



Cold Water Distributing offers ice machines that sell wholesale ice in Arkansas

By CHIP TAULBEE, Arkansas Business (New Businesses: 9/5/05)

Scott Perry has a machine that makes the cheapest ice around and a low-maintenance investment he says can make money just as sure as it can turn ice to water.

Perry's Cold Water Distributing, which he co-owns with a passive Atlanta investor, distributes 200-SF automated ice machines that sell ice at practically wholesale costs.

While the average convenience store or supermarket might charge about \$1.25 for a 7-pound bag of ice, Perry's machines dish out 20 pounds of the stuff into customers' containers or coolers for \$1. Customers can also get a 16-pound bag of the stuff for the same price.

"There's nobody who can beat us on the price," Perry said.

The machines themselves, called Ice Houses, are the product of Ice House America of Atlantic Beach, Fla. Earlier this year, Perry scraped together about \$100,000 to buy the distributor rights of Ice House in Arkansas.

Since then, the company has two units in Hot Springs, the one market in the state Perry said Cold Water would hold on to just so he has some units to show investors. The rest of the markets around the state are wide-open for investors willing to fork over \$95,000 per unit.

And according to Ice House America's research, any city or town with at least 10,000 people could support an Ice House.

The \$95,000 price for an Ice House would pay for itself in just a few years, Perry said.

Perry said keeping up with an Ice House is fairly simple once it's up and going.

Cold Water will install the equipment and train the owner of the unit. No employees are required, and maintenance is minimal — perhaps only a little routine work once a month. Units are also wirelessly connected, so owners can check their daily activity on the Internet and receive text messages if there is a machine malfunction.

It's an operation Perry enjoys most because of the freedom it affords. "Sure, I know there's a risk, but the freedom is worth it," Perry said.

Owning his own business is nothing new for Perry. His family owned franchise restaurants in southern Arkansas and northeast Louisiana and later outdoor clothing companies.