came to an end. Upon

Spence’s departure, Renwick’s wife Beth became co-owner of Midlands Biofuels, which eventually changed its name to Green Energy Biofuel and became the U.S.’s first woman-owned biodiesel company.

After exiting the US Foods contract, which Spence retained, Renwick went back to the Winnsboro biodiesel plant. “Everything changed,” he says. “I saw an opportunity to work in feedstock processing, not biodiesel production. Biodiesel has not been an easy industry to work within.



Dr. Beth Renwick contemplates change on day one of her new job as co-owner of Midlands Biofuels, which would later become Green Energy Biofuel.

Rules change and the tax credit lapsed a bunch. It really changed our focus from being 100 percent vertically integrated by collecting and refining oil, and then making, distributing and selling fuel, to learning we could become a feedstock processor for other biofuel companies—like what we are now. We realized we were too small to really compete in the biodiesel business. So, I dedicated myself and our efforts to research and develop processes to refine fats, oils and grease.”

Renwick was about to test his new model. Two biodiesel producers in North Carolina and Georgia had received infrastructure grants to build out their tank farms. During this time, their ability to process and store UCO and biodiesel in bulk was under construction, so Renwick’s company began hauling their grease to South Carolina, refining it, and transporting it back to them for fuel processing.

Meanwhile, Renwick had an “ah-ha” moment. In hauling a 6,000-gallon tanker load of a biodiesel producer’s raw feedstock to South Carolina for processing, a significant percentage of that is waste—say 2,000 gallons.

“So, we would sell them 2,000 gallons of our oil on top of the 4,000 gallons of their cleaned oil, making a full tanker load delivery they need at their plant,” he says. “That was a great, huge opportunity to sell all our surplus feedstock. It was a pendulum swing. But when they didn’t need us anymore, the pendulum swung the other way and now we had all this capacity but no oil to process.”

Then the pendulum reversed course again and Green Energy Biofuel gained the opportunity to work with Tyson Foods. “We had all the oil we could possibility handle coming to our door,” Renwick says. “But we were already geared up for that because of the work we had done.”

On top of that, Green Energy Biofuel began taking the waste from those same two biodiesel producers it was servicing in order to convert the low-grade material into high-quality feedstock.

“We developed a business model we had no intention of creating,” Renwick says. “It just organically happened. This was a new way to operate our business—not making biodiesel but



The Green Energy Biofuel crew having fun while working in 2016.

providing feedstock for others to make fuel. And this remains our business model today.”

Green Energy Biofuel currently operates two grease-processing facilities in South Carolina, one in Tennessee, and it has recently expanded into North Carolina. In addition, the company owns and operates [ReSoil Compost](#), a site where the solid-organic fractions of waste are composted into high-quality soil amendment for bulk sale.

“Some people say they never met anyone as lucky as us,” Renwick says. “It’s not luck. It’s perseverance, planning and positioning. Losing four contracts at different times that caused us to expand and contract at four uniquely pivotal moments gave us perspective and showed us the way. We have faith that there is a higher calling for what we’re doing—there’s a bigger picture here and purpose to our life. It’s been about keeping that faith and working really, really hard every day.”

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