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Saukville business owner makes room for one-of-a-kind collection

When Mike Kryshak was looking for a home for his new company, Carroll Converting, he was fairly specific on his needs — a secure facility for his research and development lab, plenty of room where his employees can unwind and a home for his extensive collection of wet wipes.

That's right, Kryshak estimates that he has the most comprehensive collection of disposable wipes in the world.

The collection is an offshoot of his 24-year involvement in the development of disposable wipes for cleaning, personal care and hospital use.

Kryshak has worked with Carroll Co. of Garland, Texas, in developing the research and training facility at 700 N. Progress Dr. in Saukville.

The 18,000-square-foot building was formerly home to Matrix Packaging, which has moved into larger quarters elsewhere in the village's business park.

Carroll Co. has production facilities in Texas, California and Ohio, working with such well-known companies such as Clorox, Georgia Pacific and Kimberly-Clark.

The Saukville facility is used only for developing new cleaning formulas and fabric selections, as well as training Carroll employees on various pieces of equipment.

Kryshak, who lives in Mequon, said he was poised to lease space in Wauwatosa earlier this year before he found out about the availability of the Saukville building.

"The village folks have been most accommodating. It is a beautiful setting and the only thing dangerous about the location is the possibility of being shot by deer hunters. We see deer walking by all the time," he said.

Kryshak got his first introduction to the field of wet wipes when working with Mike Guy of Guy & O'Neil in Fredonia in the development of the original Joey Wipes.

More than two decades ago, the concept of disposable cleaning wipes was novel.

Today, he said the competition is intense, with special formulas and packaging covering products for hand cleaning and sanitizing, disinfectant cleaning, multi-use and specialty cleaning.

“There’s a lot more competition in the field than there used to be. Because of that, whenever someone comes to me with a new product, I urge them to at least file the paperwork for a patent,” Kryshak said.

That lesson was learned the hard way, when a woman from Texas approached him years ago with the idea of creating a makeup remover.

A short while later, Biore and Ponds introduced similar products.

Kryshak said the wipes and treated fabric industry has found a niche in Wisconsin, pointing to the success of such companies as Guy & O’Neil, Kleen Test in Port Washington and Rockline Industries in Sheboygan.

“I guess it is an outgrowth of the wood pulp industry. They have a reputation for being secretive, but we all get along pretty well among ourselves,” he said.

It is Kryshak’s business contacts who are most intrigued by what he jokingly calls “the wipes museum.”

“I probably have at least 5,000 items,” he said, pointing to shelves filled with tubs and boxes of cleaning products, and a wall covered with foil packets.

The collection includes packages of the prototype Wet Ones towelettes, along with Lysol disinfectant wipes and Purex 3-in-1 laundry sheets.

There is a wide variety of limited run items, generic products with private labels and an odd assortment of gag-related wipes — like the personal cleaner taking a shot at the sexual proclivities of President Bill Clinton.

“People I know in the industry keep bringing items, and there was a point where I would be getting samples of pretty much everything that came out,” Kryshak said. “I guess I have always been a pack rat, but it has gotten to the point where there isn’t much new out there.”

When he was younger, Kryshak said, he originally intended to become a high school biology teacher but was lured into lab work. He has gone on to earn several patents and has several more pending.

Kryshak now heads the company, which has five veteran employees.

“Each one of our employees has 10 years or more experience. In many cases, they are the trainers who show others how to use the machinery used in the

wipes field," Kryshak said.

Because of the close-knit crew and the fact he plans on spending a lot of time in the Saukville facility, Kryshak wants to bring many of the comforts of home into the building. Plans include creating a comfortable lounge with a TV and ping-pong table, and a separate workout room.

The luxury of space allows him to be indulgent with some of the less-than-essential features.

"We have more space in this building than we are ever going to need," he said.

Image Information: MIKE KRYSHAK FINDS himself surrounded by the history of disposable wipes at Carroll Converting in Saukville. Kryshak said his unusual collection has more than 5,000 samples of products created over the past two decades. Photo by Mark Jaeger