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# readySC Helps Fibertex Nonwovens EVOLVE IN GRAY COURT



Fibertex Nonwovens is a continuous operation that includes a five-stage process, and employees are trained for each area

In January 2019, Fibertex Nonwovens, Inc. acquired a state-of-the-art spunlace production site in South Carolina from the Turkish company Mogul Nonwovens (Mogul). Gwen Seagraves, human resources manager at Fibertex Nonwovens, was the fifth employee hired during Mogul's startup in 2016. Seagraves describes how South Carolina's readySC™ program provided invaluable recruitment and training assistance throughout Mogul's startup phase. Now that the plant has successfully transitioned to Fibertex Nonwovens (Fibertex), Seagraves looks forward to new opportunities to work with readySC during upcoming expansions.

**EDGE:** *Could you tell us about your company's history in South Carolina?*

**Gwen Seagraves:** Fibertex Nonwovens began in 2016 as a Turkish-owned company called Mogul South Carolina Nonwovens Corporation. Mr. Ekrem Kayali was the owner of Mogul, and he wanted to get a footprint in the United States. He chose South Carolina because it was once known as the textile capital of the world.

The company selected a site in Gray Court, SC, that had formerly housed another nonwovens manufacturer. The building had been empty since 2009, and there wasn't much to it when purchased but an open warehouse that needed a lot of renovations and upgrades.

Hired early on as employee number five, I was very much involved in the startup. Initially, we hired seven people, and they were also involved in every aspect of the startup, including uncrating the equipment and helping contractors install it.

We officially began production in March 2017. Through the next year, we continued hiring as we transitioned to a



Gwen Seagraves, Fibertex Nonwovens human resources manager

12-hour rotating shift. We have about 40 employees at this site now.

While we were busy growing, our owner had three other companies in Turkey that were also growing very rapidly. In order to focus on the investments in Turkey, Mogul's ownership decided to sell the U.S. operations in 2018. We were put on the market and acquired by Fibertex Nonwovens in January 2019. Fibertex is

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a large nonwovens manufacturer with eight factories around the world and over a thousand employees. Since the acquisition, we've been transitioning from a small standalone company to being part of a large global company with very diversified products.

**EDGE:** *How did readySC help recruit your workforce?*

**GS:** We started working with readySC from the outset. The readySC team was instrumental in helping us with our recruiting and training plans as well as keeping us on track.

They worked very closely with us on our recruitment efforts, including radio and newspaper ads. They also posted our jobs on their website – [www.sctechjobs.com](http://www.sctechjobs.com). Then readySC created a three-hour training class to be used as part of our interviewing process. First, we would interview the candidates, and then they would go through the pre-hire training class.

The readySC representative conducted the pre-hire class while making it clear that attendees were not guaranteed a job nor would they be paid to attend. The operations manager, our president and I also attended so we could observe class participation and interaction. That helped us decide who would be the best candidates for job offers. The pre-hire class also allowed us to see that these people were serious about joining the company, which is what we wanted.

Our goal is to develop a culture where we are all one team. We work diligently to hire people that want to work here and be a part of the team. If you have the right people in place and they're happy with what they do, they are going to be much more productive, and they're going to be much better employees. So, when we initially interview people, we tell them that we want to make sure we're a good fit for them as well as find out if they're a good fit for us.



*"The readySC team gave us indispensable advice and assistance that helped us start up our new facility and hire our workforce. Everyone should know that this resource is available for companies."*

— GWEN SEAGRAVES, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER AT FIBERTEX NONWOVENS



**EDGE:** *What kinds of skills are you looking for in your employees?*

**GS:** Our operation is unique for this area. There are plenty of automotive manufacturers that are mostly assembly. We're not assembly at all. Ours is a continuous operation that includes a five-stage process, and we train employees for each area.

We believe that we can teach people the technical skills they need to do the job, but we can't teach them a good work ethic. We can't teach them integrity. We can't teach them to be at work on time. Those are the things that we look for in candidates when we are hiring. We also look for people who will be stable in their work environment. We're not looking for people who want to work a couple of weeks, get a paycheck and then leave. We're looking for people who want to grow in manufacturing and make this their career.

**EDGE:** *What are some examples of the kinds of training that readySC has done for you?*

**GS:** Because we believe in investing in our people, we do a lot of training. From the very beginning, readySC has been a big part of our training strategy, and that has been so beneficial. Some of the pre-hire classes they did for us were train-the-trainer, first aid, CPR and AED training.

For our post-hire training, readySC created a scope of work and course outlines based on our input. They wrote out the syllabuses for the courses so I could review them, and they asked us what our goals were for each class. It was a collaborative effort to develop the training, then readySC was there to deliver it when we needed.

The training plan included behavioral-based safety, lean principles, leadership training and culture awareness, even statistical process control. We also had conflict resolution, computer skills, Excel training, keyboard training, and technical writing, which was an excellent course for our team leaders and some of our product and development people. Root cause analysis and problem-solving were also very beneficial programs for our employees, so they could learn how to delve deep into issues and resolve them. Additionally, readySC conducted total productive maintenance training for our maintenance group. The entire training plan was very comprehensive in nature. It covered everything we needed.

**EDGE:** *What did you think of the readySC instructors?*

**GS:** The readySC instructors were professional and available when we needed them. They made things interesting for the students, and their background in manufacturing made it clear that they were familiar with the subject. For example, one of the pre-hire instructors had previously been in textile manufacturing, so she had real-life experience that she could share with the students.

As the training progressed, readySC would check in with us regularly to get our input and adjust where necessary. It was a tailor-made approach that was extremely beneficial, especially for us as a startup company. At the same time, it gave our employees transferable skills that they could take with them anywhere. Overall, I'd say readySC did a superb job of outlining their recommendations and helping it all come to fruition. It was a wonderful experience for us as a startup company.

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Fibertex Nonwovens facility, Gray Court, SC

Fibertex Nonwovens is the leading global partner in technical and innovative performance-based materials and nonwovens solutions. Headquartered in Denmark, Fibertex has created nonwovens solutions for its customers in over 70 countries for more than 50 years.

**EDGE:** For a company that was not only a startup but was also based in another country, how helpful was readySC in preparing you for success?

**GS:** Since we began as Turkish-owned and family-owned with no expatriates on-site, startup was a challenge. The company had to learn about compliance in the United States, including Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations and labor law regulations. Leadership did an outstanding job of dealing with those challenges by planning and putting the right people in the right place to start this facility.

The initial team realized that each of us was responsible for getting this operation up and running. There were many challenges, but to me, it was all exhilarating. I'm lucky to be working with people who are smart and professional. They are like my second family. We're all in this together and working toward a common goal, which is the success of the company.

It's a great work environment. We recognize our people, we know our people, we listen to our people and we engage with them. The readySC training helped with that. It demonstrated to our new employees from the very beginning that the company really cares about its folks and is an excellent company to work for. That's also the message I give new employees during the interview process.

**EDGE:** What was your top positive outcome from working with readySC?

**GS:** There are so many positive outcomes that came from working with readySC. One was developing the great relationship I have with the readySC team and the instructors at Piedmont Technical College. I've got new friends as well as valuable resources. I wouldn't hesitate to pick up the phone if I had a question for any of those folks.

Discovering these resources was a wonderful learning experience

for me. I found out that I had a team of professionals that I could rely on throughout the process. The overall experience was just outstanding.

**EDGE:** Is there a single word or phrase that you would say best describes readySC?

**GS:** I don't think there's a single word that describes readySC. I just think that they're professional and they know what they're doing. They're a great organization and good people to work with, and I feel like I have developed a valuable relationship with readySC and Piedmont Tech through this opportunity. I trust that if I need them, they will be there to help me.

**EDGE:** If given the opportunity to talk to another company about readySC, what would you say?

**GS:** If someone called me and asked me about readySC, I would explain the very positive relationship that I have had working with them: how thorough, efficient and personable they are. I would tell them about the time that the readySC team put into developing and delivering training, not to mention all the help they gave us with recruitment. A lot of the readySC instructors and coordinators came from manufacturing. They'd been where we were, and that experience showed. The readySC team gave us indispensable advice and assistance that helped us start up our new facility and hire our workforce. Everyone should know that this resource is available for companies.

**EDGE:** How do you anticipate readySC can help your company in the future?

**GS:** Now that we have been acquired by Fibertex Nonwovens, the company plans to grow and expand, with the Gray Court facility being seen as a stepping stone to successful business growth. We will definitely be reaching out to readySC again to help us with that process. I'm looking forward to working with readySC again! ■



# TECHNICAL EDUCATION Leads to Success at Glen Raven



Randy Blackston, vice president of operations, Glen Raven Custom Fabrics, Anderson, SC



**A** technical college education has been the key ingredient to success for Randy Blackston, vice president of operations at Glen Raven Custom Fabrics, LLC. In 1988, Blackston started on the university transfer track studying Business Management until he discovered the industrial training program at Tri-County Technical College.

When Randy Blackston toured the industrial technology department at Tri-County Technical College (Tri-County) and saw its mechanical equipment, he realized that he wanted to challenge himself by studying gear ratios, motion time, production control and quality analysis. Blackston promptly transitioned to the Engineering and

Industrial Technology Division, and never scored less than an "A" before graduating as an honor student with a 4.0 GPA.

"Tri-County's Industrial Technology Department was excellent. It provided the basic math and engineering

background to go straight to work or to continue my education, which is the avenue I chose," Blackston said.

"I enjoyed the connection I had with faculty and the interest they had in me," he added. "When you engage like that with students, you expedite the learning process at a level much greater than can occur in the classroom lectures."

After receiving his degree in Industrial Technology in 1990, Blackston enrolled at Clemson University to continue his education in textile manufacturing with an area of concentration in Industrial Engineering. "It was an easy transition," he said. "When I entered Clemson, I felt like I was a semester ahead. The Industrial Technology classes gave me a good head start."

While attending Clemson by day, Blackston pursued a second degree in Quality Assurance at the technical college by night. During a single semester, Blackston was enrolled in a total of 28 credit hours while maintaining a 30-hour work week. He worked full-time, second-shift jobs through 80 percent of the five years he went to college. "I had a goal," said Blackston, and he stuck to it.

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Blackston began working at the Glen Raven (Sunbrella®) manufacturing facility in Anderson as a management trainee and project engineer.

From May 1992 to June 1994, Blackston served as project manager for the one-million-square-foot facility on Liberty Highway. He was immersed in the new project for two years, calculating every item needed for the facility based on growth calculations. Blackston now calls this his most significant achievement and credits much of the project's success to his training at Tri-County.

"Tri-County's hands-on approach gave me the foundation I needed to tackle complicated problems. Through the math and work measurement, I had the building blocks to do calculations and be a part of group discussions," he said.

As Blackston continued to progress at Glen Raven, his relationship with Tri-County evolved also. He became an instructor at the college in his free time, serving as an adjunct from 1995 to 2003. He also developed the first web-based quality classes for the college's Quality Assurance program. "I taught real-world exercises by taking actual data and presenting it to the class. Students appreciated this. Teaching made me a better manager. I would do it again tomorrow if time allowed," he said.

Today, Blackston is vice president of operations at Glen Raven (Sunbrella®) in Anderson. He is directly responsible for the operations of four manufacturing plants with 1,200 associates and oversees global manufacturing of the Sunbrella® branded products. As part of this role, Blackston is responsible for global best practices and manages global capital projects. He also directs Glen Raven's sustainability program and led a corporate-wide initiative which resulted in achieving landfill-free status in all operations in North America, France and China.

In 2016, Blackston received Tri-County's Distinguished Alumni Award at the college's spring commencement. Blackston attributed much of his success to his time at Tri-County. "Glen Raven has given me wonderful opportunities," he said. "Years ago, I joined an amazing company, and I'm thankful I could use my education [at Tri-County] to work for the greatest company in the world." ■

## Glen Raven Custom Fabrics

Glen Raven Custom Fabrics manufactures a host of fabrics for a variety of markets. Its flagship brand, Sunbrella®, provides customers with a beautiful, durable fabric that has revolutionized the shade, marine and furniture markets.

Custom Fabrics spans the globe, but is anchored in the United States. In an era where most textile manufacturing has gone overseas, the majority of Glen Raven's fabrics are produced in the United States. Its main manufacturing facility is located in Anderson, South Carolina with over 1 million square feet under one roof. In Anderson, yarn is spun and fabrics woven, finished, and sent through extensive quality control. Having this entire process in one facility ensures the quality that industry leaders and consumers associate with the Sunbrella brand.



# Standard Textile Raises the Bar WITH APPRENTICESHIP



Apprentice Kristian Johnston working on hydraulics

**W**hen Standard Textile realized it was facing a shortage of maintenance professionals due to retirements and a lack of skilled candidates, it chose to meet the problem head-on. Tom Hobbs, human resources director at Standard Textile, describes how Apprenticeship Carolina™ and Spartanburg Community College helped the company embrace the power and potential of apprenticeship to grow its own skilled workforce.



Tom Hobbs, human resources manager, Standard Textile

**EDGE:** *Could you give us some background on your company?*

**Tom Hobbs:** We have had our Center for Advanced Manufacturing in Union, South Carolina, since 2004. In our 15 years at this location, we've grown from 20 associates to over 150, expanded our building, and added millions of dollars in equipment to keep up with ever-growing

product demand. In 2016, we bought an existing warehouse in Buffalo, SC, expanded it to 200,000 square feet, and completely remodeled it to fulfill our need for a distribution center in South Carolina. Our Carolina Distribution Center now employs 12 full-time associates.

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Apprentice Dylan Lowe working in the machine shop

**EDGE:** *What kind of apprenticeship program do you have?*

**TH:** Since 2016, we have had five maintenance apprentices through Apprenticeship Carolina. Of those, we have already transitioned three to work as full-time electromechanical technicians.

**EDGE:** *What made you decide to start an apprenticeship?*

**TH:** We noticed a distinct skills gap in the maintenance arena, as well as a shortage of qualified candidates in the local market. Since we were unable to find the right candidates, we decided that we would need to “build” them.

**EDGE:** *How helpful have Apprenticeship Carolina and the college been in setting up your apprenticeship program?*

**TH:** The Spartanburg Community College and Apprenticeship Carolina teams made it easy to set the program up. They were always willing to assist if we had any questions.

Because of the SCC and Apprenticeship Carolina teams, we have been able to take eager, talented, entry-level candidates and mold them into the technicians that we need to help us continue to grow locally, domestically and globally.

**EDGE:** *What are some of the benefits of apprenticeship for your employees?*

**TH:** The employees enjoy the fact that they’re not being “thrown to the wolves” on their first day of work. They know that the expectation is for them to start learning from the ground up.

They also know that we’re going to train them at a pace that is conducive to them being able to learn the requisite skills while being safe and having access to skilled mentors throughout the process.

**EDGE:** *What would you like to highlight about your apprenticeship program?*

**TH:** We would like to highlight the fact that all the apprentices that have completed the two-year program

“Apprenticeship allows us to take eager, talented, entry-level candidates and mold them into the technicians that we need to help us continue to grow locally, domestically and globally.”

— TOM HOBBS, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER,  
STANDARD TEXTILE

**STANDARD**  
TEXTILE since 1940

have been transitioned into full-time employment and are still with Standard Textile today.

**EDGE:** *Have you seen any unexpected benefits from your apprenticeship program?*

**TH:** One of our apprentices brought new skills to the position that have helped save Standard Textile a substantial amount of money. Kristian Johnston came to us from Spartanburg Community College’s Union, SC, campus in April 2018. He brought welding skills with him that have allowed us to internalize tens of thousands of dollars in outside contractor expenses. He is well on his way to completing his apprenticeship, as well as his welding and mechatronics degrees. He will be a great long-term member of our team

and will once again confirm that our decision to start using apprentices was the right one.

**EDGE:** *What do you personally like most about the apprenticeship program, and why?*

**TH:** The whole team here at Standard Textile really enjoys watching the growth of the apprentices as they gain on-the-job knowledge and experience. It’s very satisfying to know that they are genuinely getting something out of the program that will benefit them throughout their careers.

**EDGE:** *If you had the opportunity to recommend apprenticeship to another company, what would you say?*

**TH:** Don’t hesitate! ■



## Standard Textile

Founded in 1940, Standard Textile has developed a culture of innovation, quality and service. With more than 80 patents, its products are engineered to deliver durability, longevity and value. Standard Textile doesn’t just provide on-time, quality products to its clients – it also partners with customers to drive out excess operational costs from their laundry and linen system.

A vertically integrated company, Standard Textile is a leading global provider of total solutions in the institutional textiles and apparel markets. Leveraging textile design, manufacturing, laundry expertise and its global infrastructure, Standard Textile serves customers in the health care, hospitality, interiors, workwear and consumer markets worldwide.



# FIBER INDUSTRIES REVIVES TEXTILE MANUFACTURING IN DARLINGTON

**A**ndrew Rosenfeld and Leandro Carboni, co-owners and partners of Fiber Industries, LLC., spoke with EDGE about returning textile manufacturing to Darlington, South Carolina, with help from readySC™.



Fiber Industries revived the former Wellman Palmetto Plant in Darlington, SC

**EDGE:** How did Fiber Industries get its start in Darlington, SC?

**Fiber Industries:** Since announcing our arrival in 2017, Fiber Industries (Fiber) has worked to reopen the Palmetto Plant (formerly the Wellman Palmetto Plant) in Darlington. As production ramps up, we plan to hire at least 135 people overall. We set out to rehire about 30 percent of the previous workforce but ended up bringing back over 40 percent.

**EDGE:** What kind of skills does your workforce need?

**FI:** Every job on the plant floor is geared toward a specific task, so each of our

employees has a different skillset. Our team includes a variety of skilled operators who manage every aspect of the manufacturing site. We are currently recruiting engineers and operators.

**EDGE:** What are some of the benefits that your company has received from readySC's training and recruitment services?

**FI:** readySC was a tremendous help in recruiting and training candidates for our workforce. At every step of the vetting process, readySC partnered with us to refine the candidate pool and ensure

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that those who were offered positions would be prepared to begin working at Fiber. When candidates went through the training provided by readySC, we could observe their performance and discover how they worked, and the readySC instructors were always available to offer their feedback. There were many opportunities for us to share our expectations and views on quality with candidates before making an offer.

**EDGE:** Are there any unique challenges that readySC and the Technical College System helped overcome?

**FI:** As a company in its initial operations and at the beginning of the recruitment process, we only had a small group of employees available to review resumes, interview candidates and train new employees. readySC ensured that we were presented with qualified candidates and provided additional resources for us to facilitate interviews.

**EDGE:** How did your work with readySC ensure that your employees were the right fit for your company?

**FI:** Working with readySC helped us identify and hire the highly skilled workforce we needed. They did the initial advertising for openings, which allowed us to begin the process with a large candidate pool. As we went through the training process, readySC instructors helped us identify the



Entrance to Fiber Industries



**“Working with readySC helped us identify and hire the highly skilled workforce we needed.”**

— ANDREW ROSENFELD (left) AND LEANDRO CARBONI (right), CO-OWNERS AND PARTNERS OF FIBER INDUSTRIES, LLC.



people who would best fit our needs. Working with readySC ensured that our new employees were able to walk into the facility on their first day with an understanding of Fiber’s work, our company culture and our expectations.

**EDGE:** Two of your current employees were readySC instructors. Could you tell us how they came on board and are contributing to Fiber Industries’ success?

**FI:** Both Rick Jones and Barry Taylor had previously worked at the facility, and when Fiber Industries came to reopen the plant, they joined us. Their experience

working with readySC opened their eyes to how the organization can help develop a workforce, and they were essential in assisting Fiber in getting the most out of the process.

**EDGE:** Would you recommend readySC to another company?

**FI:** We’d recommend readySC in a heartbeat. When a company works with readySC, they get so much insight into the people they are recruiting and getting ready to hire. The readySC staff are professional and genuinely care about providing a high level of service. ■



**Fiber Industries** produces mid-tenacity, low-shrinkage products for polyester/cotton blends; workwear fabrics; leadership staple engineered for the knit trade; high-tenacity, optically-brightened staple for woven and industrial applications; high-tenacity, low-shrinkage products for sewing thread; engineered specialty fibers for performance nonwoven applications; and 0.9 to 9.0 denier super white and SDOB for knits, wovens, sewing thread and nonwovens.

# MILLIKEN INVESTS IN TALENT Through Apprenticeship



South Carolina's workforce has been key to the long-term success of Milliken & Company for over 130 years. Today, with the help of Apprenticeship Carolina™ and South Carolina's technical college system, Milliken is expanding on that legacy by launching its Textile Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship Program. Craig Haydamack, senior vice president of human resources for Milliken & Company, describes how Milliken's new apprenticeship program will help attract and develop the top-tier talent that will drive their future goals.

**EDGE:** *What is Milliken's history in South Carolina?*

**Craig Haydamack:** Milliken's storied history in South Carolina has woven throughout the state since 1888. With more than 4,000 associates and 17 locations in South Carolina alone, Spartanburg serves as the global headquarters from which we serve the world.

The impacts of Milliken innovations continue to flourish around the world, as our leading performance and protective textiles, floor covering and chemical solutions are utilized across an array of industries. As such, we are creating solutions like apprenticeship programs to foster the highly-skilled manufacturing talent we need to not only maintain our current status but also fulfill future increased demand.

**EDGE:** *What made Milliken decide to begin an apprenticeship program, and how helpful were Apprenticeship Carolina and the technical college system in getting it started?*

**CH:** Apprenticeship programs are an important part of Milliken's ability to attract and develop top-tier talent in our manufacturing plants. The current low unemployment rate coupled with a highly-skilled workforce means that qualified candidates are likely already employed. An alternative approach to fill our manufacturing talent need is to develop apprenticeship programs by partnering with technical colleges.

Apprenticeship Carolina and Spartanburg Community College (SCC) have been integral in launching Milliken's apprenticeship program in South Carolina. We have developed a great relationship and they continue to be supportive as we further develop the Milliken apprenticeship program.

**EDGE:** *Please tell us about your apprenticeship program.*

**CH:** Milliken currently offers one registered apprenticeship in South Carolina, the Textile Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship Program at the Milliken Limestone Plant in Gaffney. Two students, who are completing their associate degrees in mechatronics at SCC, are currently enrolled, and we will soon welcome two additional apprentices for a total of four participants.

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“Apprenticeship Carolina’s partnership with Milliken is very much appreciated and has allowed our apprenticeship program to become a seamless process. We encourage other companies that are thinking of developing such a program to highly consider working with them.”

— CRAIG HAYDAMACK, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR MILLIKEN & COMPANY



Over the course of four years, the apprentices will pair 8,000 hours of on-the-job training from Milliken with job-related technical education at SCC. When complete, the apprentice will have secured a scalable wage increase and be a fully skilled and nationally credentialed textile maintenance technician by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Milliken understands that apprenticeship programs can be a critical component of our technical workforce development. We are hoping to expand this program to other locations by partnering with local community colleges to meet our talent and business needs. We are also considering introducing a youth apprenticeship for high school juniors and seniors with tracks such as maintenance technicians and production operators, depending on their interest and skill set.

**EDGE:** How have Milliken and its employees benefitted from having an apprenticeship program?

**CH:** Apprenticeship programs allow Milliken to attract and foster top manufacturing talent and provide a

solution for the local workforce at large. We see that as the key benefit. Many of our current highly-skilled associates will be considering retirement. While these apprentices are moving through the program, they are learning from tenured associates who are sharing their extensive knowledge with the next generation. Milliken has long valued education training and the diverse perspectives that new associates can bring to the company. When we align these values with the right candidates for the apprenticeship program, we are sustaining our current production and facilitating future growth.



**EDGE:** What would you like to highlight about your apprenticeship program?

**CH:** Milliken’s Textile Maintenance Technician Apprenticeship launched at the beginning of this year. Our plant managers have already seen the benefits of the apprentices’ contributions in the first few months, and they look forward to seeing them continue to evolve professionally.

**EDGE:** If given the opportunity to recommend the assistance provided by Apprenticeship Carolina to another company, what would you say?

**CH:** Apprenticeship Carolina streamlines the apprenticeship model to make it actionable for companies. They are a reliable partner for questions and a sounding board when developing a new apprentice program. Apprenticeship Carolina’s partnership with Milliken is very much appreciated and has allowed our apprenticeship program to become a seamless process. We encourage other companies that are thinking of developing such a program to highly consider working with them.

**EDGE:** Over the years, Milliken has worked with readySC™, Apprenticeship Carolina, and your local tech college. What do you think is the

greatest advantage of using all three of South Carolina’s premier training and recruitment resources?

**CH:** Partnering with readySC, Apprenticeship Carolina and SCC allows us to take advantage of readily available resources. Without collaboration at this level, apprenticeship programs would be extremely difficult to implement.

Milliken is one of many manufacturers in South Carolina, and we realize that these specialized agencies play a vital role in growing and sustaining our workforce. Together as a state and as a community, we are helping to develop the workforce in South Carolina, which ultimately benefits all South Carolina residents.

**EDGE:** What other thoughts would you like to add about Apprenticeship Carolina, readySC and your local technical college?

**CH:** Apprenticeship Carolina, readySC and SCC are all supportive of manufacturing in South Carolina, and specifically, the Upstate. Their vision aligns with ours. We understand that for us to continue as a successful global company, we have to invest in the development of skilled workforce talent, which requires successful partnerships throughout our local communities and across the state. ■

## Milliken & Company

Milliken & Company is a diversified industrial manufacturer that has been in business since 1865. In 1884, the company invested in a new facility in Pacolet, South Carolina, and from that investment, the manufacturing operations grew. Milliken & Company headquarters moved to Spartanburg, SC in 1958, where it has flourished ever since. Today, Milliken & Company has more than 7,000 associates worldwide and operates over 40 manufacturing facilities in the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Mexico and China. Milliken operates in a number of diverse disciplines, includes specialty chemicals, performance and protective textiles, floor coverings, specialty fabrics, healthcare and business consulting services.

# SPARTANBURG COMMUNITY COLLEGE Receives Donations for Augmented Reality and Reality-Based Classroom Immersion



Dr. Alex Lemken, ioxp GmbH co-founder (left), and Philip Riddle, SeeDaten president and CEO (right), present new state-of-the-art technology at SCC



Spartanburg Community College (SCC) instructors can now easily transfer their teaching and experiential knowledge to students via the latest augmented reality (AR) and reality-based classroom technologies thanks to donations from SeeDaten, Inc., ioxp GmbH, the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA) and Milliken & Company.

Announced February 27, 2019, the partnering companies and their donations will provide cutting-edge technologies that assist instructors, students and industries. The goals are three-fold:

- Instructors can prepare consistent and effective course content for students and client companies across SCC

and have access to the latest technologies to enrich the learning experience for each student.

- Students can learn course content consistently, on modern platforms including mobile devices, in an interactive and immersive manner, and at a self-set pace to meet their individual learning preferences.

Students also have the opportunity to interface with latest learning technologies, such as AR, to prepare them and give them an edge in their career choices.

- Industries benefit from AR in the classroom because they can be assured that when hiring SCC students, they have been prepared to help their future employer produce quality products and quality results in the shortest amount of time, reducing the cost of required training.

*“Investing in innovative approaches to learning is important to Milliken’s current and future success.”*

— CRAIG HAYDAMACK, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, MILLIKEN & COMPANY

This new technology is a “game changer,” said Henry C. Giles, Jr., SCC’s president, because “it brings a whole new dimension to the classroom and to learning.” AR allows instructors “to create digital information on top of the physical world to teach and learn,” he explained. “It’s one thing for students to read about a technique, but it’s a completely different learning opportunity for students to actually experience and complete a process in their own classroom/lab setting via AR.”

Philip Riddle, president, CEO, founder, of SeeDaten, Inc., said, “We are thrilled and grateful for the opportunity to partner with SCC, SCRA and Milliken & Company to make an ongoing positive impact with current and future SCC students and faculty.” Riddle said that this opportunity “sets a new standard for what can be accomplished to impact individuals, workforce development and the competitive landscape of South Carolina.”

Milliken has invested, via a considerable in-kind donation, to assist SCC in raising the bar for educational excellence and to prepare students for movement into Milliken’s modern manufacturing operations. “Investing in innovative approaches to learning is important to Milliken’s current and future success,” said Craig Haydamack, senior vice president, human resources, Milliken & Company. “We are honored to help increase the manufacturing readiness of SCC students through the use of SeeDaten technology.”

“We are indebted to SeeDaten, ioxp GmbH, Milliken and SCRA for bringing this technology to our students,” added Giles.

Learn more: [www.sccsc.edu](http://www.sccsc.edu) ■





*readySC Goes the Distance for*  
**CHINA JUSHI**

**S**outh Carolina's readySC™ program is committed to helping international companies succeed and thrive in our state. For China Jushi Co., Ltd., this meant preparing new hires for extended overseas training.

  
**\$300**  
 million investment

  
**400+**  
 new jobs

  
**80,000**  
 ton production line

*China Jushi Chairman Yuqiang Zhang (left) and South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster (right), Jushi USA groundbreaking*

China Jushi Co., Ltd. (Jushi), global manufacturer and promoter of fiberglass products, announced plans in 2016 to open its first North American manufacturing facility in Columbia, South Carolina. This announcement signified a \$300 million investment and over 400 new jobs during the company's first phase of production. When finished, the 80,000-ton Jushi production line would be the largest manufacturing facility in

Richland County and one of the largest in the state, rivaling even the Boeing facility in North Charleston.

As construction of the site began in earnest, readySC representatives met with Jushi to strategize the best way to recruit and train its workforce. South Carolina

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*"We are thankful to the entire team at readySC for all their support and guidance throughout this process. They supported us from start to finish on the recruiting, hiring and training of over 500 employees as we built our facility. We could not have been successful without their support."*

— RAY WIERZBOWSKI, VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS, JUSHI USA



has a long, storied history with textiles, but working with heated glass is a unique process that requires several weeks of hands-on training. Since Jushi has no equivalent site in North America, the fiberglass manufacturing facility in Tongxiang, China, was chosen as the training site. As a result, job candidates had to be willing to travel outside of the country and stay for extended periods of time to complete their training.

Jushi decided that the first employees to go to China would become the team leads at the South Carolina facility and help other trainees learn the process. To prepare them for this experience, readySC developed customized train-the-trainer modules to ensure trainees got the most out of their time in China. Part of this preparation included coaching each team leader to keep a training journal which would then be used to help develop materials to teach other new hires in the future.

The readySC team also helped employees get ready for a deep immersion into another culture, where the food, language and even traffic is different. In addition, many of the trainees had never been on a plane, much less traveled outside of the United States, and the idea of an extended stay in another country seemed daunt-

ing. So readySC developed and delivered cultural awareness courses that helped build a comfort level with the practical issues of international travel.

After the first group arrived in China, a readySC video team followed a week later to film footage of the work environment and to interview trainees about their first-hand experiences at the Tongxiang facility. Trainees were encouraged to share challenges and solutions so subsequent new employees would have realistic expectations of the trip. Topics covered practical suggestions like how to use technology to communicate with those who speak another language and how to work with interpreters during hands-on training.

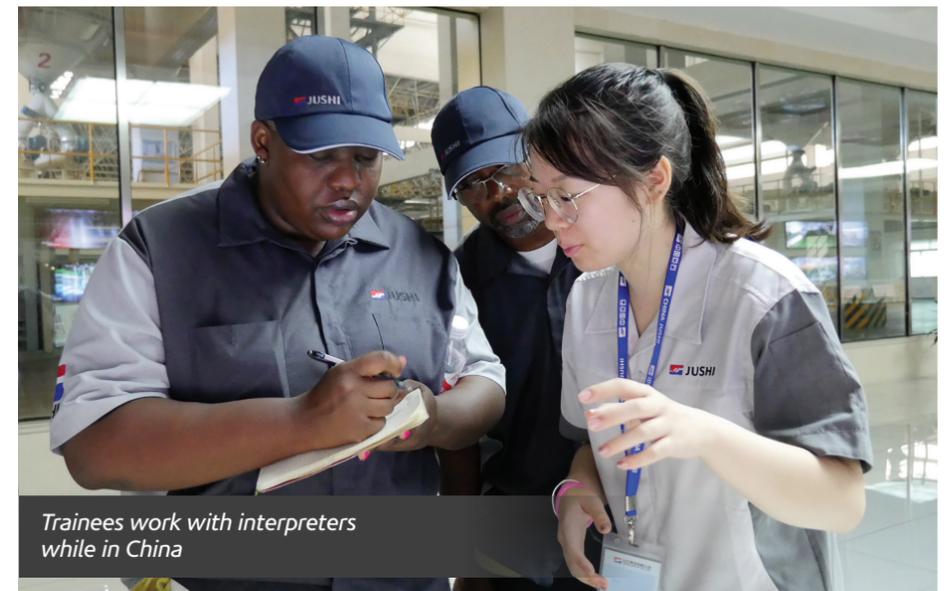
The trainees gave first-hand advice on how to deal with cultural differences while also pointing out commonalities they shared with their Tongxiang counterparts, such as pride in their work and a willingness to help each other succeed. "As one trainee said of his journey, "It's an experience that you'll never forget. There's nothing like it in the world."

In the six months since the first group traveled to China, readySC has trained more than 560 Jushi employees and conducted 20 pre-hire and 104 post-hire classes. Topics covered include safety,

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*Jushi USA trainees tour the Intelligent Manufacturing Innovation Center at China Jushi's Tongxiang plant*



*Trainees work with interpreters while in China*



*readySC has trained over 500 employees for Jushi USA*

*Placing of the Foundation Stone for the Jushi USA facility, December 8th, 2016*



## China Jushi, Co., Ltd.

China Jushi Co., Ltd., a global manufacturer and promoter of fiberglass products, is establishing its first US fiberglass manufacturing operations with an 80,000-ton production line in Richland County. The first phase of the project is expected to bring \$300 million in capital investment and create 400 new jobs.

Headquartered in Zhejiang, China, China Jushi is a leading supplier of fiberglass reinforcements and fabrics to the reinforced plastics industry worldwide. With more than 20 years of experience in the U.S. market, Jushi already has a strong brand influence in American markets. The new production line in the Pineview Industrial Park in Columbia, SC, is designed to supplement the growing composite material industry in the United States.



readySC instructor Angie Miracle (left) and former trainee Paul Sulton at the Jushi USA facility

communication, teamwork, lean manufacturing, 5S, OSHA 10, conflict resolution and front-line supervisor skills.

Ray Wierzbowski, vice president of operations for Jushi USA, shared his appreciation for readySC's continued assistance. "Their team is extremely knowledgeable and provided extraordinary support in recruiting, hiring, and training," he said. "They worked closely with us to

develop and deliver a custom solution for our needs."

"We are thankful to the entire team at readySC for all their support and guidance throughout this process," added Wierzbowski. "They supported us from start to finish on the recruiting, hiring, and training of over 500 employees as we built our facility. We could not have been successful without their support." ■



Jushi USA plant, Columbia, SC



readySC™ is ready to help with your recruitment needs:  
[www.sctechjobs.com](http://www.sctechjobs.com)



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From your initial start-up and early production goals to your organization's long-term growth strategy, South Carolina offers a comprehensive workforce solution custom-designed to meet your needs. Our internationally renowned programs — **readySC™** and **Apprenticeship Carolina™** — along with our robust **technical college system** provide the training and education necessary to build a competitive workforce ready for today's demands and tomorrow's challenges. Learn more at [www.sctechsystem.edu](http://www.sctechsystem.edu).

