



*Jan. 3, 2017*

*For immediate release*

## Specialty food company Blue Crab Bay Co. sold

Pamela Barefoot, founder and longtime president of specialty food company Blue Crab Bay Co. in Melfa, Va., has sold the company in an asset sale to Eastern Shore of Maryland native Elizabeth Lankford.

Lankford's family is well known on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. Her grandfather Stanley began Lankford Produce in 1964 and soon was joined by her father, Tom, and uncles Fred and Jim. In 1981, Lankford Produce merged with Sysco Corp., of which Lankford-Sysco Food Services, now Sysco Eastern Maryland, became a vital subsidiary.

Barefoot, 66, said her decision to sell Blue Crab Bay was initially difficult but was made easier once she knew the company was going to stay local.

"My dream was always to keep Blue Crab Bay on the Shore, as a Shore brand," she said. "Over the years, so many people from here have told me how proud they were to see it on store shelves when they were traveling. I have been fretting over an exit strategy, and all the businesses that approached me did not want our property in the (Accomack Airport) Industrial Park. They would have taken the brand and moved it to their headquarters, possibly in another state. Folks would have lost their jobs, and the Shore would have lost its claim to the nearly 32-year-old brand.

"Two years ago, I received an email from Elizabeth Lankford, and I knew in my heart she was the right one," Barefoot continued. "She cared about the brand. She cared about the Eastern Shore and my employees. Her father had tons of experience in the food industry, and with her very supportive family, I knew she would be a great caretaker for my Blue Crab Bay family."

Elizabeth, 32, recently resigned from her job in Washington, D.C., where she specialized in state government affairs for Healthcare Distribution Alliance.

"I had always been looking for an opportunity to return home to the Eastern Shore," she said. "This is a perfect fit. I have been a longtime fan of Blue Crab Bay's brand and high-quality products. I look forward to leading the company and expanding our national reach."

Barefoot plans to continue to work at Blue Crab Bay for at least two more years. "I'll just have more time for my Airbnb cottage and to go RVing with my husband to state and national parks, an interest we picked up about four years ago," she said.

Founded on Barefoot's kitchen table in 1985, Blue Crab Bay has evolved into a nationally recognized, award-winning specialty food brand and a leader in its community. Blue Crab Bay's line of specialty foods and gifts includes award-winning Virginia peanut snacks, Bloody Mary mixers, seafood seasonings, and Blue Crab Stoneware. The company operates from a 24,000-square-foot building in the Accomack Airport Industrial Park in Melfa, where a retail shop also is located. Products are available in thousands of stores nationwide and on the company's consumer website. For more information, visit [bluecrabbay.com](http://bluecrabbay.com) (consumer) or [baybeyond.net](http://baybeyond.net) (trade).

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