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21st Century Knitting At MSC



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

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Emerging Issues Forum**

*The ONLY magazine dedicated to
the hosiery industry*

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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council

Go For The Gold:

Two top legislators have resigned from the General Assembly to start new careers: as lobbyists.

Harold Brubaker, former House Speaker and top appropriations leader in the 2011-12 Legislature, two months ago announced his resignation to open a lobbying operation with his son. Brubaker was the longest-serving member of the House and was in his 18th term. Sen. Richard Stevens, a senior appropriations chair in the Senate, resigned in earlier this month and soon after announced he is joining a Raleigh lobbying firm.

Both are Republicans whose party controls both chambers in the General Assembly. Polls suggest the GOP will maintain control in upcoming sessions due to redistricting. As top leaders, Brubaker and Stevens are likely to attract major clients in banking, healthcare, insurance, and utilities. Stevens and Brubaker will earn much more than the average \$50,000 earned by legislators, including salary and per diem.

Presidential Race – Cloudy For Business:

Polls show that the presidential race will be close, with Pres. Obama showing a slight lead in toss-up states following the conventions. GOP contender George Romney's numbers however are close enough to move ahead if the economy drives down support for the incumbent president.

Will the results of the election set the stage for Congress to finally find common ground to avoid going over the fiscal cliff?

But which candidate will lead a recovery for U.S. business? Neither has laid out specific plans or concepts. Jobs, jobs, jobs has been the mantra. But which administration would aggressively pursue a review of regulations and eliminate thousands that tie the hands of small business. How would a national healthcare plan emerge? Romney recently said he would retain parts of Obamacare. Will there be more or less oversight of U.S. financial institutions and the flow of money?

Romney's track record as a very successful businessman suggests he would surround himself with savvy advisors unshackled from ideology. Would Obama bring more advisors with business experience in contrast with the former ivy-tower recruits? And will the fog start to clear before November? Will the results of the election set the stage for Congress to finally find common ground to avoid going over the fiscal cliff?

2013 Legislature:

With at least 65 percent of the North Carolina legislators having less than two sessions of experience, there is bound to be major developments ahead. If the elections put more Tea Party standard-bearers in office, look for more polarization. Many of the Republicans leaving were considered moderate, an anathema to most newcomers. Fewer moderates also are found in the Democratic stable which has moved to the left. And who will lead the Democratic caucus in the House with the departure of former Speaker Joe Hackney?

As North Carolina grows in population, and experiences demographic changes, state government is going to confront more challenges that will test an ideological agenda. ■



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

New Generation In Knitting

Flatbed Operations Expand Opportunities For Rebirth

Twenty-first century knitting operations are leading a revolution in textiles manufacturing, comparable to the impact of the internet on worldwide communications.

A preview of the next generation in knitting can be seen in the Manufacturing Solutions Center at Catawba Valley Community College in Hickory. Manufacturers of the flatbed knitting tout the production of “whole garment” or “technical” textiles.

Rodney Sigmon, who spearheads research and development and prototyping, refers to the new process as “three-dimensional knitting” or “knit to wear.” Complete apparel – dresses, sportswear, gloves, and socks – come off the equipment. But so does more technical components like backs for chairs, upholstery fabrics, and construction accessories. The equipment has the capacity to knit wire spacer fabrics and laid-in wire and cables for heating elements.

“The implications for these machines are huge,” says Dan St. Louis, director of the center. He says the new knitting technology is a good fit for companies and entrepreneurs in a region where traditional manufacturing is re-inventing its operations and markets.



21st Century Technology: Rodney Sigmon, specialist for research and development and prototyping at the Manufacturing Solutions Center, checks specifications for a sample produced on Stoll one-dimensional knitting machine.

Since 1990, HTC has guided the transition of the hosiery industry from mechanical to computerized production. When the Hosiery Technology Center was established, there were over 200 mills with 30,000 people shipping over 50 percent of the nation's legwear – socks, tights, pantyhose. The globalization of the marketplace resulted in the sourcing of products offshore and the closing of mills and mass layoffs.

In the meantime, furniture manufacturing was experiencing the same pressures.

Today the Manufacturing Solutions Center has expanded to help hosiery, yarn, furniture and other emerging companies create new products for

the 21st century marketplace. The center is recognized worldwide for its superior hosiery testing services and its assistance for prototyping new products. The center also focused on helping hosiery and furniture manufacturers pursue international markets.

Prototyping is poised to take a giant leap with the flatbed knitting machines from Stoll of Germany and Shima Seiki of Japan. Socks with knitted individual toes could be added to the offerings from hosiery companies. Performance-driven gloves and caps are potentials for traditional glove businesses.

Remember the green Nike shoes worn by U.S. athletes in the recent summer Olympics? Sigmon notes they were

made on flatbed machines.

The capabilities and speed of production is determined by the size of the needle bed. The Shima Seiki bed extends 36 inches and is adept at creating new socks with multiple patterns and colors and other small-size apparel. The Stoll has a bed that extends up to 72 inches with capacity for almost unlimited products for fashion, performance garments, upholstery, military products and numerous technical fabric uses.

The computerized equipment functions with programs that can be created by designers or pulled from files. For designers the opportunities

(continued on page 8)

are almost endless: yarn and colors can be scanned and programmed to create a realistic visual before the equipment is put into production. For any type of function or fashion, designers can literally push the creative envelope.

St. Louis says the Stoll and Shimi Seiki equipment was installed in the MSC through a partnership that the MSC staff will help entrepreneurs and existing businesses design and make prototypes of new products with this technology in order to generate more sales of this technology. MSC staff can also help getting these products to market both from internal resources and by using the network of close partners to bring such services as marketing materials, web sites, sourcing of raw materials, prototyping, distribution of products, retail connections, exporting etc. New business start-ups or increasing existing business orders creates jobs which is why MSC was created in the first place.

Sigmon and Rick Small have both been involved in extensive training sessions by both Shima and Stoll technicians both at their facilities and at MSC. There is a lot to learn but they are getting better with every day they work on this technology. Sigmon and Small will also be available to train new technicians on this technology so it can be incorporated into existing or new companies.

In fact, prototyping can be a business in itself and St. Louis sees entrepreneurs acquiring machines to tap into this market. When the MSC moves into new facilities

next month in Conover, the flatbed operations are expected to draw even more attention and activity.

The move also will result in expanded testing facilities which have fueled the growth of the MSC over the past decade. Hundreds of hosiery buyers and marketing executives from leading U.S. retailers and brand companies have been introduced to the MSC through its Hosiery 101 and Hosiery 102 courses. Most of the retailers have designated the MSC for hosiery testing. In 2011, a North Carolina hosiery company received a multi-million order to produce special socks for the Indian military after they were tested for required standards.

Since it was established 22 years ago through the efforts of area manufacturers, the center has received bipartisan support from the North Carolina General Assembly. As the needs of the industry evolved – from the integration of immigrants into the work force and the arrival of computerized technology – the MSC has been a resource that helped the hosiery industry survive.

High-quality performance products will drive manufacturing of the future, St. Louis insists. This means more emphasis on prototyping and outreach to specialty markets.

With access to the extensive opportunities offered by the flatbed program, North Carolina mills can be poised to rebuild manufacturing in America. ■

At right: Prototypes of new products produced by knit-to-wear programs on Stoll and Shima Seiki machines (above right and below right). Apparel comes off as a true seamless product.



Manufacturing In N.C. Topic For Emerging Issues Forum



The prestigious Institute for Emerging Issues at N.C. State University is examining and promoting manufacturing in North Carolina.

Some would say “about time.”

Some 430,000 people in North Carolina are employed in manufacturing, ranking the state one of the top in the nation. Manufacturing wages are 52 percent higher than those for other non-farm jobs.

The annual Emerging Issues Forum will be held at the Raleigh Convention Center Feb. 11-12. Former Gov. James B. Hunt, the founder of the forum, will be a central figure at the conference which has examined tax reform, creativity, and other trends affecting government and the economy.

During a recent webinar with institute supporters across the state, Anita Brown-Graham, director, observed “the lesson of the Great Recession is how vital manufacturing is to the economy.

Particular emphasis will be put on how manufacturers have redefined themselves...reinventing the business for the global market, it was suggested.

Scott Ralls, president of the N.C. Community Colleges, said that technology, including robots and computer-driven equipment, has revolutionized production in traditional industries, notably textiles and furniture. The community colleges are adjusting to the need for highly-trained and motivated workers in the 21st century operations.

Dr. Ralls said the average age for people in workforce training programs tends to be older – 31 years. The challenge, he continued, is to attract more females to the manufacturing workforce. “We may never produce enough males,” he asserted as he outlined the growing demand for trained people.

The 2013 forum also will look at growing demands for personnel in other sectors of manufacturing such as biotechnology, welding, hosiery, plastics, electronics and others.

“Too many people think manufacturing is dead,” Ms. Brown-Graham reflected. “Far from it,” she added as she contemplated the upcoming forum.

The Manufacturing Solutions Center, soon to be relocated to Conover, and the Textile Technology Center in Belmont will be among the key manufacturing support agencies represented. ■

SYFA Market Meeting In Charlotte Sept. 27-28

The “Fiber to Market” conference sponsored by the Synthetic Yarn and Fiber Association will be held September 27 – 28 at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Charlotte.

Kim Pettit, managing director of the association, said the conference presentations will take the participants from raw materials to fabrics; from fabric to retail; and the impact of government legislation on the textiles economy.

Dr. Roger Tutterow, Stetson School of Business at Mercer University, will be the keynote speaker on Friday morning, Sept. 28. Other presentations will feature spokespersons from yarn and fiber companies and brands associated with SYFA.


Registration and additional information is available at kpettit@thesyfa.org. 

Membership Renewals Due For Hosiery-Textile Council

The Hosiery and Textiles Governmental Affairs Council is recruiting companies for the 2012-13 membership year.

Memberships are for the 2012-13 fiscal year and support the legislative program for the N.C. General Assembly on behalf of the Manufacturing Solutions Center and the Textile Technology Center. The agenda for the council includes protection of funds for the operation of the centers and special issues. Earlier this year the lobbying program exempted the centers from sales taxes on acquisition of new equipment.

Paul Fogleman, director of the council and lobbyist, said the 2013 session will be especially challenging as almost two-thirds of the members will have served for less than two terms. “There will be a dramatic shift in leadership and this requires educating members on the value of the centers to manufacturing in North Carolina,” Fogleman said.

Additionally, North Carolina will have a new governor and administration. This will involve new heads of Commerce, Revenue, Employment Security offices. 



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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.

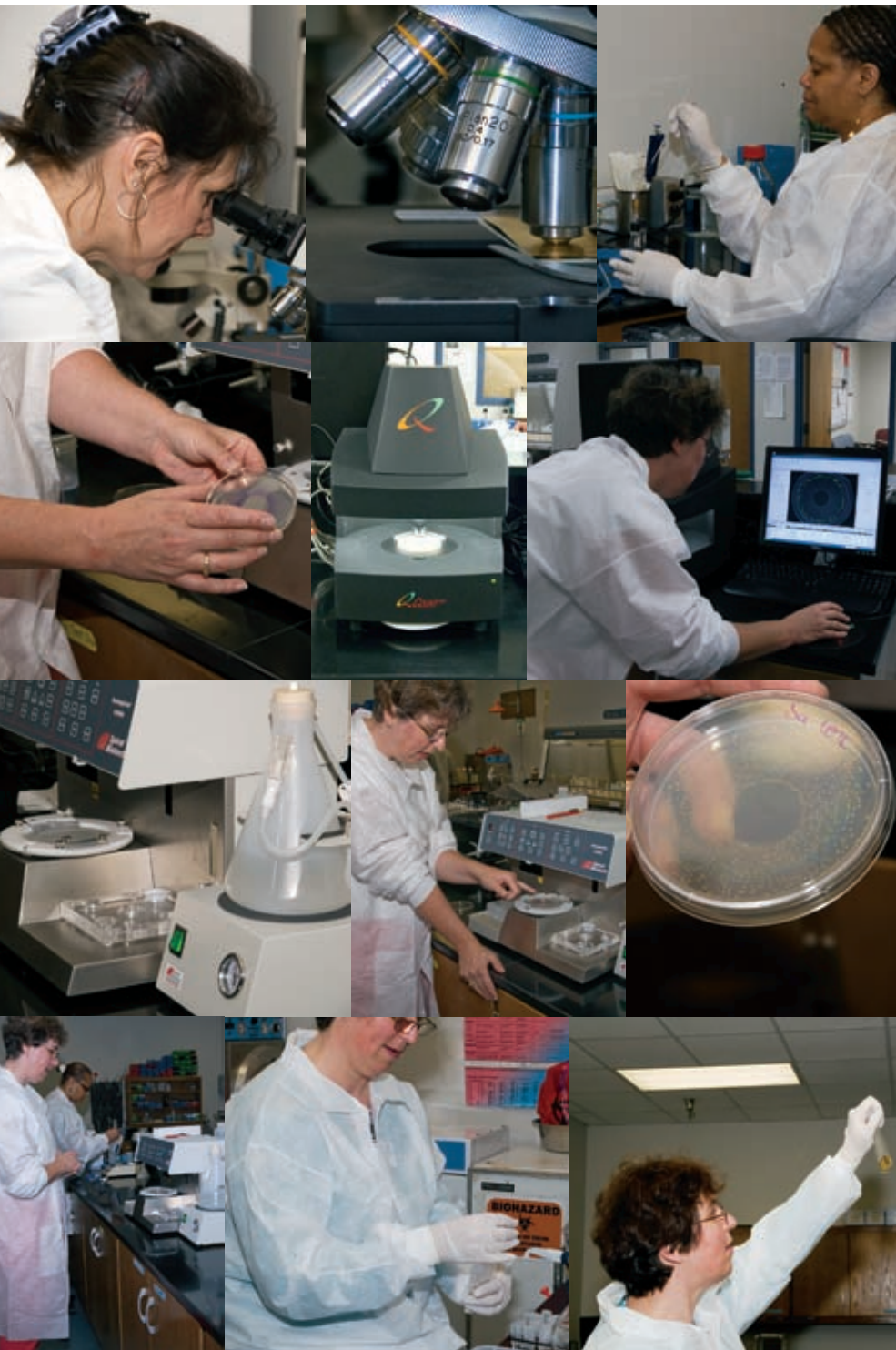
We congratulate the new leaders in the House and the Senate. Also we look forward to working with new members of the General Assembly as we present our case for the continued support of the Textile Technology Center and the Manufacturing Solutions Center with its successful hosiery industry testing and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