

BUSINESS

Delta Air Lines will stock local Du Nord vodka, from America's first Black-owned distillery, on its in-flight beverage carts.

A BIG SHOT FOR SMALL DISTILLERY

By SHARYN JACKSON • sharyn.jackson@startribune.com

Chris Montana isn't 100% sure how Delta found him. Du Nord Social Spirits (formerly Du Nord Craft Spirits) is one of Minnesota's smaller craft distilleries, and as the owner, Montana never expected to hear from a company the size of Delta when it reached out last summer, wanting to forge a partnership.

He's still in a state of disbelief, even as vodka from his Minneapolis distillery begins selling from in-flight beverage carts Oct. 1.

"This doesn't happen," Montana said. "Small craft distilleries don't get placed on a major airline that moves millions of bottles every year. That's reserved for legacy distilleries and large companies. You couldn't possibly buy that kind of exposure."

"I can't overstate how massive of an opportunity it is," he added. "It means the world."

See **DU NORD** on D3 ▶



Chris Montana, owner of Du Nord Social Spirits, is grateful Delta chose his small business, instead of "the easy path" with a bigger distillery. Provided photo

Twin Ignition eyes next-gen entrepreneurs

They aim to invest in and mentor companies, create 100,000 jobs in 20 years.

By NICK WILLIAMS
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Twin Cities businessmen Seth Peter, Ben Rasmussen and Scott Aubitz all had high-flying corporate or entrepreneurial ventures with well-known companies such as NetSpi and Bright Health.

The flexible lifestyle their most recent business chapter allows them is irreplaceable, they said.

The men, in their 40s and 50s, get to mentor and support the next generation of Minnesota entrepreneurs filled with more family time, without constant travel or long nights at the office.

In 2019, they founded Twin Ignition Ventures, a venture-capital fund that invests in

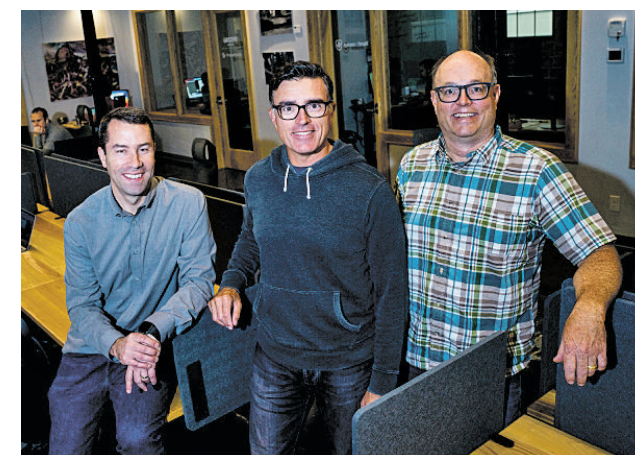
locally based startups. They also run the affiliated Twin Ignition Startup Garage, a 6,000-square-foot office building on Marshall Avenue in Minneapolis' North-east Arts District that Peter acquired in 2017.

"We've created a situation here, really a business, where we get to do the things we enjoy most in life," said Rasmussen, from Fridley. "It is most fulfilling, and our commitment is to each other and to [entrepreneurs]. It feels pretty good."

The move has reinvigorated a desire to change their hometown for the better, they said.

Their goal is to invest and mentor companies that would collectively create 100,000 jobs across the Twin Cities in the next 20 years.

Rasmussen, 51, is from Fridley. Peter, 48, and See **IGNITION** on D3 ▶



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Twin Ignition Ventures partners Scott Aubitz, Ben Rasmussen and Seth Peter, at their Twin Ignition Startup Garage.

Edina's Vensana Capital nets \$325M

The firm has made 10 investments since its creation in 2019.

By NICK WILLIAMS
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Two years after launching with \$225 million for its inaugural venture-capital fund, Edina's Vensana Capital has secured \$325 million in committed capital for a second fund.

Kirk Nielsen and Justin Klein, two longtime investors in medical technology, joined to launch the venture-capital and growth-equity investment firm in 2019. The firm also is operated from the Washington, D.C., metro.

Nielsen, a native Minnesotan who formerly worked

at Medtronic, said previously the firm would commit between \$10 million and \$30 million to each portfolio company.

The firm has made 10 investments since its creation. Those deals include Brooklyn Park-based medical device maker CVRx, which in June raised \$126 million through its initial public offering, and Bloomington-based Relievent Medsystems.

Vensana was one of 10 equity investors to participate in Relievent's \$70 million round of funding in 2020. That capital is being applied to the commercialization of the company's treatment for chronic back pain that involves destroying select nerve cells in the spine.

See **VENSANA** on D3 ▶

In-person work has its problems

Employees are still doing much of their talking on Zoom and Slack.

By DANIELLE ABRIL
Washington Post

Nick Kneer was excited to go back to the office. After working from home for about a year and a half, Kneer had missed the camaraderie he had with his co-workers at the Ohio-based university library system where he works as a

communications coordinator. He was counting down until he could mingle with students and staff again.

But his excitement quickly faded after the reality of in-person work turned out to be far from what he expected.

Instead, to avoid contracting the delta variant, he ended up locked in a "windowless, cinder block room" — his temporary office — attending most of his meetings via Zoom.

"It was definitely a bum-

mer," he said.

As many office workers head back to the office, even as the delta variant spreads across the United States, employees are facing a bizarre new reality: They are still spending most of their time isolated and glued to their computers for Zoom meetings, e-mail and Slack.

With more companies implementing permanent hybrid working options, the virtual nature of work may

See **ZOOM** on D3 ▶

China buckles under power cuts

Outages add to pressure on global supply chains, economic stability.

By KEITH BRADSHAW
New York Times

Power cuts and even blackouts have slowed or closed factories across China in recent days, adding a new threat to the country's slowing economy and potentially further snarling global supply chains ahead of the Christmas

shopping season in the West.

The outages have rippled across most of eastern China, where the bulk of the population lives and works. Some building managers have turned off elevators. Some municipal pumping stations have shut down, prompting one town to urge residents to store extra water for the next several months, although it later withdrew the advice.

In Shenyang, the northeast's most populous city, restaurant owner Li Yufeng

used a battery from an electric bicycle to run a pot for noodles after seeing a notice that power would be switched off at 7:30 a.m. Li said he started working early to prepare chicken, sauces and other dishes.

Shopkeeper Yang Chang had a generator running on the sidewalk to keep freezers full of meat cold.

He said he was in better condition than restaurants that needed water.

"I was born in the '90s. See **CHINA** on D3 ▶