



Market Goes to the Mattresses in Tough Business Climate

By David Gill

HIGH POINT, N.C.—The mattress manufacturers that plan to show at this week's High Point market are readying new products in an atmosphere in which, as one vendor noted, "retail is lousy."

The author of that appraisal—Kathy Grigg, vice president and co-owner of Carolina Mattress Guild—added that the company has tailored its introductions for this week's show to pursue business at value price points, from \$299 to \$699. Carolina Mattress Guild's new line, Town & Country, offers

"Consumers want the best product at the lowest price."

Kathy Grigg, Carolina Mattress Guild

14 models in that retail price range. "Most mattresses purchased at retail are sold in this range," Grigg said.

To Grigg, the key to the softness of the mattress market lies in how constricted consumer budgets have become in recent months. "Money is tight for consumers," she said. "Their mortgage payments have been going up and gas prices are still high. Consumers don't want to put off purchasing a mattress, but they do want the best product at the lowest price."

Gerry Borreggine, president of Therapedic, agreed that the mattress business has been "sluggish" going into this week. Therapedic is one of the dwindling number of top mattress manufacturers that has continued to be active at the High Point Market; most of these vendors have put nearly all of their eggs into the Las Vegas market basket over the past two years.

"We are pleased to be showing in High Point as we are hoping that it will help jump-start business," Borreggine said. Therapedic is planning to raise the curtain on the ACafe mattress collection, which will take a place in the company's Kathy

Ireland Home line of licensed mattresses.

The ACafe grouping "is designed to hit the high-volume price points of \$499, \$599 and \$699," Borreggine

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 29

said. "The timing of a hot, promotionally priced product line is somewhat serendipity for us. But, in light of the current state of the mattress business, we are very fortunate to be able to show retailers something new and exciting at these very desirable price points."

At a higher price point, Therapedic is also showing the Romantic Elegance mattress,

another addition to the Kathy Ireland line. The Romantic Elegance offers a 9-inch layer of natural latex foam in a Euro-top construction, and will be featured as part of the Kathy Ireland First Lady collection.

The promotional price points aren't the only mattress sectors that will see new products this week. Some vendors are also raising the profile on "green" mattresses.

One of these is Springwall Sleep Products,



Magniflex's SoyGreen mattress is made with a vegetable-oil version of its proprietary Memoform memory foam.

which is launching environmentally friendly additions to its Chiropractic line. These mattresses incorporate

components such as organic cotton covers, latex fill, cotton padding layers, aloe vera, bamboo and foams based on corn and soy. Like other mattresses in the line, the new series, called Chiropractic Eco, is made to specifications of the Posture Committee of the American Chiropractic Association.

Also in the green category, Springwall is reintroducing its latex foam line with the added features of latex quilted surfaces and organic cotton covers.

Magniflex, the Italy-based mattress manufacturer that has expanded its U.S. presence in recent months, is pushing the bar on natural mattresses with its launch this week of the GeoEthic Collection. This new program includes natural, oil-based memory-foam mattresses; the natural oils replace the petroleum-based component in other viscoelastic memory foams.

The new products are made with vegetable oil versions of Memoform, Magniflex's proprietary eco-friendly memory foam. The new models include SoyGreen and BioSoy, which use soy fiber; EcoBamboo, featuring bamboo fiber; Linen Comfort, with linen fiber; GeoShell, made with chitosan made with marine algae fiber; and DreamWood, manufactured with cellulose fiber.

"Magniflex has taken a global leadership position in the eco bedding category by coming out with not one but eight natural oil-based memory-foam mattresses," said

Henry Burney, chief executive officer for Magniflex's U.S. operations.

In the futon category, Arason Enterprises is coming to High Point with a test of a mattress upgrade for its ZzZ Chest. The new mattress, which is an innerspring product like its predecessor, comes with a quilted top to provide a more traditional mattress feel. "The previous

mattress was OK but didn't have

that traditional feel," said Jane

Arason, president of Arason Enterprises.

High Point "will give us an opportunity

to survey the market