

“American Idol” Clay Aiken Brings Business to Wilson Firm

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February 15, 2004

When Clay Aiken walked through the door at Logistech Solutions, Gail Warren rolled back in her office chair and said “Get out!” (As in, “no way!”) Aiken pretended to take her literally. He said, “OK!” and turned back around to leave. Warren quickly stopped him with a “No! Not until I get to know you!”



This is one of Warren's favorite Clay Aiken stories to tell since the high-profile client made a surprise visit to the Wilson business in November. A Raleigh native, Aiken was the runner-up last year in “American Idol,” a televised talent search, and released his debut album, “Measure of a Man,” in October. He now lives in Los Angeles.

“That was quite the surprise. I would not have expected Clay to show up in Wilson, North Carolina!” said Warren, the company's manager of project implementation and development.

Logistech Solutions Inc. (www.logistech.us), located in the Northside Business Park on Quality Drive, provides warehousing, shipping and inventory management services to small and large manufacturers, retailers and distributors.

One of its latest clients is the Bubel/Aiken Foundation (www.bubelaikenfoundation.org), a charitable organization whose mission is to provide services and financial assistance to children with mental and physical developmental disabilities.

Bubel stands for Diane Bubel, who encouraged Aiken to audition for “American Idol.” While Aiken was a student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Bubel hired him to work with Michael, her now-13-year-old son who has autism.

Logistech Solutions fulfills orders of Bubel/Aiken merchandise off the site that averages

about 20 orders a day. The site sells everything from “the Clay Bobblehead” to Bubel/Aiken coffee mugs, T-shirts and mouse pads. One of the latest additions is a Carolina Hurricanes branded hockey jersey representing Aiken's performance at a December game.

Aiken came to Wilson see the Bubel/Aiken merchandise and to tour the facility. The staff expected to see Aiken's management come through that day, but not Aiken himself.

Greg Hathaway, general manager, and Mitchell Hall, president, tease Warren about her reaction to Aiken's visit. She listened to Aiken's songs off his CD for the rest of the day and fired off e-mails, Hathaway said. She and Aiken also exchanged e-mails.

Warren's worst moment happened when Aiken asked her for a business card, and she realized she was out of cards. She had to write her information on a sticky note. But Warren learned a lesson from the experience: She dug out a leather business card keeper from her purse and held it up. “I never leave home without it now,” she said with a laugh. “I keep 100 business cards on hand now!”

Logistech Solutions has other clients in the music industry, such as Ben Harper (www.benharper.com) and Jack Johnson (www.jackjohnsonmusic.com). The company fills Internet orders for CDs, DVDs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, posters, and stickers.

Logistech Solutions formed in March 2002. The founders — Mitchell Hall, Peggy Hathaway, and Greg Hathaway— were all previously in the fulfillment business and have a combined 45 years of industry experience. The company employs 10 people.

Logistech Solutions recently signed a five-year lease at Northside Business Park for the building it had subleased from Window Concepts. The facility is split into office space, a 25,000 square-foot warehouse, and a 23,000 square-foot fulfillment operation.

The company provides integrated solutions to several on-line shopping stores, such as BabyClassroom.com, and has extensive integration to the largest online shopping portal, Yahoo!

The company also provides interface to proprietary enterprise systems using XML technology for companies such as Nortel Networks, one of Logistech Solutions' enterprise clients. Using this technology, Logistech Solutions coordinates, orders, prints, stores and distributes all of its marketing collateral to Nortel's entire network of distributors and customers.

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