



BRO-TEX PRESIDENT SHARES INSIGHTS ON 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY AND WOMEN OWNED CERTIFICATION

Bro-Tex is excited to celebrate 100 years of being family-owned and operated. Arlys Freeman, President, discussed this accomplishment in an interview with Autumn Boos.

HOW DID BRO-TEX GET STARTED?

In 1923, my grandfather Arnold Greenberg and a partner started a rag business, Minnesota Rag and Paper Stock Company, to supply local roofing mills. My father, Roger Greenberg, took over the company at only 25 years of age. Bro-Tex had been the trade name of the Wiping Rag department, and the company officially changed to Bro-Tex Co., Inc. in 1975.

Bro-Tex manufactures and distributes non-woven wipers, paper products, wet wipes, microfiber cloths, cotton towels, sorbents and of course cloth rags for businesses across the United States. In addition to hundreds of standard items, we produce private label products as well as convert custom items.



Arnold Greenberg, original owner.



Gray MicroSpun made from Recycled Bottles

100 YEARS IS A GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT. HOW HAS BRO-TEX EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?

We have grown our business in several ways over the century.

We have been environmentally conscious from the beginning by first grading and recycling textiles into rags, and later using the secondary fibers for quilting and sleeping bags.

My dad expanded our business to convert a variety of non-woven materials. We can help guide customers to the best product for their application.

My dad started a large shoddy fiber operation. For many years we took waste material from socks and polyester clothing to be used in automotive door panels and trunk linings.

In 2010, we started the Midwest Floating Island division to manufacture BioHaven floating islands. Made from a matrix of recycled soda and water bottles, these man-made wetlands both improve water quality and create wetland habitat in ponds and surface water. We have produced islands for cities, schools, zoos, state departments of conservation, and homeowners.

Also called Floating Treatment Wetlands, the islands are produced with internal buoyancy, plant holes, UV protection on top, and places to attach anchor lines. Customers can add wetland plants to create floating rafts that compete with algae to reduce nutrients in the water.

BRO-TEX WAS RECENTLY CERTIFIED AS WOMEN OWNED. HOW WAS THAT PROCESS?

I have worked at Bro-Tex full-time for 37 years and have led the company as President for more than 15 years. My mother operated a fabric store in our facility for many years and was on our board for decades.



Arlys Freeman and Roger Greenberg.



Island Made by Midwest Floating Island to clean the water and provide habitat.

My father passed away in the fall of 2022. My mother and I now own the company, and we decided in October to pursue certification for being women owned. It is a rigorous process to be certified by Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) which is a gold standard 3rd party certification. We have also applied to be certified as a Woman Owned Small Business (WOSB).

Our corporate lawyer commented, "I have even more respect for the WBENC symbol now that I know how extensive the certification process is."

Once the materials were submitted in mid-March, there was a review process and then an on-site inspection. We were excited to receive our certification by WBENC around 6 weeks later.

HOW IS SUSTAINABILITY AFFECTING YOUR WIPING BUSINESS?

Bro-Tex offers wipes that meet EPA guidelines for recycled content and have excellent absorbency.

Our microfiber products are popular for people who want to reduce chemicals in their environment. For example, our MicroSpun cloths grab 99.9% of bacteria using just water. Our gray MicroSpun is made with recycled bottles. We are always looking for materials that are green friendly for our customers that have sustainability goals.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FOR THE WIPING INDUSTRY?

The shortage of paper and inflation drove prices up last year, so pricing is an issue for customers. We are continuing to look at ways to help reduce our costs and pass that on to our customers.

We expect there to be continued consolidation in the industry, which puts pressure on independent distributors who have been long-term customers.

COVID was a tremendous challenge because the demand for our Fresh Start Disinfecting Wipes was overwhelming. Our employees were amazing and worked long hours to source materials and produce record amounts of wet wipes.

The incredible demand for disinfecting products has dropped off, but we are pleased that the public remains concerned about clean facilities. We continue to expand our Fresh Start wet wipe line. We just launched a new

budget-friendly sanitizing wipe. We are committed to being nimble so we can respond to future health emergency needs.

BRO-TEX IS A FAMILY-OWNED COMPANY. HOW DOES THAT IMPACT YOUR APPROACH TO THE BUSINESS?

Many of our family members work at Bro-Tex. My brother, Dan Greenberg, joined us 8 years ago in sales. Our children have worked here during the summers.

Our employees are like family. We have many multi-generational employees at Bro-Tex. Some of our employees have worked with us for over 45 years. We like to promote from within. Our current scheduling and purchasing manager started with us on the production floor.

We pride ourselves on offering high quality products with excellent customer service. Celebrating the 100-year anniversary is about recognizing our employees, suppliers, and customers who have helped Bro-Tex accomplish so much. **MSN**



Bro-Tex Wet Wipes

- ▶ Clean greasy hands and tools with **Orange Peels® Plus**.
- ▶ Make your own wet wipe with **Solution Wipes®**.
- ▶ Disinfect with **Fresh Start® Disinfecting Wipes**.



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