



*FRESH FROM DOVER-FOXCROFT – DuraFresh™ multi-use cloths are being sewn, stitched and packaged in the former Maine Highlands Federal Credit Union building in Dover-Foxcroft. Pictured, from left, are GLOBEco Maine’s marketing director Mark Snyder, managing director Phil Pastore, production workers John Richer and Rae Newell, and consultant Marie Veno. Seated is production lead-person Elaine Draper. (Eastern Gazette photo – Mike Lange)*



## **GLOBEco Maine ‘GEM’ brings innovation and new jobs to Dover-Foxcroft**

By Mike Lange

DOVER-FOXCROFT – At first glance, a package of DuraFresh™ cloths doesn’t appear to be that unique.

But once they’re saturated with water, they become a soft, virtually germ-free cleaning cloth that can be composted when worn out. And that won’t be for weeks or months, based on normal usage.

The innovative product has been test marketed across the country, according to managing director Phil Pastore “and the reviews have been outstanding. Our biggest selling point is that our product is based on the most sustainable resource on earth: trees.”

DuraFresh™ cloths are made from natural wood fiber in an open-weave design that allows germs to be easily washed away, keeping it fresh and odor free.

The company is starting off on a small scale in the former Maine Highlands Federal Credit Union space in the Dover-Foxcroft Save-A-Lot building. There are four serging machines in use right now to attach borders and inner stitching to the cloths with more machines on the way.

While initial cloths on the market have been imported, DuraFresh™ has partnered with True Textiles in Guilford to create the fabric and ship it to Dover-Foxcroft where it will be cut into squares, serged and packaged.

“In mid-July, GEM (GLOBEco Maine) delivered 5,000 pounds of fiber spools to True Textiles for broadcloth fabric weaving, and the Dover-Foxcroft facility is already finishing and packaging fabric squares into saleable product which can be found in many stores around Maine and New Hampshire,” Pastore said. “Although the base viscose rayon fiber is not yet made in the U.S., the company’s long term goal is to spin fiber in Maine from repurposed Maine pulping plants, creating a new materials industry centered right here in Dover-Foxcroft.”

Marketing director Mark Snyder spent 28 years with Toms of Maine before joining GLOBEco Maine. “This is a very exciting time for us,” he said. “True Textiles has been an excellent partner, and we’re working on ways to maximize efficiency.” Snyder said that in addition to the consumer market, DuraFresh™ is an attractive option for commercial usage. “We’ve passed out samples to hospitals and restaurants, and they love ‘em,” he said.

It’s taken the company about 16 months to get to this point, Pastore explained. “When we first came up with the idea of creating an environmentally-friendly cleaning cloth, it was hard to sell,” he said. “The textile industry isn’t exactly a sexy investment in 2015.”

But Pastore’s 24 years’ experience as a materials engineer and his affiliation with the University of Maine’s Forest Bioproducts Research Institute (FBRI) convinced him and initial investors that the DuraFresh™ concept was viable. “The next step was finding a location and a work force,” he said.

When Creative Apparel shut down its statewide operation in January 2014, Pastore said that he had his eye on their vacated building in the Pine Crest Business Park. When that became unavailable, they moved into the current location. “Our first employee was a former Creative Apparel stitcher,” he said, “and we plan to hire more as we ramp up production.”

Leading up to its operational kickoff in Dover-Foxcroft, the company has received \$60,000 through four grants from the Maine Technology Institute for related product technology development, and GEM has been approved for another \$107,000 for the commercialization of targeted new product advancements.

Specific to Dover-Foxcroft, GEM was awarded a \$240,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) which was matched by investment funds from Coastal Enterprises Inc., which specializes in financing business development in rural areas.

He added that Ken Woodbury, the former executive director of the Piscataquis County Economic Development Council, and Dover-Foxcroft Town Manager Jack Clukey “were instrumental in convincing us to move here. They’ve been outstanding.”

Several local stores, such as Goulette’s IGA & Lovell’s Hardware (in Guilford), and Will’s Shop ‘N Save & Bob’s Hardware (in Dover-Foxcroft), are now stocking DuraFresh™ cloths and more merchants are being added every day. “We’re just beginning to build out,” said Snyder.

But the company has an ambitious, long-term goal, Pastore said. “Eventually, we’d like to see it made beginning to end, right here in Maine. Trees cut in Piscataquis County would be made into dissolving pulp, the fabric created at True Textiles and the product finished, packaged and shipped in Dover-Foxcroft,” he said. “Our company is founded on Maine work ethics and ingenuity,” he said. “Both are hard to beat.”

For more information, visit <http://durafreshcloth.com>.