



by BRENT CHILDERS, *Editor*

## Government and business interact in all sorts of ways but an example of a very successful symbiotic relationship between the two can be found in the North Carolina Hosiery Technology Center.

The previous 12 months have been busy ones for the folks at the N.C. Hosiery Technology Center. So have the last 15 years.

The center's service as an industry resource is evidenced by a glance at all the hosiery manufacturing that still exists in North Carolina despite an onslaught of challenges brought on by global sourcing and what many view as unfair trade agreements.

Government and business interact in all sorts of ways but an example of a very successful symbiotic relationship between the two can be found in the North Carolina Hosiery Technology Center:

Established in 1990 on the campus of Catawba Valley Community College, the impetus for the center came from manufacturers in

the western North Carolina region who recognized the need for an institutionalized approach to development of skilled personnel in production.

While the establishment of the center was grounded in training a workforce for a changing hosiery workforce, it has evolved over the last 15 years to much more than that.

Brenda Goings, director of education and communication at Kentucky Derby Hosiery, says the center has served as a nucleus for a united domestic hosiery industry.

U.S. hosiery manufacturing are endured to the technology center and their executives are appreciative of the service the center provides to the industry.

The appreciation is reciprocal.

Dan St. Louis, director of the center, says it is the cohesion between the manufacturers and the center that has made the center a model for similar enterprises.

"That's been the secret from day one," he said. "From the establishment of the center itself to helping us get equipment, yarn or whatever we need, the manufacturers have always been there. I've never called and not gotten help. If the manufacturer couldn't help us they would find somebody that could."

St. Louis said another integral part of the success has been the center's relationship with Catawba Valley Community College.

"Our relationship with the college has been great," St. Louis said. "The college has recognized that we are not the typical college pro-

The N.C. Hosiery Technology Center has continued to fulfill its mission of being a catalyst for the vitalization of the domestic hosiery industry. With its various programs, from training to testing to helping manufacturers find new business, the impact on the domestic industry has been profound. The center without question has demonstrated its value in helping the manufacturers improve quality and remain competitive. As trade policies and other market factors continue to present challenges to the domestic hosiery manufacturers, the center's role in helping us meet these challenges will become even more important. I want to personally thank all the staff at the center's Hickory and Asheboro facilities for all their efforts.

Nim Harris Jr.  
President  
PICKETT HOSIERY

With the support received from the state and a large number of local businesses, the Catawba Valley Community College Hosiery Technology Center has evolved far beyond what is expected of a traditional community college.

That support has enabled the HTC to progress from serving merely as a training provider to an innovative center for testing, research, marketing and distribution for a changing industry. The staff has taken the lead in modernizing hosiery production, helping it adopt new ways of thinking and new ways of producing higher quality products.

We are especially appreciative of this level of excellence. North Carolinians can also be proud of a community college with a vision for innovation.

Cuyler A. Dunbar  
President  
CATAWBA VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# THE HOSIERY CENTER STAFF



DAN ST. LOUIS  
*Director*



TONY WHITNER  
*Process Improvement*



DEAN ALLRED  
*HTC Piedmont Area Coordinator*



RICK SMALL  
*Head Instructor*



LINDA YORK  
*Administrative Assistant*



BAI LOR  
*Web Developer*



RODNEY SIGMON  
*Head Knitting Technician*



REGINA SPENCER  
*Laboratory Manager*



KIM SIGMON  
*Testing Lab Technician*



JODI LYNCH  
*Analytical Lab Technician*



SHANE LYNCH  
*Analytical Lab Technician*



UANYEL SHERIDAN  
*Lab Technician*



SHELISHA RUTHERFORD  
*Lab Technician*



JERRI CLARK  
*Lab Technician*

gram and because of that they have allowed us to think outside the box. They let us do what we have to do. That's been very important for us."

While many community college-based programs may have more of an emphasis on instruction, the center's emphasis has been serving as a resource to the domestic hosiery industry – whether through training employees or developing a new legwear product.

During the last 12 months and going for-

ward, the center has concentrated on four primary areas:

- Lean manufacturing – For domestic manufacturers, "speed to market" will be the key to survival, the HTC believes. The new logistics program offered by MDI's Consolidation Services Inc. has involved the efforts of the technology center to introduce the program which can package, ship and deliver products anywhere in the U.S. within 24 hours.
- Marketplace opportunities – Working

with manufacturers to develop new products with new fibers is a major focus. And it is creating new business for specialty products. The center's partnership with the Center for Applied Textiles Technology is expected to push this program even further with quick turnaround of yarn for prototypes and samples. The center staff also tracks government procurement opportunities.

- Retailer support – The growing reputation of the HTC testing service is accompanied by

The North Carolina Hosiery Technology Center with its staff in Hickory and Asheboro has proven year after year its tremendous value as an industry resource.

Because of the efforts of the center, the domestic hosiery industry in North Carolina remains a viable player in today's competitive markets. On behalf of all the employees at Lakeside Dyeing and Finishing, we extend a sincere thank you to the center's staff, its host community college and all those within the industry who have helped make the center the invaluable resource that it is today.

Hooper Harris  
Owner  
LAKESIDE DYEING AND FINISHING

On behalf of Harriss & Covington and its employees, I would like to say thanks to Dan St. Louis, Tony Whitener, Dean Allred and all the folks at the Hosiery Technology Center at Hickory and Asheboro. The center's staff certainly has made our life easier and made it easier for us to compete in a global market. Whether product development, assisting with legislative issues or providing valuable market information, their role as an industry resource has been invaluable in helping us overcome unfair trade policies and other challenges facing today's domestic hosiery industry.

Darrell Frye  
Chief Financial Officer  
HARRISS & COVINGTON

credibility with leading retailers and brand operations. Also, retailers are sending personnel to the center's Hosiery 101 and 102 workshops that introduce the fundamentals of sock construction to buyers and quality control personnel.

- Training – Recruiting new personnel to hosiery production operations is becoming more difficult as the public is exposed to problems of the domestic industry.

In-plant training from the Randolph Community College staff is in more demand.

In the mid-1990s as retailers began requiring tests of socks for durability and color fastness, the technology center began focusing on the role it play in assisting the industry as a testing center. That effort was advanced when in 2003 the center received authorization from the General Assembly to keep fees collected for testing services.

The center's attention to its role as a testing facility has proved invaluable over the last five years as the domestic hosiery industry began to experience formidable competition from overseas manufacturing.

The testing center has played a crucial role in assisting domestic manufacturers achieve a higher standard of quality in the socks it pro-

"The manufacturers tell us they like getting that information and of course they are the driving force behind all that we do."

Tony Whitener

duces – which has proved to be an advantage against offshore competitors.

Dan St. Louis, director of the center, said the importance of the center's testing services is evident in the amount of activity he sees in that area today.

"Testing in May was a record," said St. Louis, citing a 13-percent increase over May 2004. While 13 percent is significant in itself, it is even more so considering the amount of testing in May 2004 increased two-fold over 2003.

"We're getting more customers everyday," St. Louis said.

He said that he is seeing more and more manufacturers using the testing data – such as durability and wicking – to help promote and sell their products.

Another initiative for the center has been working with manufacturers in developing LEAN manufacturing processes for their operation.

Ray Shearin, owner of the newly established

CKS Hosiery, has said his operation will be a complete LEAN manufacturing facility and said the technology center was instrumental in helping him ut the process in place.

"I'm a firm believer in LEAN manufacturing," Shearin said. "It saves money."

The center's marketing assistance has continued to play an ever-increasing role as a center service as manufacturers are looking for every advantage in today global marketplace.

Tony Whitener, who directs the center's commerce and product development, said the philosophy behind the center's marketing efforts are to generate business for manufacturers through developing new products and gathering and disseminating market data.

"One of the things that we are doing is looking for products other than conventional legwear," Whitener said. "Of course the other primary thing is new legwear sales that we can help generate and pass on to manufacturers."

Whitener said another key component has

On behalf of CENTURY HOSIERY INC. thank you for providing vital support to our industry. Your help has been instrumental in the strength and growth of our business.

Malcolm Martin  
President  
CENTURY HOSIERY INC.

Dan and everyone at the HTC have been very helpful to us in so many ways, such as testing, training, education and legislative issues. It is vital we domestic manufacturers work together and the HTC has been our uniting force.

Brenda Goings  
Director of education and communication  
KENTUCKY DERBY HOSIERY

been the market research that the center does, particularly at some of the industry primary trade shows such as MAGIC in Italy and FAST in Las Vegas.

At a recent suppliers meeting, Whitener and St. Louis presented a detailed overview of what they observed at the FAST show in Italy, from machine technology to how the Italian hosiery industry is responding to globalization.

Whitener said a good example of the importance of the trade shows is how he and St. Louis observed several years ago how the Asian hosiery presence at Magic began changing.

"The Asian displays use to be in the basement and we saw how they were beginning to respond," he said. "Their displays went from card tables to Rolls Royces. We were able to see what was coming."

Whitener said that type of information has been invaluable to the industry.

"The manufacturers tell us they like getting that information and of course they are the driving force behind all that we do."

## CKS Hosiery, Inc.

A proud supporter of the tech center

433 Rocky River Road  
Oakboro, NC 28129  
704-485-3948 fax: 704-485-3949  
rayshearin@ckshosiery.com

Pam Trading would like to congratulate the N.C. Hosiery Technology Center staff in Hickory and Asheboro for the great job they are doing. It has certainly played a key role in helping manufacturers stay competitive despite the many challenges the industry has faced. You always do a wonderful job and we extend our thanks for all your hard work.

Alan Parker  
Vice President  
PAM TRADING

O'Mara Incorporated would like thank all those at the Hosiery Technology Center in Hickory and Asheboro for your support and all your hard work. Your efforts have been instrumental in helping manufacturers and their suppliers find the competitive advantages needed in today's marketplace. We look forward to working together with you in the future.

Chris O'Mara  
O'MARA INCORPORATED

I would like to personally thank the staff at the Hosiery Technology Center for the fine job they do on behalf all the hosiery manufacturing industry. The services they provide to manufacturers are invaluable as the industry continues working to meet the challenges of today's competitive environment.

Dale York  
Owner  
CAROLINA TEXTILES INC.

# Hosiery industry says 'Thank You' to the HTC

## Amital Spinning Corp.

197 Bosch Blvd.  
New Bern, NC 28562  
(252) 636-3435  
Fax: (252) 637-8043  
mgold@amital.net

## JewlTronics

1501 Oakshade Ave.  
PO Box 104 Kannapolis NC 28082  
Kannapolis, NC 28083  
704-932-8002  
Fax: 704-932-8002

## Matrix Yarns, Inc.

2101 River Chase  
Eden, NC 27288  
336-623-3119  
Fax: 336-623-4518  
cavtex@infionline.net

## Clayson Knitting Company, Inc

734 South Main Street  
PO Box 39 Star, NC 27356  
910-428-2171 Fax: 910-428-1133  
clayson@clayson.com

## Slane Hosiery Mills, Inc.

313 S. Centennial St.  
P.O. Box 2486  
High Point, NC 27261  
336-883-4136 Fax: 336-886-4543

## Fine Line Hosiery

1480 South Main Street  
Randleman, NC 27317  
336-498-1600 Fax: 336-498-1601  
finelinehosiery@yahoo.com

## MDI

5005 Alex Lee Blvd. (28601)  
P.O. Box 2148  
Hickory, NC 28603  
828-323-4100  
fax: 828-323-4527  
www.merchantsdistributors.com

## Zach Hosiery Inc

105 Todd Ct PO Box 1830  
Thomasville, NC 27361  
336-475-2960 Fax: 336-475-0317  
Tony@triad.rr.com

## Fiber and Yarn Products

585 11th Street NW,  
Hickory NC 28601  
800-648-2425  
fax: 828-324-9136

## Melatex Incorporated

3818 Northmore Street  
Charlotte, NC 28205  
704-322-5046  
1-800-228-1589

## L & R Knitting

6300 Claude Brittain Road  
Hickory, NC 28602  
828-874-2960 Fax: 828-879-4880  
lrknitting@conninc.com

## Sports Solutions, Inc.

115 1/2 West Main St.  
P.O. Box 596  
Pilot Mountain, NC 27041  
336-368-1100 Fax: 336-368-1102  
sportssolutionsinc@yahoo.com

## 3-T Hosiery

4238 Johnson Bridge Rd.  
Hickory, NC 28602  
828-397-3189  
york3T@charterinternet.com

## Crawford Knitting, Inc.

7718 Hwy 64 East  
P.O. Box 1360  
Ramseur, NC 27316  
336-824-1065 Fax: 336-824-1165  
johnjrckc@hotmail.com

## Denton Hosiery Mills.

265 West Finch Street  
PO Box 476  
Denton, NC 27239  
336-859-2116  
fax: 336-859-5592

# Hosiery industry says 'Thank You' to the HTC

## Johnson Hosiery Mills, Inc.

2808 Main Avenue NW  
PO Box 1389  
Hickory, NC 28603  
828-322-6185 Fax:828-322-6539

## Ciervo Knitting Enterprises L L C

1801 Fairway Rd.  
PO Box 1806  
Asheboro, NC 27204  
336-625-6687 Fax:336-626-4374  
Ciervoknitting@triadbiz.rr.com

## NC Sock Company, Inc

1222 F Ave SE PO Box 1941  
Hickory, NC 28603  
828-322-7121 Fax:828-324-0803  
dennis@ncsock.com

## Almo Industries, Inc.

2260 Long Dairy Road  
P.O. Box 757  
Graham, NC 27253  
336-578-5700 Fax336-578-0105  
info@almoindustries.com  
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embroidery since 1981.*

## R. EVANS HOSIERY

8177 GROVER EVANS SR. RD  
CONNELLY SPRINGS, NC 28612  
(828)397-3715  
Fax:(828)397-5778  
EVANSHOSIERY@EARTHLINK.NET

## Mt. Pleasant Hosiery, Inc

1467 North Main Street  
PO Box 338  
Mt Pleasant, NC 28124  
704-436-9816 Fax:704-436-6562

## Cunningham Yarn Co

PO Box 14176  
Greensboro, NC 27415  
(336) 272-5185  
Fax: (336) 379-7738

## Catawba Sox

West 25th Street  
Newton, NC 28658  
Conover NC 28613  
828-464-1690 fax 828-465-6359  
catawbasox@conninc.com

## Thor-Lo Inc

PO Box 5399  
Statesville, NC 28687  
704-872-6522

## Shogren Industries

225 Wilshire Avenue  
PO Box 585  
Concord, NC 28026  
704-786-5617 Fax:704-788-8614  
mzerona@shogrenindustries.com

## Menzies-Southern Hosiery Mills, Inc.

953 C Avenue SE  
Post Office Box 789  
Hickory, NC 28603  
828 328-5201 fax:828 328-2896

## Soft Socks, Inc.

150 Hollars Street  
PO Box 3187  
Burlington, NC 27215  
336-578-1974 fax; 338-578-5294  
mrsh@mebtel.net

## Huitt Mills, Inc.

115 10th Street NE  
PO Box 646  
Hildebran, NC 28637  
828-322-8628 Fax: 828-324-0349  
sockstar@huitt.com

## WILLOWBROOK HOSIERY

CURTIS THOMPSON, PRES.  
413 TUCKER STREET  
BURLINGTON, NC 27215  
336-228-3315 FAX: 336-228-3316

## Hickory Throwing

520 20th Street SE  
Hickory, NC 28602  
828-322-1158 fax: 828-322-6974  
www.hickorythrowing.com