

# TEXTILES AND APPAREL NEWSLETTER

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## Announcing

### Make It With Wool Winners

JEAN BONHOTAL, 4-H Volunteer, Oswego County

The New York State Make it Yourself with Wool Contest was held November 4, 2000, at the St. Andrews Catholic Church in Syracuse, NY. Winners, named in three divisions, will represent NY in the national contest scheduled for January 25-27 in Sparks, Nevada. They were:

#### Juniors, ages 13-16

1. Andrea Kelchlin
2. Hannah Young

#### Seniors, ages 17-24

1. Jackie Kelchlin
2. Brian Larkin

#### Adults, age 25 years and older

1. Ellen Tracy
2. Debbie Larkin

Congratulations to all who participated! In addition, a special thanks is extended to those who helped organize, publicize, or judge the event and to all who donated prizes.

## Concerning Consumers

### Who Sewed All Those Swimsuits?

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

By now you've seen the highly publicized 2000 Olympic swimwear, either on television or in your local newspaper. You might have read that this was the first Olympics to allow full-body suits in the swim competition and that the new swimsuit fabric mimics the sleek skin of a shark. Perhaps you wondered who created this design and who sewed all of those suits. Last week, Beth Davis and I explored those questions with Paige Short, Vice President for Product Development for Kentucky Textiles.

In June 2000, Olympic officials reversed a ban on the use of full-body swimsuits and launched another competition—who could sew swimsuits the fastest. A neck-to-ankle suit has 38 panels of fabric, requires 45 feet of stitching, and takes 1 hour. By comparison, a regular men's swimsuit has three panels of fabric, requires 3 ft. of stitching, and takes 6 minutes. Although no one was awarded a gold medal in sewing, seamstresses at Kentucky Textiles sewed 4,500 suits in less than one month in their Paris, KY plant.

Those experienced hands are still sewing Olympic swimwear but this time the garments are headed for the retail market. Choices will include several colors and color combinations (we saw red, blue, and black) and a variety of styles—with or without sleeves, long or short legs, open or closed back. You might be able to get your hands on one but at a cost of approximately \$300 most are being purchased by professional swimmers.

The two components that have everyone talking are the new fabric and the unusual shapes of the garment pieces. Both were created in a four-year research and development effort by Speedo, a privately-owned Australian company, at their Nottingham, England facility. Fiber scientists, marine biologists, designers and others came together to study the hydrodynamics of sharks and to identify the key muscles used by swimmers.

The result was a lightweight, lycra-polyester, knit fabric with ridges that reduce drag in the water. This Fastskin fabric boasts a subtle fishscale pattern and is manufactured in Milan, Italy. It is cut and sewn in Paris, KY. Swimsuit panels are shaped to fit the natural contours of the body and to allow maximum freedom for the swimmer's muscles. They are joined with elastic thread in flatlock seams. Our guide noted that although the workers are very skilled and many have as much as 30 years on the job, they had to be trained to match the irregular panels and accomplish the precise stitching.

Kentucky Textiles, Inc. is a family-owned company with three generations of history. In the late 1930s, Paige's grandfather worked for Hansley Mills that sewed garments for Haines in

Paris, KY. In 1943, with only \$5,000 and 10 employees, he opened his own plant in Carlisle, KY. Her father, Wayne Shumate, joined his parents' full time at age 20. He learned all aspects of the business, including how to operate the sewing machines. He established several factories and employed 2,800 workers under Bluegrass Industries, which he later sold to Jockey International in 1981.

Shumate kept his plant in Paris and renamed it Kentucky Textiles. Today, with 475 employees, Kentucky Textiles is the largest employer in Bourbon County, located 18 miles northeast of Lexington, KY. It is a vertical company whose manufacturing capabilities include knitting, dyeing & finishing, cutting, sewing, packaging, and distribution.

Kentucky Textiles has been manufacturing Speedo swimwear since 1968 and Olympic suits since 1972. They also handle all North American distribution for Speedo. In addition, the firm makes replica jerseys for Reebok, corporate apparel for Hershey's, first-aid kits and surgical gowns for Johnson & Johnson, and running shorts for Asics. Other customers include Land's End, Jockey International, Fila, and Wilson Sporting.

We visited on a Saturday morning in November. The date was well past the Olympics but a small force was putting in a little overtime and the general mood was one of satisfaction. After all, a lot of the medalists credited the high-tech suits for reducing their times by those critical winning seconds.

#### Sources:

1. Brown, Jillian. High-tech Gear for 2000 Olympics, The Christian Science Monitor, September 21, 2000.
2. Fast Swimsuits Need Fast Stitches, Norwich Bulletin, August 12, 2000.
3. Short, Paige. Kentucky Textiles, Paris, KY. Personal communication, November 18, 2000.



*Special bathing costumes were worn as early as the 18th century. They consisted of jackets and petticoats of brown linen or long, loose sacks made of flannel. Martha Washington's bathing gown had lead disks wrapped in linen attached near the hem, presumably to keep the gown in place when the bather entered the water.*

—Survey of Historic Costume  
Fairchild Publications, NY, NY Third Edition, 1998

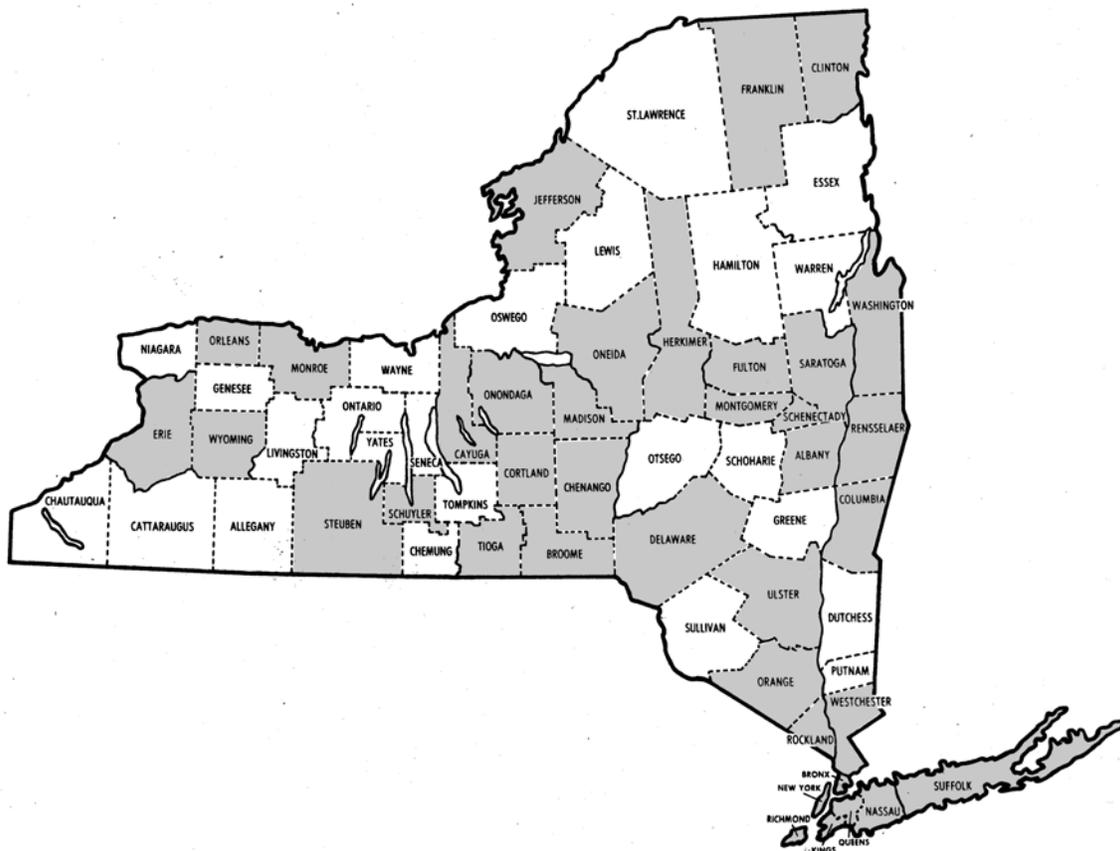
## Supporting Industry

### Scope of Apparel Industry in New York State

FRAN KOZEN

The apparel industry is a major industry in New York State, second only to printing and publishing in terms of number employed in production of non-durable goods. Only California employs more in apparel manufacturing than New York. In 1997, the most current year reported:

- There were 3939 apparel manufacturing firms in New York State.
- Apparel manufacturing employed 91,500 in New York State.
- Apparel shipments from New York State totaled \$9.6 billion.
- Nearly one quarter of apparel manufacturing firms in the USA were located in New York State.
- Apparel and sewn products manufacturing occurs in New York City and 34 of 57 counties statewide (See Map).



### Manufacturers in the News

Tough Traveler Ltd., a manufacturer of luggage, child carriers, cases, backpacks, and specialty bags, was recently honored by the Schenectady City Council for 30 years of innovation and contribution to the community of Schenectady. Tough Traveler has maintained its manufacturing plant in Schenectady even as other luggage and pack companies have moved to "offshore" manufacturing. Find Tough Traveler at [www.toughtraveler.com](http://www.toughtraveler.com).

## Emerging Technology

### Wellman Introduces Sensura

Wellman's new synthetic fiber, Sensura, intends to challenge cotton as the comfort fiber. The manufacturer claims that Sensura is color fast, shrink-resistant, drapeable, soft, and that it dries twice as fast as cotton. The exact chemical makeup of the fiber has not been released, but Wellman executive Tom Duff says, "It is not polyester—it is a whole new fiber we have developed that promises to deliver style, performance, and comfort." Wellman teamed up with Parkdale Mills to create the new fiber, which is being tested by a few companies including Nike, Pillowtex, and Galey & Lord. Patagonia has committed to use Sensura in its fall 2001 performance line.

—*Women's Wear Daily*, October 25, 2000

### Kentucky Textiles Touts Hempspun

Kentucky Textiles of Paris, KY is promoting their newest fabric, Hempspun, a 45% cotton/55% hemp knit. It is strong, absorbent, and durable. The fabric has been introduced to focus groups across the US who recommend that it be used for sweatshirts, socks, blankets, sleepwear, and beach cover-ups. Tommy Bahama has already purchased (and sold) 900 bathrobes; other designers are considering the fabric for their 2002 lines. The advantage of using hemp is its natural resistance to many pests and its ability to grow in marginal soils. It is imported from China because it is illegible to grow hemp in this country.

—*Personal communication with Paige Short*,  
November 18, 2000  
—[www.hempspun.com](http://www.hempspun.com)

## Gathering Resources

### News from DressShop

CHARLOTTE COFFMAN

Kaaren Hoback, DressShop instructor, writes that she was so excited after our May TXA retreat that she "babbled and babbled to Annette at Livingsoft about teaching kids to sew." The result is a new computer program just for young people, *Sewing Made Easy*.

The program includes seven patterns with variations, easy sewing instructions, streaming video, fabric selection, and on-model viewing. And best of all—ONLY 12 body measurements are needed! Kaaren, one of five beta testers, says, "I made them for my grand kids, particularly Cady who is age 10 and has been sewing on a machine all summer. This is the most fun I've had in ages!!!"

*Sewing Made Easy* requires Windows 95 or higher, a CD-ROM drive, and a recent browser such as Internet Explorer 4.0, Netscape 4.0, and AOL 5.0 or better. A Macintosh version is being developed.

LivingSoft has an introductory offer of \$39 (retail price is \$70). To encourage group orders, second, third, and fourth units are only \$29 each (only one shipping fee will be charged when multiple CDs are purchased in the same order). November 30 is the announced deadline but Kaaren might be able to honor your requests if you are only a few days late.

You may try the free demo at the bottom of Kaaren's webpage <<http://www.geocities.com/FashionAvenue/Catwalk/4867>> or at the LivingSoft site <<http://www.livingsoft.com/util/demo.htm>>. The demo only prints in 1/4 scale and requires that body measurements be entered. Kaaren says, "The 1/4 size is great for doll clothes and stuffed toys." If your computer has 4MB of free space, you can also download a demo from <<http://www.livingsoft.com/util/SMEdemo.zip>>

*Sewing Made Easy* also accepts adult measurements, so you can boost your basic sewing skills while making clothes for yourself.

To order, contact Kaaren Hoback, Serendipity Designs, PO Box 287, Dryden, NY 13053-0237, Tel: 607-844-9589, or Email: [Patrns4u@aol.com](mailto:Patrns4u@aol.com). The program is also available directly from LivingSoft at Tel: 800-626-1262 or their online store <<http://www.livingsoft.com>>

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