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**Textile manufacturers turn
their attention to reducing
carbon footprint.** Page 5

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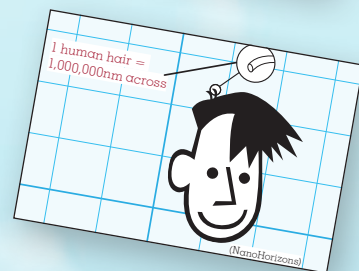
TRENDS

Legwear Fashions Textiles

*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*

PUBLISHER & EDITOR.....Paul Fogleman
ASSISTANT EDITOR.....Charlene H. Carpenter
ART DIRECTOR.....J. Johnson
MARKETING DIRECTOR.....Denise Hatcher
SALES & MARKETING.....Carol Bracewell

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legislative column

by PAUL FOGLEMAN, Director, Hosiery Governmental Affairs Council

The Barack Obama phenomenon points to the electorate's desire for change in politics. Candidates at the state and local levels also are confronting this mood swing within their own districts.

In the North Carolina 10th Congressional District. GOP Rep. Patrick McHenry faces opposition within his own party with a primary opponent. In the fall, he will face a popular military hero and son of a Presbyterian minister. The voters' desire for something different—an option to partisan gridlock—is prompting competition for incumbents.

In Catawba County, the state senate's longest-serving Republican also faces primary opposition. Sen. Austin Allran will face Kitty Barnes, chair of the Board of County Commissioners and past president of the N.C. County Commissioners Association. Allran traditionally has appealed to the evangelical community. Barnes is an advocate for education and promoted the recent quarter-cent sales tax in the successful fall referendum.

In Alabama, popular Rep. Robert Aderholt whose district includes Fort Payne and its hosiery center, is facing opposition but polls indicate he will easily win his election.

The North Carolina gubernatorial race includes incumbents in both parties. Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue and State Treasurer Richard Moore are vying for the Democratic nomination. Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory, and State Sen. Fred Smith are competing with former Supreme Court Justice Robert Orr and attorney Bill Graham are seeking to carry the GOP banner. All are touting change as they define change.

♦♦♦♦

America's healthcare system is being scrutinized in the 2008 political races at the national and state levels. Both Sen. Hillary Clinton and Sen. Obama are including universal healthcare in their policy positions. Healthcare issues, including mental health reform, are debated at the state level in North Carolina.

For small and medium-sized businesses and their employees, this offers possibility of financial relief. For uninsured families, it offers relief from stress.

Look for health legislation to be near the top of the agenda in Legislatures.

♦♦♦♦

State legislatures this year are facing serious budget issues as the economy slows down and perhaps moving into a recession.


Alabama Gov. Bob Riley has submitted a budget to the Legislature that calls for cuts to education appropriations with hold-the-line on other expenses. Although Alabama has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the South, thanks to the automotive and technology industries, lower tax collections are reported.

At mid-year, North Carolina tax collections were reported at \$150 million over estimates. But the second half of the year has Legislative fiscal managers more cautious.

There won't be money for "discretionary" projects, leaders have advised.

♦♦♦♦

Raleigh attorney Robin Anderson, chair of the State Personnel Commission, has announced she will run for State Labor Commissioner. She will oppose two-term Commissioner Cherie Berry, a former Republican House member.

A graduate of UNC law school, Anderson has taught law at the Meredith College MBA program. She was appointed to the personnel commission in 1999. A native of Catawba County, Berry is a retired business executive. 

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Textiles Conference Offers Strategies For New World

There is no business to be done on a dead planet.

David Brower, founder,
Earth Island Institute

These were no save-the-earth tree-huggers. They were 300 executives and technicians from the textiles industry who gathered in Charlotte February 12-13 to learn how to participate in an earth-friendly products supply chain.

"Sustainable is Attainable" was the theme of the conference sponsored by the Synthetic Yarn and Fibers Association and the FSG/American Fiber Manufacturers. The message of the speakers: Businesses can and will respond to the challenges of global climate change and the depletion of earth resources. Those businesses include textiles operations.

Looking for energy alternatives from landfills. Reducing the carbon footprint in manufacturing processes. Establishing standards for sustainable products. Recycling.

And integrating biotechnology in the production operations. These were among the topics absorbed by the attendees.

Ray Anderson, chairman of Interface Inc. and passionate advocate of manufacturing sustainability strategies, set the tone for the conference in his keynote address. Admittedly a "radical industrialist" and "as competitive as anybody you know," Anderson heads a company with a billion dollars a year in sales in 110 countries.

Anderson believes the "bowels of the earth are in decline" with the depletion of fossil fuels and other resources. He also insists that business practices are doing the greatest damage.

Thirteen years ago Anderson challenge his company executives to set sustainability goals. In spite of some skeptics, he said, the company moved forward. He cited the example of an engineer who designed a pipeline system to replace its natural gas with methane from a landfill.

Moving closer to the experience of his audience, Anderson related the successful drive to eliminate glue from the

installation of carpet tile by using adhesive tape.

This is industrial sustainability in action, Anderson said. He added that the best way to come up with new ideas is to stop following old concepts. Using new ideas, the goal of Interface is to totally eliminate the company's carbon footprint by 2020. Anderson said the company is about halfway on the journey, but already has reduced greenhouse emissions by 93 percent, fossil fuel usage by 60 percent, and smokestack emissions by 52 percent.

And this is what caught the attention of the listeners: Company sales have increased by 60 percent over the 13 years and profits have doubled.

"Business doesn't exist to make a profit; business makes a profit to exist," Anderson allowed. Embracing the new reality, there has never been a more differentiator for a company than sustainability, he asserted. "What sense is a business plan that says destroying the earth is the preferred path to profit?" he concluded.

Synthetic fibers, as well as natural fibers, are part of the sustainability picture in the textiles industry and how this role is emerging was presented by Alasdair Carmichael, president of PCI Fibers operation in Spartanburg, SC. Born in England and having lived in Asia, Europe and the U.S., Carmichael brought a global perspective to trends involving polyester fibers.

Recycling has become a major component in the manufacturing process, with over 205,000 tons produced in the U.S. Still that lagged behind the 233,000 tons from recycled



products made in Europe, he reported.

Over 30 million tons of polyester was produced around the world for consumers and most from recycled products. China alone imported 900,000 tons of used plastic containers for manufacture of polyester fibers, he said.

In his presentation, Carmichael touched on a driving force behind sustainability: pressure from retailers.

Carmichael noted that giant British retailer Marks and Spencer is spending \$400 million to be "carbon neutral" by 2012. Ads from the retailer are touting high-end clothing "made from recycled bottles." The point of sale materials also includes washing instructions that use less energy.

Other aspects of sustainability involve polypropylene principally manufactured in China, Europe and the U.S. and rayon and Ingeo, made from corn extrusion.

The conference also was introduced to the procedures for establishing standards for sustainable products. The carpet and office furniture industries have engaged in

(continued on page 13)

New Hosiery Entrepreneurs Adapt To New Roles In World Market

They are risk-takers. They are re-inventing their role in an industry that has experienced upheavals that were beyond their control. They are new entrepreneurs in the hosiery industry.

In areas that once dominated hosiery manufacturing in America, third generation executives have started new companies or have redefined those built by their families. But hosiery entrepreneurs outside these traditional regions—Piedmont North Carolina and northern Alabama—also are pursuing niches. As one said, “It’s in our genes.”

Hickory NC is in the heart of a region that once was home to 100 hosiery manufacturing companies that shipped 30 percent of the products in the United States. At the turn of the 20th century, two Catawba County mills were the leading employers. During the 1930s and 1940s, former employees of these mills began operating knitting machines in their garages—even their homes. Within months, these operations were given names, some emerging as full-scale knitting and finishing plants.

In the prime of the Catawba Valley hosiery industry, dozens of mills could trace their beginnings to Elliott-Lyerly Hosiery Manufacturing or Ridgeview Hosiery Mill. Some of these companies continue today, including Moretz Inc., which is now GoldToe/Moretz.

Another hosiery industry cluster emerged in DeKalb County Alabama. In 1907, the W.B. Davis Hosiery Mill opened in an old hardware building in Fort Payne. From this development, some 110 hosiery mills eventually opened, following the same pattern in the Catawba Valley. In the Piedmont Triad region of North Carolina, which includes High Point, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro, the cluster prototype continued, with more emphasis on fine-gauge sheer hosiery for women.

Then came the late 1990s. NAFTA. CAFTA. The World Trade Organization. Free trade. Mills closed their doors as retailers demanded lower prices to match those from Asia and Latin America. Globalization put thousands of people out of work, including owners and their children.

In 2008, entrepreneurs still are visible in the hosiery clusters and beyond. They are reinventing their roles, focusing on their new brands, outsourcing products from Asia, or still adapting to a new profile as domestic producers.

After Ridgeview Inc. closed its doors six years ago, President Hugh Gaither fell back on his marketing skills to take a new direction, yet capitalizing on his experience with sports specialty stores. Today he is the owner of Flagship Brands LLC which owns Feetures!, a high-tech performance socks line sold by upper



Hosiery manufacturers-turned-distributors are selling millions of dozens of hosiery products produced in Asia, most notably China, on container ships such as this.

end retailers. From his offices in Newton NC, Gaither oversees the sales and distribution of thousands of dozens of socks shipped throughout the U.S.

In nearby Hickory NC, John M. Mills is putting together a team at Grace Knitting. The Mills family sold Ellis Hosiery Mills to ILG in 2002 and John Mills and his father left the company shortly after the sale. Toward the end of 2007, Mills began developing the concept for his new enterprise. Mills has been joined by Jay Johnson of Johnson Hosiery Mills, which closed in 2007.

Gaither and Mills are examples of how younger executives can change with the times. But there are others, including a younger third-generation man who quickly sprung into action after the family mill closed in Catawba County earlier this year. He declined to be interviewed but confirmed he will develop a business using domestic resources. It will be small with low overhead, he avowed.

In 2007, Arthur Lavitt closed the doors to Paul Lavitt Mills Inc., founded by his mother and father 40 years earlier in Hickory. It was a tough decision. Offshore products from low-cost countries—especially for fine-needle socks—made domestic manufacturing unprofitable, he says.

But Lavitt is in business—as a distributor once was referred

(continued on page 10)

NANO: *Small Particle With Big Influence On* U.S. Textiles and Hosiery Future

Textile industry manufacturers and hosiery marketers are hearing over and over that to survive, they must think big. As in worldwide. As in exporting.

But they also are prospering by thinking small. As in nanometers.

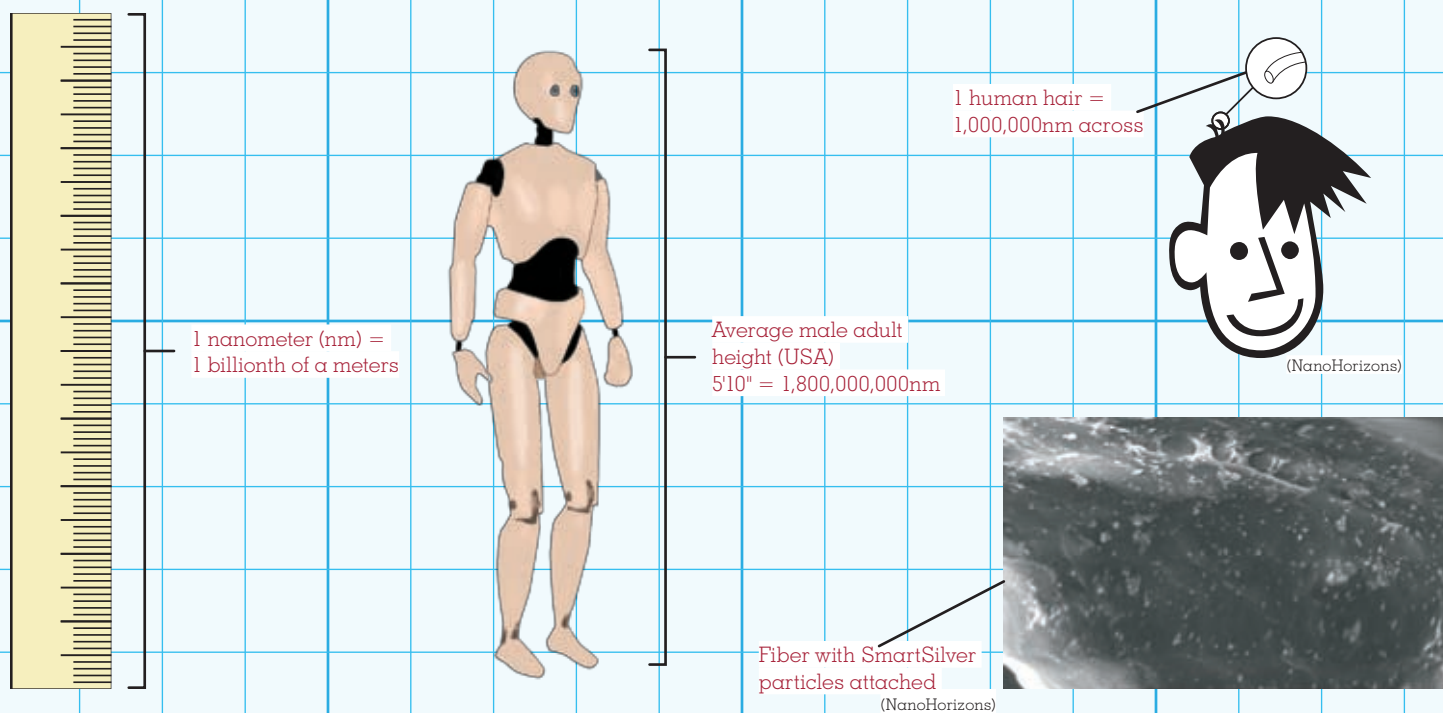
Since 2000, the era of nanotechnology has been advancing. Hosiery and apparel

To think nano is to think small, indeed. A nanometer is one billionth of a meter. A human hair is 100,000 nanometers in diameter. In the textile world, nano is becoming large, and nanomaterial companies are expanding.

Given the emergence of low-cost innovations, most nanomaterials

Of significant interest are the properties of Schoeller's Nanosphere technology that uses a coating to create a water and stain repellent surface. Schoeller also created a line of phase change materials that help garments regulate body temperature by absorbing or releasing energy as the body heats or cools.

1 Nanometer (nm) = 1 Billionth Of A Meter



companies have introduced high-tech performance products through fibers made with nanoparticles. Consumers looking for stain resistant apparel, antimicrobial goods, and moisture management features are fueling the growth of the nanotechnology industry.

Companies that are producing nanomaterials insist the potential for nanofibers has just begun. They are becoming more cost effective as they have entered mass production. Costs for incorporating nanotechnology-enabled properties into end products have dramatically decreased. But benefits are expanding.


companies are realizing that to reach the textile market they have to do more than come up with novel products. They must offer a drop-in solution that does not require additional processing costs to the fiber producers.

An example is the NovaResin line from NanoHorizons with additives of silver nanoparticles that are predispersed in resins for use by yarn and film extruders. The result is antimicrobial performance without changing the processing conditions, company spokesmen report.

Nano-Tex has launched a line of nano-enabled finishes that improve stain release, moisture management and static control.

Dr. Dan Hayes, director of operations for NanoHorizons, with the cost-effective applications of nanotechnology on fibers and fabrics, the industry is just scratching the surface. Benefits to consumers, he says, will dramatically increase in the coming decades.

"The future holds immeasurable promise for a wide range of new nanotechnology applications," he continues. "In textile markets, this will mean products that are stronger, safer, more comfortable, more versatile than ever imagined." ■



by Charlene H. Carpenter,
Assistant Editor

Green Sells.

Environmentally conscious consumers are causing earth friendly to be a dominant force shaping the U.S. marketplace and retailers are jumping on the green bandwagon as fast as they can. They are demanding eco-friendly products from their vendors, and legwear manufacturers are responding.

Eco-Friendly Socks Hit The Market Running

Although hosiery manufacturers say an increased demand for sustainable style is just now reaching the legs, domestic manufacturers are meeting the retail demand for eco-friendly products by adding green products to their lines. Manufacturers, which have been making earth friendly products, say the retail demand for green legwear has increased markedly during the past year.

"We have been making them for at least three years but within the past year, people are calling us," says Noreen Ewald, director of sales and marketing for Mayo Knitting Mills of Tarboro, N.C.

For some legwear companies, like Fox River Mills of Osage, Iowa, earth-friendly products and manufacturing processes are not new. The company has been on a journey to make its operations environmentally friendly since the 1970's when the town of Osage began taking steps that have led to it being named "the energy conservation capital of America." The company is an international model for green companies.

Others such as Teko Socks, which began manufacturing socks four years ago in Mt. Airy, N.C., are newer kids on the block, but they have jumped into the green economy feet first — not just because they want the business but also because they are sold out to doing their part at saving the environment.

Teko only uses four types of yarns in its socks and all of those are eco-friendly. Owner Jim Heiden gets his Merino wool from only one source so that he can trace its sustainability: He can insure that

the sheep are being raised eco-friendly. And, he tries to buy all of his supplies from vendors within a 200-mile radius of his plant in an effort to decrease the petroleum usage of his trucks. To help preserve American jobs, he makes sure everything he buys is American-made except the wool.

Green Socks

There are various shades of green depending on who you are talking to. Green can apply to the yarns and fibers in a product and stop there, or it can extend all the way from the raw materials through the manufacturing process to the end product and the packaging. In hosiery, manufacturers are concentrating on a few good yarns and fibers, which are meeting both consumer and retailer, demand.

NatureWorks Ingeo™ is being used by several companies. The fiber is made from corn extrusion and is the world's first man-made fiber derived from a 100 percent annually renewable agriculture resource. The non-petroleum based fiber is compostable and has natural insulating and moisture management properties.

To enhance the properties of the Ingeo, Fox River Mills is working with National Spinning Co. to blend Ingeo and recycled polyester to make a performance yarn. The recycled polyester is made from recycled plastic beverage containers. The yarn is 63 percent Ingeo and 37 percent recycled polyester. Fox River is the first manufacturer to use the blend, according to Becky Lessard, Fox River's Vice President of Finance and Administration and Chief Environmental Officer. For spring, it is making women's athletic socks with the yarn for its Good Earth collection. The socks will come in fashion colors.

"Comparison tests show that the abrasion resistance improved, the fabric is a stronger fabric and the wicking properties improved (by blending the recycled polyester with the Ingeo)," says Lessard. "It is a performance yarn."

The manufacturer will introduce unisex socks made out of the blend at the Outdoor Retailer show in August. The socks will incorporate fashion colors and fashion elements not normally found in outdoor socks, according to Fox River Brand Manager Xany Gibson.

Fox River is also using a blend of the recycled polyester and Merino wool, AXT 50/50™, to make socks for its Ski,



Mayo Knitting Mills



Mayo Knitting Mills



Twin City Knitting



Fox River Mills



Fox River Mills



Twin City Knitting

Domestic hosiery manufacturers are offering the green marketplace socks made from eco-friendly yarns and fibers. Mayo Knitting Mills is using recycled cotton and organic cotton and Twin City Knitting is using Cocona® and Ingeo™ in athletic socks. Fox River Mills is making socks with two new earth-friendly blends: Ingeo and recycled polyester and Merino wool and recycled polyester. Solo Licensing is using bamboo and soybean fibers in its fashion legwear.



Solo Licensing



Solo Licensing

Outdoor and Boot & Field categories.

"We are enhancing the mechanical properties of the Merino," says Gibson. "When you blend these two together the wicking properties improve and the breathability improves. Then, these two fibers become a performance yarn."

Ingeo also is being used by Twin City Knitting to make men's and women's athletic socks. The company is making socks with 98 percent Ingeo and 2 percent Spandex. It also makes them with 88 percent Ingeo, 10 percent nylon and 2 percent Spandex.

The Conover, N.C. manufacturer is making athletic socks with Cocona® yarn which contains a natural technology made from the activated carbon of recycled coconut shells. The eco-friendly technology is certified to dry quickly and provide moisture management and UV protection.

Teko Socks makes all of its products earth friendly. To insure that they are

environmentally sound, Heiden uses only four yarns in the socks he makes. They are EcoMerino Wool, Ecopoly Recycled Polyester, Ingeo and Organic Cotton.

The Merino wool comes from a farm in Tasmania where no pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers are used and where the sheep are only sheered to 2 to 3 centimeters rather than to the skin, says Heiden. Teko is making running, cycling, hiking and skiing socks with the yarn. The company also is making running, walking and light hiking socks out of the recycled polyester yarn, Ingeo and organic cotton.

Cabot Hosiery Mills in Northfield, Vermont is also making socks with Merino wool under its Darn Tough Vermont label.

Mayo Knitting Mills' Ewald says retailers are very interested in its socks made from a yarn spun from recycled cotton. The recycled cotton is made by recycling fibers and clippings collected after the cut and sew process. The sock

manufacturer also is making athletic socks from organic cotton.

"Organic doesn't just mean organic dyes were used. It means the ground was not enhanced with chemicals in order to create the bud on the top. The chemicals make the yield larger and fluffier. With no chemicals, the yield is smaller so it drives the price up," explains Ewald.

Bamboo, soybeans and organic cotton are the basis of Earth Grown products being marketed by Solo Licensing in New York. Fashion novelty socks made with the earth-friendly yarns will be on the shelves this spring, according to Vice President Fern Pochtar.

"These are high-fashion novelty socks with computer patterning," says Pochtar. "One of the features of the bamboo and soy are they are naturally antimicrobial. The soy beans are grown with no pesticides."

Green Is Selling. 

Tariffs On Honduran Socks Draw Mixed Industry Reaction

Tariffs on cotton socks coming into the U.S. from Honduras is too little too late, according to some domestic manufacturers.

The tariffs proposed by the U.S. Commerce Department last month, would be a maximum 13.5 percent. Domestic manufacturers' lobbying goal had been for a safeguard on all socks coming in from Honduras.

Jim Schollaert, who represents several domestic producers in Washington, was deeply disappointed. "This is a real letdown," Schollaert said. "This is not even a half measure—it's a quarter measure...nothing but a fig leaf for the promises the administration made to get CAFTA passed," he continued.

The promise referred to by Schollaert was made by House majority leaders in 2003 to U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt of Alabama. Ironically, the promise was also engineered by Alabama hosiery manufacturer Charles Cole who now embraces open trade with Honduras. Cole now is employed by Gildan Activewear of Canada which purchased V.I. Prewett operations last year. Cole had merged his mill into the Prewett organization.

The Commerce Department's

Committee on the Implementation of Textile Agreements (CITA) voted to impose the tariffs before the end of 2008. But it could take up to three months to negotiate with the Honduran government.

Gildan owns one of the largest hosiery mills in the world in Honduras and is planning to build another. Low wages and lower overhead has prompted Gildan to shift U.S. production south, resulting in the closing of former Kentucky Derby operations in Hickory and Mt. Airy. It still maintains production in the Prewett facilities in Fort Payne, AL.

Rep. Aderholt, announcing the CITA decision, took note of the Gildan position.

"A lot of people have been in support of the safeguards, but have unable to be vocal publicly because of Gildan," Aderholt said. "Gildan may look at this differently. I am in a position where I can be more vocal and speak for the sock producers in Fort Payne."

"We want Gildan to do well domestically, so jobs will not be moved out of Fort Payne...we hope this will be encouragement to Gildan to stay in Fort Payne and continue production," the congressman continued.

According to U.S. census data on



domestic sock manufacturing, output dropped by 19.6 percent in 2006 and another 13.5 percent during the first quarter of 2007. At the same time, imports from Honduras increased by 50 percent during the year ending in April 2007. World imports of socks into the U.S. jumped 14 percent during the year.

Schollaert noted the cotton-only tariff on Honduran shipments leaves a huge loophole. A sock that is made with 51 percent acrylic and 49 percent cotton could escape the tariff altogether, he said. ■

New Hosiery Entrepreneurs Adapt..... from page 6

to as an agent. He has kept the Alexander Julian brand and has a license with Liz Clairborne. He is sourcing from offshore operations but he also buys socks and seamless apparel from four North Carolina mills. His company, Design Studio International Inc. is located at Suite 2500, 1384 Broadway, New York City.

Up in Northfield, Vermont, Cabot Hosiery Mills is the last state's legwear manufacturer. Started in 1978 by Marc Cabot, the company is now run by his son Ric. The company has been successful pushing high-end outdoor socks under the brand "Darn Tough." Cabot Hosiery Mills success is traced to a decision made by Ric in 2004.

Retail buyers were looking at private label socks that could be acquired for half the price from offshore mills...and of the same quality. Ric looked in the mirror one day and told himself: if I can't make a high quality sock that is different from anything else, no one can. "Darn Tough" was born. "That decision saved our company," he reflects. But the decision wasn't that simple. He also had to find a brand manager who understood the marketing environment for socks.

Marc Cabot is a UNC-Chapel Hill graduate with a degree

in journalism. Ric also holds a journalism degree from the University Colorado and this is reflected in the company's website copy.

The transition from journalism to hosiery manufacturing is explained on the company's website. "A knitting machine can be as creative as a typewriter." Ric now envisions a future with his son taking the reins. But that is at least 20 years away as he son is now four years old. ■

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Promotions Announced At Wells Hosiery & Apparel



R. Michael Turner



Matt Anglemeyer

Ted Cooley, CEO of Wells Hosiery & Apparel, announced two promotions at the Asheboro, N.C.-based company.

R. Michael Turner has been named Vice President of Manufacturing for the Domestic Manufacturing Group. He is a 17-year veteran with the company, initially in the financial area before moving to manufacturing 15 years ago. Turner is in charge of both the hosiery and seamless areas of the company.

Matt Anglemeyer was named Vice President of Sales and Operations. He has been in management and sales with Wells for 11 years. Anglemeyer now has responsibility for Wells Hosiery and Apparel's domestic sales and operations in Asheboro and New York, as well as the Central American facility Ropa del Caribe in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Wells Hosiery & Apparel is a specialty manufacturer of fine ladies hosiery and Santoni seamless wear as well as traditional and specialty cut and sew apparel. The company employ 350 employees in the Asheboro operation and 200 employees in Costa Rica. The showroom is located at 1270 Broadway, Suite 1218, New York City. 

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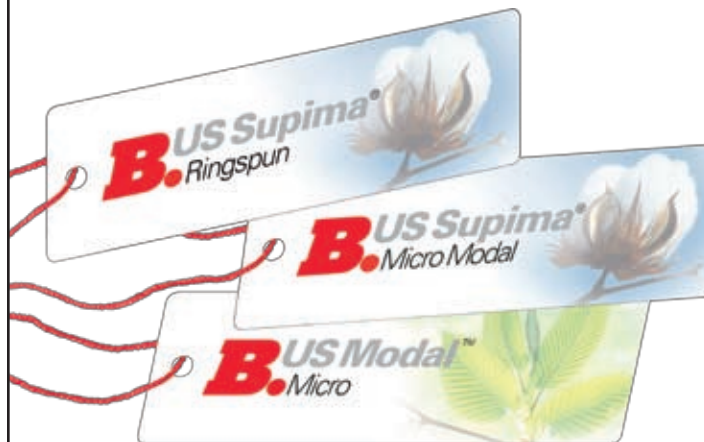
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Allen Field Pushes Global One-Stop Marketing Services

International marketing has been a boom for Allen Field Company.

With manufacturing facilities in China and the U.S., the company has been able to compete on price and custom services. And like other successful companies in the global economy, Allen Field has adopted a culture of innovation.

An example of out-of-the-box thinking is the expansion into new services. After decades of experience in the textile and hosiery, the company has developed the skills and the technology to create custom components, including specific designs. Customers include manufacturers of socks, hosiery, ties, belts, scarves, towels and apparel.

According to Jane Serra, marketing associate at Allen Field, more customers are turning to the company for total packaging services: printing (header cards and bands), packaging and displays.

Ms. Serra estimates that 80 percent of the hangers are produced in China, with 20 percent made in the U.S. The company has offices in China to support the role in the global marketplace. 

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Think Green. Think Profits. Think Sustainable

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long and extensive processes for developing such standards, it was revealed. Insights into the complexity of a standards process were offered by


Dr. Bob Peeples, director of sustainability for the Carpet and Rug Institute, and Denise Van Valkenburg, senior environmental engineer in Environmental Strategies and Programs at Steelcase Inc.

Mark LaCroix, vice president, Global Sustainability, with InterfaceFABRIC, said his company now has built sustainability into every business decision.

LaCroix, as co-chair for the Sustainability Committee of the Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Assn., outlined the processes and results of standards adopted by the organization.

"The Many Shades of Green" was the topic of his presentation, noting that sustainability often is defined in the eye of the beholder.

"We've all been invited to a sustainability party and it's gotten a little messy," LaCroix said. He reviewed labels now be used by various agencies and organizations, noting that each represents a different degree of earth-friendly manufacturing strategies.

"Mother Nature is the ultimate model (for sustainability)... she is the ultimate developer of low cost, recyclable, free energy, products," he said. 

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Liability Issues, Green Movement Highlight Carolina Hosiery Meeting

Hosiery manufacturers and their suppliers were advised to keep liability issues on the radar screen as the marketplace becomes more sensitive and pro-active.

Panelists addressing some 60 executives and sales managers at the annual Carolina hosiery division of The Hosiery Association suggested liability initiatives loom at local, state and federal government levels, as well as from the private sector. This trend will require reliable product testing, it was emphasized.

Panelists touched on issues and trends ranging from liability to the movement toward sustainable products and the prospects for more regulatory burdens and international trade. They were Dan St. Louis, manager of the Hosiery Technology Center in Hickory, NC; Rich Stober, vice president of sales, Gold Toe/Moretz LLC; and Jerry Cook, vice president of government relations and international trade, Hanesbrands Inc.

THA Chair Bill Nichols, Gildan consultant and former CEO of Kentucky Derby Hosiery Inc. was the panel moderator.

Stober cited the liability issue as one of the three major challenges he said are confronting hosiery manufacturers and marketers. Innovation to provide a high price-value ratio and managing the business after the sale is made were others.

St. Louis said the rapidly-growing testing program at the hosiery center is involved with grippers on socks for healthcare facilities as well as the presence of harmful elements such as formaldehyde. Goods coming from China or the other Asian sources are especially susceptible to inaccurate content labeling, he said.

Cook, who tracts government involvement and regulatory issues, insisted product safety will continue to loom on the horizon, including flammability.

Cook also predicted that the safeguards which have restricted imports from China will not be renewed in December. The Bush administration effectively will be over and there will be no push to renegotiate, he said.

The elimination of the safeguards will result in freer trade with Asian countries, including Viet Nam, Cook continued. As a result, this will be bad news for operations in the Caribbean and South America because it will be easier to get cheaper goods from Asia, he added.

Those companies that want to get into exporting should move now, Cook said. The devalued dollar has created a climate for exporting and there are extensive government resources, i.e. Department of Commerce, to help manufacturers navigate the international marketplace.

St. Louis endorsed this observation, noting that Marc Swinnen, international sales manager for the HTC, has developed more than \$20 million in sales during the past year for small and medium-sized companies.

Stober agreed that exporting is viable, but observed that the hosiery products have to be relevant to the marketplace—consumer preference—in the various countries.

The greening of the U.S. market prompted questions from the audience during the presentations.


Are retailers willing to pay more for sustainable goods?
Answer: no.

Will the “green” movement continue? Answer: yes.

But as St. Louis noted, green can take on many shades. Wool

*Cook also predicted that the safeguards
which have restricted imports from China
will not be renewed in December.*

represents a natural product, consistent with green. But was the sheep vaccinated or fed unnatural products for feed? And if the sheep grazed on a pasture, what was put on the grass?

Identifying what really is sustainable in hosiery manufacturing could be an undertaking by the industry, it was suggested by Nichols. 



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