Spotlight: Colcom, Inc.

Colcom Inc. has been serving the hospital and life science communities in the Tri-State Area (New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware) since 1970.

Joe Collins started Colcom in 1970, when there were only a few manufacturers' reps in the industry. He started with two product lines and grew the business from there. He had always wanted to share what he had built and see Colcom continue into a second generation.

Less than a decade ago, Colcom President Bridget Collins was teaching middle school English and Physical Education. After five years of 'loving teaching,' coaching every sport and being 'all in,' she was ready for a change. "I wanted to have time for a life, for a family," she explains. Bridget took a day off from school and walked Philadelphia with Tom Stevens, calling on Colcom customers. She loved the freedom, the interaction with people, and the excitement of the sale that she could see on Tom's face. "Before that, I had never really understood exactly what my dad did," she says. And so eight years ago, a new career was born for Bridget. She is now the proud mother of two children, five and three years old. Life is good, although she feels she is even busier now than when she was a teacher.

"It took me a while to grasp this unique industry," Bridget says. "Once I did, I was off and running pretty quickly. I love that you have to be a road warrior, make decisions on the fly, work out deals, solve problems, and make assurances to the customer that we're going to take care of you."

Family Atmosphere
Bridget can't say enough about the 'fabulous' people in the Colcom family. Bill Gannon and

Simple Solution to a Difficult Problem

I recently heard about an effective way to mitigate vibration issues associated with construction and its negative affect on lab animals. Many of our customers have to deal with construction in or near their animal rooms; in this situation, not even our vibration-free racks can always prevent disruption to the animals. The vibration from motorized equipment and tools can upset a colony of mice to the point where important studies can be compromised. Most susceptible are pregnant mice and others with acute sensitivities to vibration. Dr. Jim Elliott at Texas A&M University introduced me to a clever product that practically eliminates vibration due to construction activity. There was construction near their lab facility, and Dr. Elliott had the equipment to measure vibration at the rack level before and after using some simple vibration isolator pads. Dave Carlton, Facilities Coordinator for Comparative Medicine, also of Texas A&M, measured a significant reduction in vibration with the pads underneath the caster on each corner of the OptiMICE rack. He developed a chart to illustrate vibration levels: The first graph shows vibration readings with no construction noise; the second, levels with construction noise and no vibration pads; the third demonstrates that with the pads, vibration levels are comparable to the first
Tom Stevens have been with the company for 20 and 10 years, respectively. Colcom's Office Manager Susan Rawlins has been with them for five years. Bridget is deservedly proud of their longevity, and stresses the importance of the respect and trust they have for one another. Rich VanDeWater and Bill Gannon met in 2003, and Colcom has been selling ACS equipment since then. ACS is the only caging line Colcom has ever had, and Bridget and Tom are the two reps who cover the lab animal market. Bridget has unending praise for Tom. "He has kept Colcom in good standing with our manufacturers and customers. Taking over Joe's territory was quite an undertaking, but Tom went for it, and now has 10-year relationships he has built through the years. He works his tail off." He is also a father of five children, all home-schooled. "We got off to a slow start with ACS, but Rich was patient with us; we hung in there and started to build a customer base," adds Bridget.

In the true spirit of cooperation, Bridget and Drew Kevorkian of Ares Scientific have been working together to land accounts in New Jersey, though it is technically Ares' territory. "We 'tag team' New Jersey to get market share for ACS," Bridget explains. Their collaboration recently experienced a great success when a major university research facility chose ACS for their caging. Bridget wants this model to survive "because it works. If the manufacturers are successful, then we'll be successful."

ACS' Superior Technology
Bridget's enthusiasm for ACS technology and products is clear. "It's a dynamite company, and we're proud to represent them. This is the type of product that answers and solves problems our competitors' caging cannot." At a recent presentation, Bridget explained how IVC racks try to solve static cage issues, but simply create more issues. She has found some success illustrating how ACS caging offers the best of static cages and IVC using low-flow technology -- the best of both worlds. Other problems ACS equipment solves include maximizing space in very old buildings with limited 'real estate,' not having to balance motors, and ease of access and moving racks. "Getting beyond a relationship a facility already has with another vendor continues to be our biggest challenge," she says.

Once a customer experiences the benefits of ACS caging technology, they are sold. One of graph. The difference is huge. These pads are available from Grainger or other industrial supply houses. If you cannot find them, please let us know and we will be happy to provide a set of four at $50.

Thanks Jim Elliott and Dave Carlton, for introducing us all to yet another way to assure research animals are well protected.
Colcom’s customers, the breeder at a large state university research facility, will use only ACS equipment. She saw her breeding go up once the animals were housed in ACS cages, due to the lack of noise and vibration, and she’s been a devotee ever since. This breeder's predecessor felt the same way, and Bridget appreciates their loyalty to ACS.

Bridget “likes the camaraderie in the animal world. Customers feel their vendor is their partner; it’s a tight knit community. Everyone talks to everyone else, and there’s a constant buzz about ACS.” She gives a lot of credit to Rich VanDewater, who "has been the glue for all of that. He hangs in there with us and our customers. Rich is the sales captain, and he has our back."

ACS is extremely fortunate to have an extraordinary network of manufacturers' rep groups -- like Colcom -- that are very much part of the family. We are grateful for their steadfast loyalty, personal dedication and 'customer first' approach to sales. As Rich VanDewater says, "Bridget and Colcom are just who we want representing ACS. They're ethical, honest and hard-working. It's great to enjoy a personal relationship with such good people."

In addition to Animal Care Systems, Colcom also represents The Baker Company, Baker BioScience Solutions, Better Built, Crest Ultrasonics, Primus, Euthanex, Lab Research Products, CryoSafe, Peqlab, Continental Refrigerator, and Lab Design.

ACS customers have used thousands of Single-use OptiMICE cages since we introduced this product more than a year ago. We have listened carefully to the comments from all users and subsequently made several enhancements to the cage. The new single use OptiMICE cage has several significant changes. The feeder is now a single injection molded piece with an integrated stainless steel insert. No assembly, more robust.

We have eliminated the rear exhaust nozzle and the bottom tray that was spot-welded in to the base. Now there is a tray/nozzle assembly that snaps in place at each cage location on the rack. These stay in place on the rack and should be good for several years of service. No assembly, more robust.

The cage itself is more consistent in thickness and more durable. The base-to-top fit is tighter and more secure. The cage card holder attaches to the base with a feature that assures a positive connection.

So, if you have been waiting for ACS single-use caging that is even more robust, here it is! These will be available for deployment on August 1st.
PRODUCT UPDATES
OptiMICE Filter
C79073

OptiMICE racks are currently being shipped with an updated filter faceplate and fine-mesh screen on the inside of the cage. This provides additional protection to the filter element and reduces any tendency to capture bedding and debris fines in the filter pleats.

Starting in late June, 2012, the OptiMICE filter will include added debris protection on the outside of the cage in the form of a fine-mesh stainless steel screen bonded to the outer surface of the filter. Filtration effectiveness and autoclavability will remain unchanged.

ACS International

Where in the World is Paolo Tamborini?

ACS is discovering plenty of opportunity in Europe. We have a solid distribution network in place, and Paolo Tamborini is attending conferences, supervising installations, and training our resellers in ACS’ technology and service. Earlier this year, Paolo installed ACS equipment at the University of Verona. This Spring, he has called on research facilities in Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic with our reseller Biotech; visited Triple A Trading to install ACS equipment at CRP in Strassen, Luxembourg; attended the Scand-LAS conference in Norway; trained our new distributors in Spain and Turkey; and met ACS’ Dave Heldt in Israel to assist with installations there (see next story, below).

Early this month, he attended the AFSTAL meeting in Marseilles, France. "This conference drew more than 400 attendees; it's a big show for Europe," he says. "There was a lot of enthusiasm for ACS' unique technology and space-saving design."

Bar-Ilan University
Faculty of Medicine in the Galilee
We Want to Hear From You!

Do you have a story, a study, a research program you would like to share with our readers? Please contact Chery Honiotes, choniotes@animalcaresystems to discuss how we can work together to enrich the content of ACS’ newsletter.

Meanwhile, in Israel ...
ACS Engineering Technician Dave Heldt traveled to Israel earlier this month to train the Lavi, Ltd. team in installing and servicing ACS caging equipment. After working with our distributors to install ACS racks in Bar-ILan University's Faculty of Medicine in both the Galilee and Tel Aviv, Dave and his wife Candee took the opportunity to tour the great nation of Israel. One of the highlights for Dave was the Sea of Galilee. Dave says “There’s great potential for ACS in Israel, with new facilities being built and a definite push in the lab animal market.”

Dave and Candee Heldt in Jerusalem