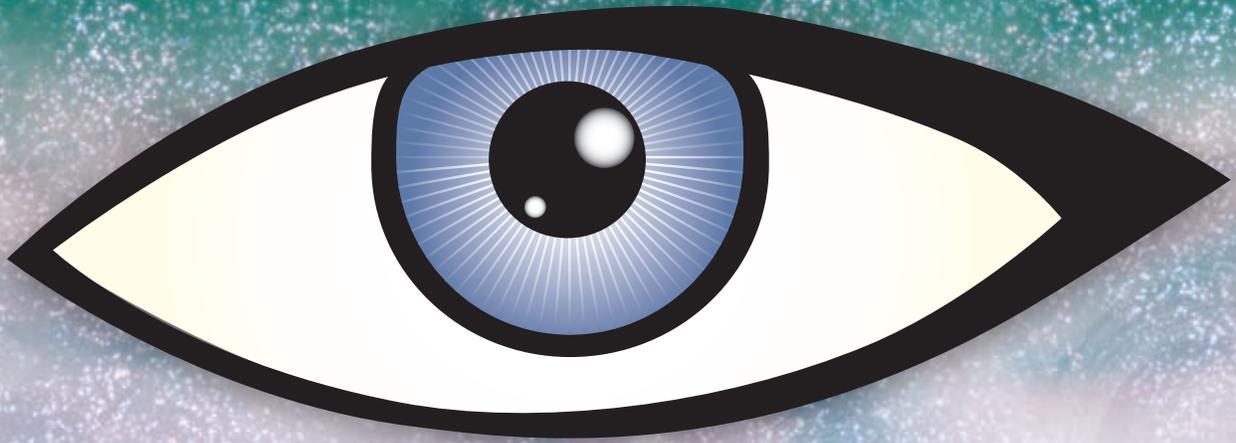


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News About The Industry, From The Industry, For The Industry.*

inside



4	Legislative Column – Paul Fogleman
6	‘We’re Anything But The Status Quo’
8	Divine Dzion Hosiery Meets Needs Of Women Of Color
9	One-Stop Transition To The Future
10	The Textile Technology Center
12	Consumer Product Safety Rule Raises Questions From Industry
12	For Some Companies, Tech Centers Provide Life-Or-Death Support
14	2009 Editorial Calendar

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dedicated to the hosiery industry*

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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council



Huge financial issues will confront elected officials in state legislatures as well as the halls of Congress. After the euphoria of victory celebrations, state senators and representatives and members of Congress received sharp reminders of shrinking revenue, higher job layoffs, and sharp business downturns.

North Carolina legislators and top government officials were told the budget hole will approach \$1.7 billion – just short of 10 percent of the total. Given the current business climate, raising revenue could be close to impossible. The option is steep cuts. The constitution requires North Carolina operate with a balanced budget.

“We’ll be in session until November next year,” said a legislator who had just won re-election. The population of North Carolina is growing at the rate of 2.5 percent each year. This means more public school students, more teachers, more buildings – more strain. For community colleges, the pressure is greater as tens of thousands of unemployed people try to retrain for future jobs.

Cutting healthcare appropriations will be just as difficult. Thousands have lost their insurance as their jobs disappeared. Medicaid budgets will be challenged.

Legislators will face tough challenges.

The addition of Kay Hagan to the U.S. Senate and Larry Kissell to the U.S. House offers opportunities for HTC undertakings for funding and regulatory relief.

Two veteran appropriations chairs in the Senate will not be around to guide deliberations in 2009. State Sen. Kay Hagan of Greensboro is now U.S. Senator Kay Hagan. Sen. Walter Dalton is now Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton who will preside over the Senate but have no input in budget deliberations.

Sen. Linda Garrou, a tough, focused budget chair, will be back in the leadership role. Her co-chairs will be appointed by President Pro-Tem Marc Basnight.

House appropriations chairs won re-election but will be subject to reappointment by Speaker Joe Hackney.

Call me Senator. Debbie Clary of Cleveland County will move up to the N.C. Senate, representing the District formerly held by Walter Dalton. Clary won the seat by 730 votes. Her election gave the Republicans a one-seat gain in that Chamber, but Democrats still hold a one-sided majority.

Clary served as an appropriations chair during the 2003-05 session when bipartisan leadership was in place.

Democrats were able to hold on to seats vacated by Kay Hagan and Janet Cogwell who was elected State Treasurer.

•••

In the N.C. House, the balance will remain the same: 68 Democrats, 52 Republicans. Democrats gained a seat in Rocky Mount vacated by Bill Daughtride who ran for State Treasurer. Republicans unseated Rep. Walter Church of Valdese.

Despite the surge in turnout of Obama supporters, Democratic legislators in some areas squeaked by. Rep. Ray Warren of Hickory-Alexander County repelled a challenge from Mark Hollo by only 207 votes. His majority came from Hickory voters. Alice Graham Underhill was reelected in New Bern by less than 500 votes.

GOP Rep. Nelson Dollar, who directed the effort to unseat Ray Warren, had a serious challenge for his Wake County seat, winning it by 650 votes.

•••

Alabama, which remains a deep red state, sent a new Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives. Former Montgomery Mayor Bobby Bright took a congressional seat that had been in GOP hands for more than 40 years.

•••

The Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council will be recruiting more members to help with the lobbying efforts in the N.C. General Assembly and assisting the Hosiery Technology Center with Washington initiatives. The addition of Kay Hagan to the U.S. Senate and Larry Kissell to the U.S. House offers opportunities for HTC undertakings for funding and regulatory relief.

The election of Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue as the first woman governor of North Carolina is seen as an advantage for the hosiery and textiles industries. 

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The Hosiery Technology Center at the new Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions (CEMS) is supporting companies

with research and development, testing and sourcing, marketing and sales. From production to retailing, the center is engaged in supply chain services. That includes training and lean manufacturing strategies.

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'We're Anything But The Status Quo'

Textile Technology Center Covers Broad Spectrum

**Think big.
Think small.
Think out of the box.**

*By Paul Fogleman
Editor*

For John Anderson, director of the Textile Technology Center in Belmont, all admonitions are on his plate. "Opportunities are coming from all directions," he stresses. "We can capitalize on trends that are reaching into every level of our industry," he adds.

Take the trend that is affecting any textile manufacturer: sustainability. Large companies are adapting strategies that can be described as "earth-friendly." This includes elimination of toxic chemicals in dyes, energy savings, turning to more natural fibers in products.

Small companies are finding niches in the market for sustainable products, supplying shoppers who are looking for apparel and household items made with natural dyes and fibers. Yarns spun with wool, angora, alpalca, cotton motivate a growing number of consumers.

Anderson has his eye on this market niche and is pursuing what could be described as out-of-the-box concepting to put his center in its midst. Think small ... like a mini-mill.

Just as farmers' markets are giving new life to small growers, Anderson thinks home-based businesses or co-ops could serve animal farmers who raise rabbits, sheep, or lamas. There is cost-effective equipment that allow these entrepreneurs to produce yarns in a mini-mill. He plans to set up such a mill in the center on the East Campus of Gaston College.

Anderson is doing his homework. He has visited special events in Western North Carolina that attract people who weave or card yarn in their homes. He was struck by the number of people and the energy he encountered. Also, he noticed the high value-added aspect associated with this "low-tech" niche in the textile industry.

He has contacted trade organizations serving the animal growers and has been "bowled over by the response." Representatives of these organizations have written letters supporting grant applications he has submitted to foundations.

materials for medical and military needs.

Anderson's clients represent all areas of North Carolina from Basofil Fibers in Enka to the West and Dynema with manufacturing facilities in Greenville near the coast. Jeff Bruner, president of Quantum Group Inc. in Greensboro gives the Textile Technology Center high marks for its work in helping them develop new products. Quantum employs over 100 people and is a niche textile company that is thriving.

Matt Thomas, technical director for Frontier Spinning in Sanford, lauds the center for its "flexibility and professionalism." Frontier uses the center for analysis of polyester stable fibers and for issues with their vendors. Frontier also has sent frontline supervisors and technical services personnel to workshops conducted at the center.

As a whole, Anderson sees the textiles industry responding to trends that were set in motion with the rise of globalization.

High tech issues will continue to propel leaders and Glen Raven Mills is an example, he says. New product development will have a sense of urgency and will need support of public-supported

He is helping large companies with their research and development activities, including the use of yarns made from recycled products, again part of the sustainability movement.

In the meantime, Anderson has seen his client list grow and his retained earnings increase with service to traditional textiles manufacturers. He is helping large companies with their research and development activities, including the use of yarns made from recycled products, again part of the sustainability movement.

Performance yarns and fabrics are in the forefront. Heat-resistant clothing for NASCAR drivers is likely to spring from research at the textile center. Also, the center is focused on high-performance

centers which have capacity to make samples and innovate.

Military needs are fueling innovations and demands for a broad spectrum of apparel and materials, including fabrics that replace "harder materials."

Textile manufacturing in the United States, Anderson surmises, will depend on specialization. For the center, that means beefing up its research and development and testing services.

"We're anything but the status quo," Anderson insists. ■

Divine Dzion Hosiery *Meets Needs Of Women Of Color*



Al and Marcia Parks

*By Charlene H. Carpenter
Assistant Editor*

Al and Marcia Parks of Divine Dzion Hosiery say they probably have the sheerest pantyhose on the market.

That's a pretty big claim, but in order to make the kind of product they make, it has to be very sheer. Divine Dzion of St.

Louis, MO, makes hosiery especially for women of color. Any color, says Owner Al Parks. The company makes hosiery for all women, but it specifically addresses the unique problems women with darker skin tones encounter with most pantyhose.

"Women of color have a very difficult time finding colors of hosiery that match their skin tones. They have trouble with the hues – the gray, red or orange hues in most hosiery. With our product, you don't have that problem. The hue is not there."

Even women with light skin complain about the chalky color found in many colors of sheer pantyhose. So, Divine

Dzion makes sheer colors that work well for them also.

"They could wear sand, almost midnight, midnight and almond, and if they want to add a hint of color, caramel," says Parks. "Women of color can wear honey brown, and it is transparent on their skin. People have told us that they go to church or work and someone will ask if they are wearing hosiery. They don't believe they are wearing it until the person actually pulls the hosiery to prove they are wearing it."

(continued on page 11)

Product Improvement 101 Hosiery Technology Center:

One-Stop Transition To The Future

The Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions and its hosiery technology center division want to reduce the stress of being in business in a stressful world.

Success for U.S. manufacturers depends on being lean and efficient. Bringing new performance products to the marketplace. Being a part of the sustainable movement. And substantiating quality for customers. All can be solved with one-stop service at the Hosiery Technology Center.

HTC Manager Dan St. Louis promotes his program as “Product Improvement 101.” His staff, with over 100 years of combined manufacturing experience, will assist a company with development of products under controlled conditions. The scope of services range from recommending fibers “to excite customers” to conducting knitting trials and laboratory tests.

The HTC will produce prototypes to enhance performance with new construction, St. Louis asserts. And it is all done in one place where capabilities include high-performance knitting, finishing and nationally-acclaimed testing services. “No other center in the world can do this,” he continues.

The center’s work is proprietary. Non disclosure agreements are routine.

For more than 18 years, St. Louis has witnessed the evolution of the U.S. hosiery

industry as director of the center. He has led the center to become a nationally-recognized model for grass-roots support services. In 2007, the center had a \$23 million impact on business for hosiery manufacturers. Earlier this year, he accepted the challenge to broaden his vision to furniture and other traditional manufacturing as director of CEMS.

St. Louis is helping manufacturers seize opportunities in global marketing with exporting programs. Also, he is leading the way in sustainable manufacturing to satisfy the demands of retailers and their shoppers. The earth-friendly movement is not a fad, he insists. It is a reality.

The center operates under Catawba Valley Community College with about half its budget from the North Carolina General Assembly. The testing laboratory and research activities are self-supporting.

St. Louis has obtained federal grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce to help manufacturers – hosiery and yarn – go directly to retailers and international markets. He has partnered with the N.C. Department of Commerce, the Textile Technology and Clothing Center TC(2) and the Southeast Apparel Manufacturers to go after new sales.

(continued on page 13)



The Textile Technology Center



By *John Anderson*
Director, Textile Technology Center

The Textile Technology Center at Gaston College is taking significant steps to remain a valuable resource for the emerging segments of the Textile Business in North Carolina and the region, as well as the mainstream producers of fibers, yarns and fabrics.

The “high tech” performance fiber and fabric segment continues to grow. The center has added several new services to its portfolio in the past year, and as a result has added new clients in this important sector. Specifically, through re-investment of funds from services and donations from the industry, the Textile Technology Center is now able to provide chemical analytical of polymers and materials. Carolina Silver (Maiden, NC), DSM Dyneema (Greenville, NC and Stanley, NC) Quantum Fabrics (Colfax, NC) and Unifi (Yadkinville, NC) all became clients of the center as a result.

As reported earlier in Trends, the Center purchased a sample weaving system that allows the center to produce and test woven fabrics from single package of yarn. Precision Fabrics (Greensboro) is just one leading producer of Performance fabrics that has availed themselves of the fast turnaround that this service affords.

North Carolina is home for two of the leading Sewing Thread producers, American and Efirid (Mt Holly) and Coats America (Marion). Both have worked with the center in the past year to develop performance products that complement their global offerings and answer emerging market needs.

The Center joined the Industrial Fabrics Association International (IFAI) and exhibited at their recent trade show in Charlotte. The show was well attended and the Textile Technology Center’s booth was busy from the opening moment of the show until closing.

On the other end of the technology spectrum, the Center is also finding a growing and interested client base in the “Locally Grown” and craft segments of textiles.

The center added the capability to spin yarn from fibers longer than two inches, which opens the possibility of producing yarns from alpaca, wool, angora and mohair fibers produced in North Carolina. The Center staff attended the Southeastern Animal Fibers Fair in Fletcher, North Carolina. One blogger who attended the fair described its as “a giant convention about all things yarn ... including pre-yarn, meaning bundles of fluff with technical names like “roving” and “top,” and ante-yarn, meaning the actual animals themselves” (www.squicciarini.wordpress.com/2008/10/28/the-story-of-saff). There was wholehearted enthusiasm for the center developing capabilities to assist and instruct this very interesting emerging segment. Toward that end, the Textile Technology Center will host a two day meeting of the Alpaca Fiber Association/Carolinas Alpaca Breeders Organization in April to look at routes to establish a viable commercial path to market. ■



Divine Dzion from page 8

Divine Dzion products come in 10 colors and are control top. The company offers a sheer, which is very sheer, and a day sheer that is a little thicker.

The hosiery, which is manufactured by Wells Hosiery in Asheboro, N.C., is also very comfortable.

"It is one of the most comfortable control top hosiery products you will ever wear," says Parks.

Parks and his wife started the company in 2004 after discarding the idea of designing their own line of hip-hop denim apparel.

"My wife had problems finding hosiery to match her skin tone so, we decided to create our own brand because other people in the marketplace have the same problem," explains Parks.

Both husband and wife brought skills to the table that have helped the business prosper: Al Parks worked in customer service for AT&T until the hosiery business took off, and Marcia Parks is employed as an associate planner for Monsanto Corporation.

But, the name of the company, Divine Dzion, gives credit where they believe credit is due:

"My wife and I prayed about the business and we knew that God was part of this. We wanted to incorporate that belief in the name. Divine Dzion. The idea for this hosiery wasn't from us. It was from God. It was a divine blessing from God," explains Parks.

Divine Dzion products are sold primarily on the Internet and in boutiques, but the couple hopes to get them in department stores and has been talking with some. The company's focus will continue

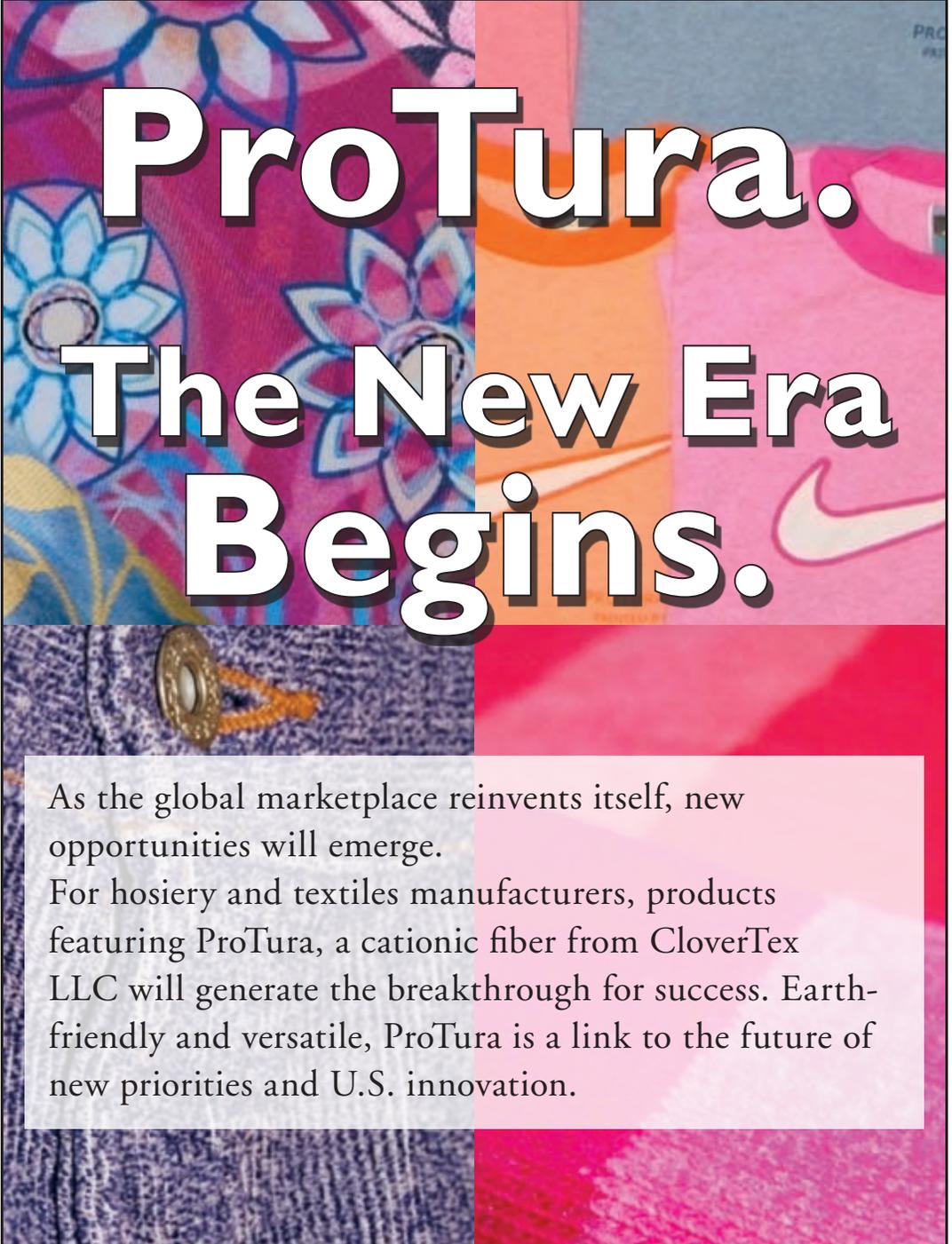
to be on customer service and meeting the needs of their customers.

"One thing we stress is customer service and customer

satisfaction," Parks says. "We tell our customers: 'Your money is important, but it is not as important as a satisfied customer because a satisfied

customer will tell other people about us."

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Consumer Product Safety Rule Raises Questions From Industry

Hosiery and textile manufacturers and their retailer customers are wrestling with another federal regulation from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, with the Hosiery Technology Center working to find solutions.

At the center of the controversy is lead. Federal action was prompted by the arrival of toys from China with paints including heavy concentrates of lead. A new regulation under the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) now targets a wide array of goods aimed at children 12 years of age and under.

Primarily the focus was on toys. But, do the regulations also include socks, tights, and apparel? And should the industry seek an exemption?

A recent commission hearing that was broadcast by webcast did not mention items worn by children. But items exempted were mentioned, including draperies, electronic devices, and "things not accessible to children through reasonable use and abuse."

In addition to toys, jewelry, children's furniture, and games will require certification that lead is no more than 300 parts per million by August 14, 2009. Two years later, the lead content can be no more than 100 parts per million.

Dan St. Louis, manager of the hosiery center with its nationally-famous testing laboratory, is considering two courses of action: become a certified testing service to identify any lead in hosiery or help the industry get an exemption from the regulations.

In the meantime, the center is fielding numerous calls each day from retailers and manufacturers. Regulations will impose more costs on U.S. companies, but offshore companies are not subject to certification issues, it was noted. ■

For Some Companies, Tech Centers Provide Life-Or-Death Support

The "Change we Can Believe In" theme which resounded in the 2008 U.S. presidential election could also identify the Textile Technology Center and the Hosiery Technology Center.

Both centers are leading important industries to adapt to 21st century markets. As textile companies and hosiery manufacturers re-invent themselves, they are turning to the centers for services they no longer can support internally. Thus, they are preserving thousands of jobs in North Carolina and in other areas of the Southeast.

Research and development and market support lead the list for demands from the industry. As the U.S. struggles through a challenging economic crisis, private sector companies must be lean and innovative. And as the U.S. government heads into a new era, so must those companies.

Thanks to the support of the North Carolina General Assembly, the textile and hosiery centers are protecting a core of traditional manufacturing. Without a bailout. ■

Allen Mebane, 84, Founder of Unifi

George Allen Mebane, founder of Unifi Inc., died November 15. He was 84.

Allen started Unifi in 1971 at the peak of his career in textiles. He previously worked for American and Efirid Inc. and Burlington Mills. He is credited with steering Unifi through economically-challenge years in the 1980s and transforming the company into a high-tech operation. He retired in 2000.

Mebane lived in the Mocksville area of Davie County where he supported numerous community programs with his philanthropic foundation. ■



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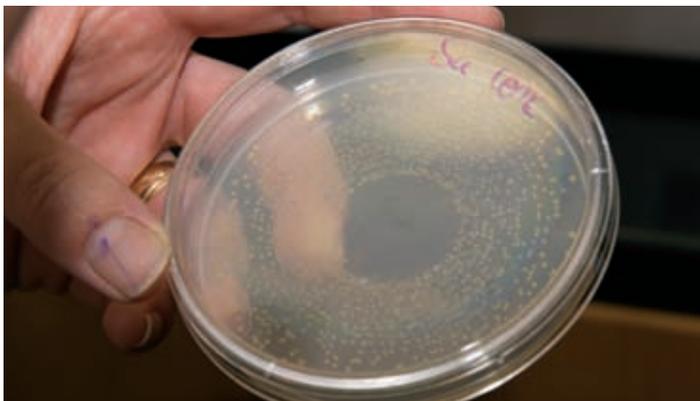
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One-Stop Transition To The Future

..... from page 9

When St. Louis became director of the Hosiery Technology Center in 1990, North Carolina hosiery mills employed 30,000 people who produced 60 percent of the nation's hosiery products. The Fort Payne, Alabama "Socks Capitol of the World" employed 8,000.

Then came NAFTA, followed by CAFTA. The World Trade Organization (WTO) admitted China in 2003 and the industry was changed. Pressured by discount retailers, U.S. manufacturers began sourcing from Asia and the Middle East, downsizing their home-based operations. Surviving U.S. companies have had to



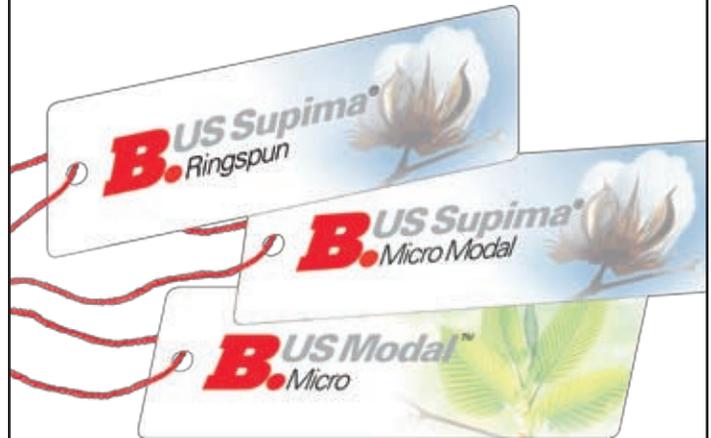
reinvent themselves to compete.

St. Louis and his staff continue to push hosiery manufacturers to look for opportunities and be open to change. The cheese keeps moving, he reflects, referring to a business-directed parable 10 years ago.

"In a competitive global world, business success depends on being first with the best. Me-too products and the same old marketing strategies will be shut out of the marketplace," St. Louis says. "Customers are spending money for what fulfills their social agenda or adds to their comfort," he advises.

The one-stop opportunity for manufacturers means that some will be prospering, employing high-tech yarns and fibers in specialized performance products. "The future still holds promise, but it requires us to rethink our business in the present," St. Louis concludes. 

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DECEMBER 2008

NEW LEADERSHIP: The 2008 elections have brought changes to U.S. government and the halls in state legislatures. We will profile some of the new faces and offer some insight into the issues they will embrace that could affect manufacturers. Universal health insurance could be one. More doors open for organized labor could be another.

2009 Editorial Calendar

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>Brave New World For U.S. Producers. What's on the horizon for the supply chain. How manufacturers are capitalizing on innovations from fiber and yarn producers. Opportunities in retail as consumers evaluate green preferences.</p>	<p>Spring fashions. Colors and trends in product design. Pre-MAGIC coverage. Highlights of Outdoor Retailer Winter Market for manufacturers of sports socks and seamless apparel.</p>	<p>The sustainability movement gains momentum. Organic fibers and yarn blends and how manufacturers are promoting recycled materials. What are retailers looking for in earth-friendly products?</p>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<p>Nanotechnology is making inroads in hosiery and apparel manufacturing, especially healthcare products. We look at opportunities and research and development in this arena. Marketing around Earth Month is analyzed. Hosiery and Textiles Day at the North Carolina legislature is in focus.</p>	<p>Preview of fall fashion trends. Retailers and manufacturers are asked to look ahead.</p>	<p>Sporting socks and apparel are a mainstay for U.S. manufacturers. With the Outdoor Retailer Show on the horizon, we look at trends.</p>
JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<p>Government contracts for the U.S. military have been important and the U.S. wants more companies to bid on contracts. The opportunities and the hurdles for domestic manufacturers will be cited. An update on the Berry Amendment that is supposed to give preferences to U.S. producers.</p>	<p>Marketing trends for textiles and hosiery supply chain. This entails steps to improve efficiency and deliveries and promoting new technologies in yarns and fibers.</p>	<p>Coverage of the biannual MAGIC Show. Hosiery and Textile Technology Centers will analyze R&D activities. Yarn and fibers companies will be invited to report on developments adding value to their products. Holiday promotions will be evaluated.</p>
OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
<p>Ten months after a new administration takes over in Washington, we report on shifts in globalization. Is China still dominating global manufacturing or is the shift to the Caribbean and South America gaining traction. How is the supply chain responding?</p>	<p>Women hosiery fashions – sheer and socks – continue to be important to domestic manufacturing. How has technology changed this segment?</p>	<p>Healthcare products represent the fastest growing segment in some textiles and hosiery companies. The aging of America's population and more sophisticated healthcare services are fueling this trend. The technology centers are helping companies integrate technologies into this market.</p>

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