



PRESENTED PLAQUE — Cohen Elgin (right), manager of Parkdale Plant 8 in North Belmont, receives a plaque from company president Andy Warlick for that plant's achievement of submitting the most ideas for the Ideas in Action program. The plaque was presented at the president's semi-annual leadership conference at the City Club in Gastonia.

PARKDALE

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ways to reduce waste and improve yield," Coggins said.

He also said that some associates have done their own research and testing and found less expensive sources of equal quality machine replacement parts.

Parkdale has found that the Ideas in Action program has generated competition in certain plants between shifts, and that they are able to take a successful idea from one plant and implement it at other plants.

Coggins pointed out that the plants with the higher number of ideas submitted were usually where the managers were enthusiastic about the program.

"The seed for the program was something Andy had in his mind for four or five years," Coggins said. "We had training classes for supervisors where they had to pair up into groups and do a project of their own choosing."

"Andy liked one group's presentation about a suggestion system or incentive plan where an associate would be rewarded for a good idea."

Coggins was asked to coordinate and establish a program for the whole company. "A committee was selected," Coggins said, "we did the research, and it took flight."

Overall, the Ideas in Action program, which has been in existence since Jan. 1, 1999, has been a success, Coggins said. "The projected annual savings is \$2.5 million from the 2,200 ideas submitted, 35 percent of which has been adopted."

Warlick says many of the innovative changes at Parkdale recently have come from associates' ideas.

"This is why the Ideas in Action program is so important

for Parkdale," he said. "These ideas keep us competitive with foreign yarns, give us competitive advantages over domestic competition, and improve safety and morale."

Coggins says that as a premier manufacturer of cotton and cotton blend yarns, Parkdale has always focused on innovative technology and the Ideas in Action program can be an important contributor to Parkdale's future.

"Innovation and Parkdale are synonymous," he said.

At the 58th annual Employee Involvement Association Conference held last month in Orlando, Fla., Parkdale's Ideas in Action suggestion program was the recipient of the 1999 award for the most outstanding first year program.

E.I.A. is a national organization with over 400 member companies from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.

Coggins, a graduate of UNC Chapel Hill, has been with the company for 30 years, 20 of them with Belmont Heritage, which Parkdale purchased 10 years ago.

His wife, Nancy, is a registered nurse at Presbyterian Hospital in Charlotte. Active in Belmont's youth baseball program for over 20 years, Coggins worked for Dan River Mills for seven years before moving with his family to Belmont in 1970.

They have two children, Boyd, a senior vice president of First Citizens Bank in Charlotte, and Becky, who is a second grade teacher in Greensboro. Boyd and his wife have two sons.

Both Boyd, a graduate of South Point and Davidson College, and Becky, a South Point and UNC Chapel Hill graduate, were Phi Beta Kappa in college.

Austin International worldwide company

BY JIM HEFFNER
Staff Reporter

Austin International, Inc. is Belmont's stealth industry.

The company, located at 526 Woodlawn St. in North Belmont has grown significantly since opening in June of 1991. Many people will be surprised to find there is a large international company in Belmont

Co-owned by Debra Ruth and Randy Austin, the company works closely with the electrical utility industry throughout the world.

Austin International bought the old Food Lion property almost 10 years ago and since then has added more buildings and open holding areas. The property now consists of 13 acres with 125,000 square feet covered.

"We bought the Vision Hosiery building in E. Belmont when the company closed, too," Ruth said. "That is three acres with 60,000 square feet covered."

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Photo by Jim Heffner

DEBRA RUTH AND LOTS OF METERS — Debra Ruth, executive vice president of Austin International, Inc. stands with stacks and stacks of refurbished electrical meters. She and Randall Austin founded the company in 1991, and it has grown rapidly since that time, now employing 100 people.

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