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**The only monthly publication that offers
News About The Industry, From The Industry, For The Industry.**

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*The ONLY monthly magazine
dedicated to the hosiery industry*

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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, *Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council*

Ball Game With New Players:

Of the 98 Democratic legislators who settled into their legislative offices at the opening of the 2009 session, more than half have resigned or announced intentions to retire. A significant number of Republicans also have announced they will not seek re-election, including Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Stevens.

Sen. Linda Garrou, an Appropriations chair when Democrats controlled the chamber, also is leaving, citing the redistricting which favors Republicans. (House Democrat Earline Parmon has since said she will seek the seat. She will face GOP leader Pete Brunsteller). Other departing notables include former House Speaker Joe Hackney, longtime Democratic leader Bill Owens who has chaired Appropriations and Rules, and

Rep. Mark Hilton who was co-chair of the House Appropriations Committee on Education. Recent count indicated 28 GOP House members will bow out.

Republicans are insisting that Democrats have been unable to adjust to being the minority party. Redistricting forced most Democrats into new districts where voter registration favors Republicans. Democrats who have been on the scene for four or more terms say it is time to move on.

Short Session Will Be ... Short:

The pace for legislators when they convene for the short session in May will be faster than normal. And the session will be shorter. Heavy campaign schedules, upcoming national party conventions, and fund-raising will demand time. Appropriations meetings are taking place and will continue through the spring. Legislative leaders are predicting adjournment before July 1.

Primaries :

More primary contests than usual are expected to attract a record turnout on May 8. Democrats are preparing for heated contests for governor, lieutenant governor, and several Council of State offices. Republicans, fueled by new congressional districts, are girding for primaries in almost all 13 districts, especially the 9th where Rep. Sue Myrick is retiring. Even longtime Rep. Howard Coble has a party contest and several Republicans will look for the opportunities to unseat Democrats Larry Kissell and Mike McIntyre. ■



TRENDS

How to get more impact with your sales activity.

Textiles and hosiery industry vendors have used **TRENDS** magazine to open doors. Multi-national, veteran established manufacturers, and smaller niche players all look at market innovations in **TRENDS**. National and state legislation affecting the industries – manufacturing and distribution – are covered in easy-to-read articles. Happenings within the industries and retailers are included to help marketers and purchasing executives.



* **Paul Fogleman**, a veteran experienced in hosiery and textiles operations, can help you with your advertising and public relations opportunities with **TRENDS**. Contact him at pfogleman@informinc.net

Manufacturing Solutions Center Breaks Ground For New Facility

Groundbreaking for the Manufacturing Solutions Center's new multi-million dollar complex in Conover NC was held February 21 with political, industry, and educational leaders applauding.

Described as a "business accelerator", the new facilities will house the hosiery technology center and its testing laboratories from which the Manufacturing Solutions Center emerged under the leadership of director Dan St. Louis. The MSC now serves furniture manufacturing and is assisting entrepreneurial start-up companies.

The Hosiery Technology Center was created 22 years ago to assist manufacturers with the training of personnel for new technology. During the first decade, the role of the center expanded to assist companies with marketing, distribution, and development of new products. As part of the Catawba Valley Community College operations, the center has expanded and become a national model for outreach to industry.

Participating in the ceremonies to launch a new era for the MSC were U.S. Senator Kay Hagan, U.S. Rep. Patrick



McHenry, and N.C. Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, along with Fran Davis, CEO of Twin City Knitting, a longtime client .

Presiding at the gathering was Conover Mayor Lee Moritz who has had a long career with Moretz Inc., Gold Toe Moretz Inc. and more recently Gildan Inc. which purchased Gold Toe Moretz.

Sen. Hagan and Rep. McHenry, whose offices supported grant proposals for federal funding, paid tribute to St. Louis and his vision to nurture small businesses.

Secretary Crisco also recalled early encounters with St. Louis and his passion for encouraging small business start-ups.


Among the 150 people who assembled for the program were hosiery manufacturers who help create the center and recent furniture clients. Shane Cooper, CEO of DeFeet International, recently recognized as Small Business of the Year, was present as were local government officials.

Since 2000 the center is credited with creating or protecting 1,000 jobs according to the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The economic impact of its services during the past decade is put at \$250 million. Since 1992, the center has received operational funds from the North Carolina General Assembly.

The new center is being constructed by the City of Conover which has received grants totaling approximately

\$3 million from the N.C. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the Golden Leaf Foundation. The site also includes a regional transit center and recreational facilities for Conover residents.

In addition to the testing and research and development operations, the MSC will house start-up companies and provide services for entrepreneurs, including product development and testing and marketing.

The MSC serves companies throughout the United States as well as those in the Catawba Valley region around Hickory. The staff includes 19 fulltime people in the testing laboratories and research and development operations. 



Dan St. Louis, center, and his Manufacturing Solutions Center associates turn dirt for what will be their new home in Conover. The center staff includes 19 persons involved in research and development, prototyping, testing, and training.



State and regional officials participated in the groundbreaking. Included are Conover Mayor and Gildan executive Lee Moritz (fourth from left), U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry, sixth from left), U.S. Senator Kay Hagan, N.C. Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, and President Garrett Hinshaw (far right), president of Catawba Valley Community College. Others in the picture are Conover council members and community college officers.

Reflections On Retiring From The Textile Technology Center At Gaston College

By John Anderson, Director Textile Technology Center

On the last Friday in March, I'll wish someone else future success as Director of the Textile Technology Center at Gaston College. Cosmically, my second retirement will begin six years to the day after I began my first one.

I've often used the phrase "this job and I found each other." I'm certainly glad we did. Whatever I was able to bring to the Center, I was rewarded ten fold in return, with new knowledge, experiences and friendships that I will carry with me to whatever comes next.

When I joined the Center in November of 2006, the future of the organization was somewhat cloudy. Sixteen months earlier, the NC Legislature had

re-chartered the North Carolina Center for Applied Textile Technology to be a "Center of Excellence" With this charter: "The purpose of the Center for Applied Textile Technology is to develop a world-class workforce for the textile industry in North Carolina; support the textile industry by identifying problems confronting the industry and assisting the industry in solving them; garner support from the textile industry for the

work of the Center; and serve as a state-wide center of excellence that serves all components of the textile industry."

Gaston College was given administrative control of the Center, and the state

appointed Advisory Board set a direction that the Center assists firms in the textile chain with new product development and product testing. In the first year of operation as a fee for service entity, the Center had billed \$50,000 for total services delivered. The operation was a "categorical" item in the Community College Budget which meant that it was funded and approved separately from the rest of Gaston College. I realized very quickly that to succeed, we needed to establish our value to the industry so that they would in turn tell their legislators that we were bringing significant returns on the resources we received.

Looking back, we've come an incredibly long way from where we were in the closing weeks of 2006. I'm talk about "WE" rather than "I", because everything here was accomplished as a true team effort.

Early on, we agreed that the key to delivering on our charter was to be successful at adding clients up and down the supply chain from fiber to consumer. The best way to do this was delivering proactive customer service to existing clients so they would, in turn, recommend the Center to their customers and suppliers. We elected to offer "one stop" service, which translated operationally into "Please give us your project, and we'll put the pieces together for you, even if we don't have all of them here today."

We capitalized on every opportunity that came along to expand our capabilities. Through donations of equipment



John Anderson, left, retiring director of the Textile Technology Center, receives a plaque from Gaston College President Dr. Pat Skinner.



N.C. House Speaker Thom Tillis, left, listens as John Anderson, director, explains the services of the Textile Technology Center. Center is Dan Nation, a board member and Parkdale Mills executive.

from industry as well as strategic investment of state and self generated funds, we added polymerization, fiber manufacture, long staple spinning, defect analysis, analytical chemistry, advanced microscopy, fabric formation, and dyeing and finishing to our service offering to the industry. We built partnerships with equipment vendors, The Center for Manufacturing Solutions, NC State College of Textiles, Burlington labs and others to provide seamless service to our clients.

Equipment capability is important, but so is having the expertise to operate it effectively. We were able to add new team members along with the capabilities, and that added to our effectiveness.

Today, innovators come to the Textile Technology Center with chemicals, polymers, fibers yarn or fabric to have a concept demonstrated, a problem solved, or a product tested, and they get their results in a timely fashion because we share our client's sense of urgency.

Numbers tell part of the story. Our total revenue for services delivered has grown from \$50,000 for 2005-06 to \$1.1 million for fiscal 2010 – 11 and it

continues to grow. The Textile Center staff has grown from 6 individuals to 22 today. We provide services to over 217 firms doing business in North Carolina across 47 Counties.


The remainder of the story is about people, attitudes and relationships. You can't help but bring a piece of yourself to a group process, and I believe that some of the principles and values that I brought to the Center will remain after I've left. They include:

- "Approach your work as though this is your own personal business – at the end of the day, it is."
- "Try new ideas and approaches. Not everything is going to work, and if something doesn't, learn from the experience and move on."
- "Customers come first"
- "Integrity means telling clients what you believe to be true, not what you think they want to hear"

The subject of leaving a legacy was raised recently by Professor Jim Hammons of The University of Arkansas, in


remarks featured in NISOD Innovation Abstracts published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development. Hammons challenged an audience of community college professionals to think of their legacy in terms of "What can I do to ensure that whatever positive things I helped create continue after I am gone."

Leaving a legacy was the piece that was missing for me when I left corporate life, and I didn't realize what that meant at the time. I am grateful for my time at the Textile Technology Center. It has been fulfilling to work with a team to build the Center, and I retire this time with the confidence that the Textile Technology Center team will continue to grow and help the industry innovate. I move on to whatever is next knowing that I was given a chance to give back and I took it.

Textile Center client Dr. Terry Gibbons of Precision Fabrics in Greensboro said "What I like about the Center is that you do what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it." Who wouldn't feel proud and confident in the future of  enterprise with that reputation?

DeFeet International Designated State's Small Business Of Year





While hosiery manufacturing is considered a traditional industry, DeFeet International Inc. has demonstrated that non-traditional thinking is the path to profitability.

The success of DeFeet International and its founder, Shane Cooper, earned the sock manufacturer the designation of Business North Carolina's Small Business of the Year.

Based in Hildebran, NC, near Hickory, DeFeet is a leading producer of cycling socks and accessories.

Some 19 years ago, then 29-years old Cooper decided that bike socks "left a lot of room for improvement." He envisioned a sock using Coolmax yarn on the inside next to the foot to wick moisture which would be transferred to a lattice on the outside where it would evaporate.

His father, Alan Cooper, born in England, was knitting machine distributor with a background as a mechanic. He agreed to let Shane rework a machine on one condition: after 90 days of use he had to buy it. Two decades later, DeFeet has 35 employees with annual sales in excess of \$4.5 million. All his socks are made in the United States.

Dan St. Louis, manager of the Manufacturing Solutions Center at Catawba Valley Community College, says Cooper is an example of other hosiery companies that have been able to prosper in the competitive global market.

"There's a reason why they are here. It's a combination of market niche and a willingness to set up a plant to run quick-turn, short orders. This isn't about making a plain white sock," St. Louis observes.

According to St. Louis, some 110 domestic manufacturers are producing hosiery products in the United States, with 76 percent operating in North Carolina. They employ 13,100 people. Supplier companies have thousands more on payrolls.

Over the years, through the efforts of Cooper, DeFeet has embraced bold innovations: bright colors, wild designs, and more recently social media in its marketing strategies. DeFeet uses blog posts, offbeat videos posted on Facebook, and "DeTweets" to give cycling enthusiasts messages about trends in their sport. ■

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BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER

The Hosiery and Textiles Governmental Affairs Council looks forward to working with legislators in Raleigh in 2011. Republicans with a pro-business agenda will set priorities for state government, including how state finances are invested. Emphasis will be on smaller government and the best return on dollars invested by the state.

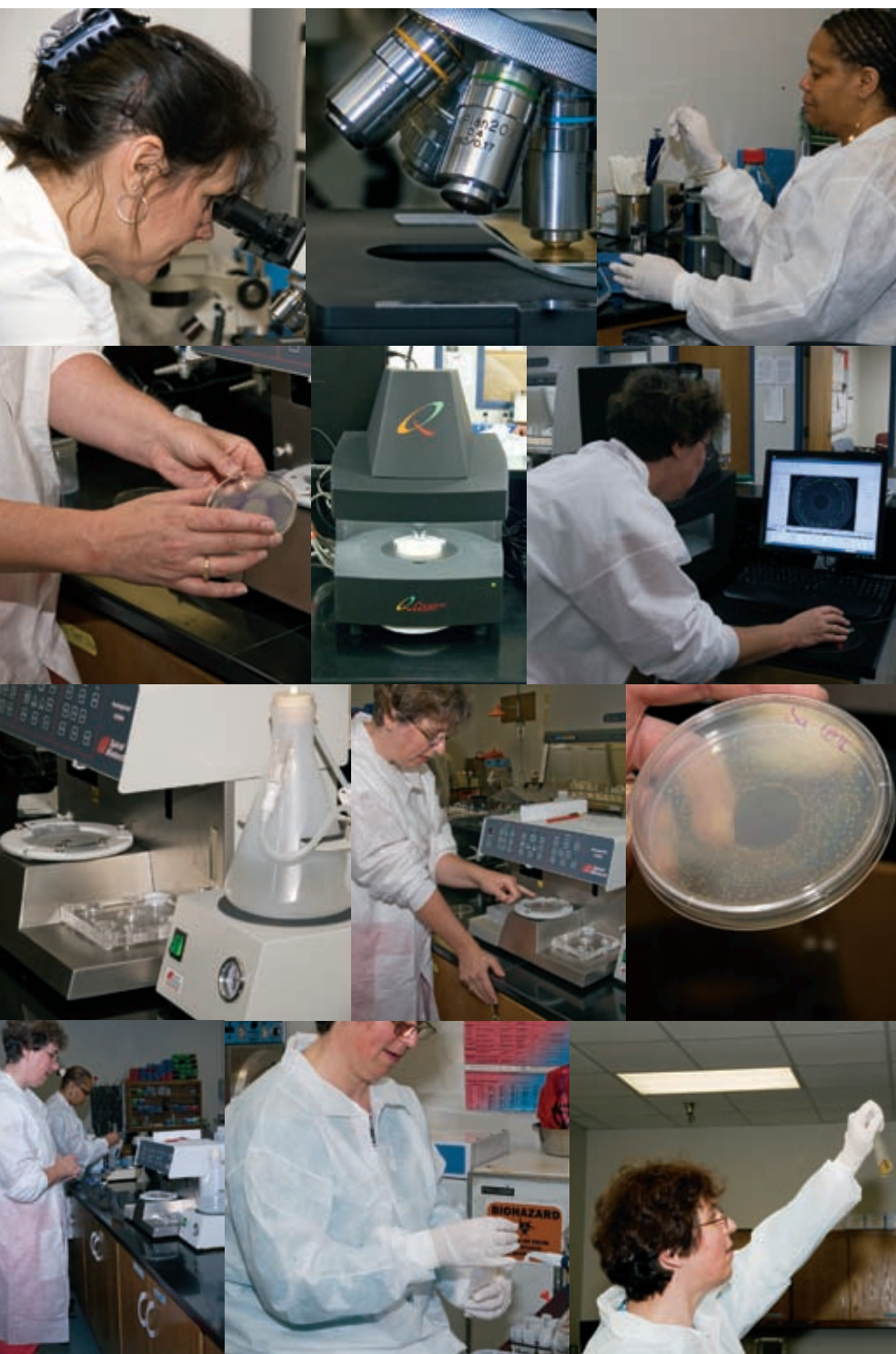
We congratulate the new leaders in the House and the Senate. Also we look forward to working with new members of the General Assembly as we present our case for the continued support of the Textile Technology Center and the Manufacturing Solutions Center with its successful hosiery industry testing and research programs.

There will be a lot of noise with competition for state money. We invite textiles and hosiery companies that continue to employ over 100,000 North Carolinians to join us in support of the value-added services of our centers.

Hosiery and Textiles Governmental Affairs Council
P.O. Box 1708 415 First Avenue NW, Hickory NC 28603
(828) 322-7766 • informinc@charter.net

People now call us the 'Manufacturing Solutions Center'

and that's OK.



Officially we have been the Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions. (CEMS). Our mission is to help traditional manufacturing in North Carolina succeed in a changing environment. The Hosiery Technology Center remains a core service. But furniture, packaging, plastics, and other industries that helped build North Carolina's economy are now priorities.

If our official name is too much to remember, just call us the Manufacturing Solutions Center. We are ready to assist you with new products, new manufacturing strategies, new markets.

Traditional manufacturers have an old history with our state. But they are an important force in the new economy.

Dan St. Louis, Director • Catawba Valley Community College

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