

GLOBALVIEW

MAINE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTER QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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MAINE IS INTERNATIONAL: Focus on Ellsworth Area

Known as the Crossroads of Downeast Maine, the Ellsworth region is also the gateway to Acadia National Park and Mount Desert Island. Located at the junction of three major highways, the City of Ellsworth has been the focus of much development in eastern Maine and was the state's fastest growing city from 2000-2010. Though primarily known as a commercial and tourism area, the city and surrounding region are home to a number of niche manufacturers that have been doing business internationally for many years.

RainWise



Not long before you cross the bridge onto Mount Desert Island, you pass an unassuming blue building along Route 3 in Trenton. Inside that building, is a worldwide leader in weather station technology and manufacturing.

RainWise Inc. first made a name for itself in the 1970s with the product that inspired its name, the remote reading tipping bucket rain gauge. Tipping bucket technology is considered the industry standard.

"Going back in history, RainWise created the small and compact weather station that a homeowner could put on their roof, but our markets now are much more business to business," says Carsten Steenberg, CEO of RainWise since 2010.

According to Steenberg, their products are used by farmers, scientific organizations, or any company that relies on accurate weather measurement.

"When we talk about a full-fledged weather station, it really is weather instruments that are measuring wind speed and direction, relative humidity, barometric pressure, and rainfall," says Steenberg.



The patents the company earned early on have long since expired, inviting competition. RainWise has maintained success by focusing on innovation and exploring new markets.

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President's Corner

Sustaining Roundtable Members

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Consulate General of Canada - Boston
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Verrill Dana, LLP
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Dear MITC Members and Friends,

Winter is upon us and as I write this the first blockbuster storm of 2019 is forecast for just a few days away. Why am I smiling, you ask? Because in the office, our thoughts are already swirling around Trade Day 2019 in May, and we're visiting one of my very favorite parts of our state, Hancock County, in this issue.

This month's "Maine is International" feature article focuses on the Ellsworth region, one of the fastest growing communities in the state. Ellsworth itself has been on a winning streak of late, with the openings of the Union River Center for Innovation and The Jackson Laboratory's Hewett Center, establishing the city as part of a biomedical cluster that extends down Route 3 to Bar Harbor. This issue profiles three exporters outside the bio-medical industry, part of a cluster of small manufacturers from Blue Hill to Sorrento, that are getting it done internationally.

Looking ahead to Trade Day 2019, MITC staff is hard at work putting the pieces together for the 39th annual Maine International Trade Day. We're excited about the theme – Maine's Future in the Global Bioeconomy. What's a bioeconomy, you ask? It's the production and use of renewable natural resources and conversion to value-added products, using 100% resource utilization. We'll hear from leading international innovators and learn how this approach could reinvent Maine's economy with impacts beyond our forest and marine industries and exciting applications in beverage, chemical, energy, fashion, and many more sectors.

Thank you for your ongoing support of MITC and our mission! Enjoy the snow.

Wade Merritt,
President and State Director of International Trade

New Sponsorship Options Available

Whether you're passionate about the future of Maine's workforce or quality trade education, want to be recognized at our largest annual event, or support expanded trade assistance for Maine businesses, there's a sponsorship opportunity for you at a level that fits your budget. To learn more, please contact Julia Munsey, Director of Membership and Corporate Development, at munsey@mitc.com.

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MAINE INTERNATIONAL TRADE mitc DAY

International Trade Development

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“We have sold to more than 70 countries worldwide,” says Steenberg. “Between 40% and 45% of our revenue is international, and we see it as the area with the most growth potential.”

RainWise first began working with MITC in 2012, asking for help with lead generation and client profiles, as the company began rolling out its weather stations for the solar market. Commercial solar installations need to show they are operating at maximum efficiency, and a RainWise weather station can help provide that information.



“The Far East is a very strong market for the solar products. We attended a trade show in Shanghai last year that was a great success for us,” Steenberg offered. “MITC has provided export assistance grants to attend these shows, which really helped us get the solar market jump-started internationally.”

In 2019, RainWise plans to unveil its newest weather station that the company has been working on for four years. The CEO calls it a game changer.

“It will set a new standard,” he says. “It’s a true IoT [Internet of Things] weather station. It can communicate over cell modem or Bluetooth or in the future even wi-fi, and it can be expanded to also measure air quality.”

RainWise already has an order for 1,000 units from a client in Australia, even before the product has officially hit the market.

“I am beyond ecstatic. I think 2019 will be one of our best years in history, and we will grow from there.”

As for being located in an unassuming blue building in Downeast Maine? Carsten Steenberg sees that as an asset.

“I have always loved the contrast of having a company in a rural place that is a leader in high tech,” he says. “I think the newer generation understands the quality of life we can offer here, and I am proud of our location.”

Tempshield

If you live in Maine during winter you know cold, but if you work at Tempshield in Trenton you understand cold on a whole different level. Think -321°F ! That’s the temperature of liquid nitrogen.

Tempshield makes products – gloves, aprons and foot protection – to protect people who work in hazardous, ultra-cold environments.

The company was founded in the 1980s by Ted and Laura Sweeney. Ted’s father worked in the pharmaceutical industry and told his son there was a need for a glove to protect people who work with ultra-cold materials in laboratories. Laura had a hobby of sewing and making hiking gear. Together, the couple created the world’s first cryogenic glove.

“They were the originators of the product and the industry that everyone else is following, chasing, and trying to match,” says Paul Larochelle, COO at Tempshield.





Originally started in Massachusetts, Ted and Laura loved Acadia National Park and moved Tempshield to Maine, where it has been operating for over three decades.

99% of the materials used to make the products are sourced in the United States. Employees here are considered craftsmen, because every stitch matters.

“Every one of our employees knows what their impact is on the product, and the potential exposures associated with our product on the end users,” says Larochele. “I can’t remember the last time we had a workmanship return on one of our products.”

Tempshield Cryo-Gloves® are shipped from Maine to all areas of the world. The gloves are used at bio-banks, research facilities, in industrial settings, and even at NASA, as well as in privatized space exploration.

While the company was purchased by a scientific company out of Chicago last year, Larochele says the ownership change has not impacted employees or day-to-day operations.

“The acquisition was based off of brand integrity, brand exposure, and being known in the global market because we service nearly every country in the world with our gloves,” Larochele explains.

Although Tempshield has been doing business internationally for decades, the company has relied on MITC for support on trade missions and at trade shows.

“We attended the MEDICA show in Germany with MITC as part of the Best of New England collaborative booth,” says Larochele. “MITC staff helped man the booth and scheduled appointments for us with six new contacts. As a state with a small business footprint, we are fortunate to have MITC as a resource.”

Tempshield sales are split evenly between domestic and international customers. Larochele sees continued, steady growth for the company in 2019. They are preparing to introduce new products as well, but in cryogenics there’s a long lead time to market because of testing and certifications, especially with regulations in Europe.

The materials they use are specialized, but it’s a unique and proprietary assembly process that makes the products perform the way they do. Larochele says they hear stories of gloves that have been in use for over a decade.

“They last a bit longer than we’d like to see them last, actually” he adds, laughing. “All of our products leave with quite a badge of quality, performance, and integrity that goes with them. We’re proud of that.”



Versa Grippers®

Versa Grippers® – the gold standard training accessory in the bodybuilding world – are designed and manufactured in Downeast Maine.

A registered trademark of Power Grippers USA, Inc., the product has been featured on the covers of 15 magazines, including the January issue of Muscle and Fitness. According to the company, the self-supporting grip eliminates grip fatigue and enhances muscle isolation, allowing for maximum muscle gain.

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The company's success hasn't come without hardship. Maine is a beautiful place to live and work, but sometimes making a living here requires creativity.

After several different business ventures, Mike and Heather Parker decided to open a fitness center where friends and neighbors could come to work out. Some of them complained they didn't like lifting straps because they were ineffective. Mike, being an inventor with several patents to his name, thought that he could create something better. Versa Gripps® was born.

Quality control and pricing issues led Mike and Heather to bring the manufacturing in-house, even before they had developed a strong market for the product. Money was already tight, and then Mike fell off a roof and suffered a traumatic brain injury.

"If it wasn't for the support of Heather and our daughters Willa and Katelyn, and all the work they put in...This has been a group effort, truly a family business," says Mike.

In the early years, there was no money for advertising, so they focused on the athletes, giving away Versa Gripps® to bodybuilders at trade shows. As a follow-up, they sent those athletes postcards and asked them to spread the word about the product in their gyms. The strategy worked.

"I think we have grown because of bodybuilders wearing our products and the relationships we have fostered with them," says company President Heather Parker. "We don't sponsor athletes, we want them to wear Versa Gripps® because they love the product. The loyalty of the bodybuilding market has sustained us."

Versa Gripps® are sold all over the world. The company has a distribution center in Amsterdam and private labels their products for Gold's Gym in Japan. Heather says a workshop offered by MITC provided advice she found useful in developing their international markets.

"The workshop stressed the importance of getting to know your international customers on a personal basis," she recalls. "We always answer the phones, and we take the time to develop those relationships. I think that sets us apart as a company."

At one point, they considered moving manufacturing overseas, but decided it was more important to stay in Maine and keep the 21 people who work for them in Sorrento employed.

Innovation has allowed for continued growth, and the company is now looking beyond the bodybuilder market. Versa Gripps® are used in the training programs of the Dallas Cowboys and the New England Patriots. The company was just awarded a new patent for a bridge support designed to protect the carpal tunnel area of the hand.

"There are all kinds of uses for them," explains Mike. "Versa Gripps® have helped people recovering from injuries, and we often get thank you letters from people who have used our product to aid in rehabilitation. We know there's a much broader market out there we still haven't tapped into."

"We took an idea from its infancy, worked hard, and built it into an international corporation," Mike says. "Heather and I feel blessed."



SAVE THE DATES

MAINE INTERNATIONAL
TRADE  **DAY**

TRADE DAY 2019

**Maine's Future in the
Global Bioeconomy**

MAY 23 & 24

Holiday Inn by the Bay
Portland

WHAT'S AHEAD

**Mastering Export Documentation:
What you don't know can hurt you!**

Thursday, March 21
Central Maine Community College, Auburn

Import Compliance Training

Tuesday, April 23
Abromson Center, University of Southern Maine, Portland

Export 101

Thursday, April 25
Bangor International Airport, Bangor

International Small Package Shipping

Wednesday, June 5
Live Webinar

