

# PAM Trading Rolls Out Lonati's Innovations

Peter Mahler, the founder and longtime president of PAM Trading Co., greeted visitors at the recent open house to introduce Lonati's new equipment for the hosiery industry.

The event also promoted the company's new role as a major Lonati distributor and service facility. PAM

Trading now represents Lonati's coarse-gauge offerings, including a soon-to-be launched knitting machine that can knit and open stitch around a pattern. This machine was developed by Franco Appollonio, the innovative president of Edelweiss Hosiery Mill.

At the 2003 International Hosiery Exposition in Charlotte,



Appollonio introduced the concept. During the show, he sold the patent to the Lonati Group. A spokesman for Lonati said prototype machines are being placed at Johnson Hosiery Mills, Hickory, Gold Toe Brands, Burlington, and Carolina Hosiery in Burlington.

The new version will be available to the entire industry

market in early 2005, it was reported.

The turnout for the show was encouraging to Allan Parker, vice president. He acknowledged that sales have been challenging over the past two years as mills lose business to off-shore companies.

But as his father-in-law, Peter Mahler observed: "Everybody can't go to China for everything."

## Textiles, Hosiery Centers Promoted In State Report

A special report submitted to the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges October 30 lays out a plan for creating a stronger state-supported center to support the textiles industry.

At the same time, the report points to the Hosiery Technology Center as a model for the new textiles entity and builds a strong case for the HTC funds to be included in the state's recurring budget. If this occurs, the 15-year annual pilgrimage to the General Assembly for operating funds would be over.

The report was prepared by Regional Technologies Strategies Inc. of Carrboro, headed by Stuart Rosenfeld, a longtime observer of the hosiery industry in North Carolina. Following the mandate of the 2004 General Assembly, the report focused on the mission of the N.C. Center for Applied Textiles Technology which has operated as an independent agency in Belmont. It has functioned under the umbrella of the Department of Community Colleges but is not accountable to the department.

Throughout the 48-page report, the hosiery center is promoted as a model for a new Textiles Technology Center which would operate as a division of Gaston Community College. The HTC functions under the administration of Catawba Valley Community College, with a satellite at Randolph Community College.

While the report acknowledges the dramatic loss of jobs and production to global competitors, it also underscores the value of the textiles economy to North Carolina. It is an industry worth promoting and worthy of state investments.

Yarn production is a segment that receives special attention. "Strong yarn manufacturers are absolutely critical if North Carolina is to maintain a textile industry and more than 60 of these companies are located near the Belmont center's location," the authors observe.

"If yarn manufacturers fail in the state, remaining textile companies further down the supply chain—both in mature industries like hosiery, and in emerging industries such as medical and defense-related textiles—would be adversely affected," they continue.

If traditional manufacturers lose access to local yarn resources, they would have to turn to overseas suppliers, removing one competitive advantage that remains: speed to market. This message has been trumpeted by Dan St. Louis, manager of the hosiery center in nearby Hickory, NC. He has been help yarn producers prototype yarns that could be applicable to the hosiery manufacturers.

The RTS report which will be studied by legislators also cites a fact that some will find surprising: 865 of the state's textile companies employ fewer than 100 people. Of the state's 130 hosiery companies, some 86 employ fewer than 100. The value of small businesses to the state's economy is recognized by House representatives and Senators.

The study equates the needs of the textiles industry to those being fulfilled by the hosiery center—training, testing, research and development and marketing.

The study's final recommendation is to dissolve the Center for Applied Textiles Technology and replace it with the Textile Technology Center, a semi-autonomous industry-driven center modeled after and tightly linked to the CVCC Hosiery Technology Center. The TTC would have an advisory board similar to that of the hosiery center.

It is also recommended that the Assembly take this opportunity to include in this legislation recurring funding for the Hosiery Technology Center and that the legislation stipulate a close working relationship between the two centers, the report emphasizes.

Finally, the state was advised "in order to profit from the successes of the HTC and promote cross-fertilization between the two center, the legislation that governs TCC should stipulate that the directors of the TTC and the HTC meet in person quarterly to share information, expertise and strategies."

For more accountability, the study recommended that TCC submit an annual report with impact measures similar to that currently produced by the HTC every year for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program.