

## Bedding Benchmarks

# Clare Bedding expanding its Restonic product lines

By David Perry

ESCANABA, Mich. — Clare Bedding, a longtime Restonic licensee here, is strengthening its commitment to that Top 15 bedding brand.

Owner Don Balsavich, a bedding veteran whose 30-plus years of experience include top management positions at Spring Air and Restonic's corporate headquarters, has been focusing on the bedding business as a licensee since 1993.

"This is the era of the smaller, well-run mattress producer," he said. "As the mattress business is currently very volatile, there are great opportunities for growth for the second-tier brands that can out-manuever and out-merchandise the big 'S' brands."

And that's good news, he said, for Clare Bedding, which has been in business since 1936 and has been a Restonic licensee since 1972.

Balsavich says he's seizing op-

portunities in the bedding market by emphasizing the Restonic brand in the Upper Midwest. His 50,000-square-foot factory services Michigan, Wisconsin, northern Indiana, northern Illinois and eastern Minnesota.

"We are going to be focusing on the Restonic brand, which has one of the strongest trademarks in the industry — the Marvelous Middle," Balsavich said. The Marvelous Middle is a reinforced design in the center third of the mattress, set off with visible stitch lines, that provides extra support where consumers need it most, he said.

Balsavich says he will be featuring several expanded Restonic product lines:

► The Comfort Care Select line of individually wrapped coil beds, retailing from \$999 to \$2,499.

► The Health Rest memory foam line, retailing from \$599 to \$1,699. The line touts a "100% made in the U.S." story that res-

onates with retailers who don't want to turn to Chinese memory foam imports, he said.

► A Restonic line featuring Flexsteel-designed box springs that was remerchandised this year and retails from \$1,299 to \$2,999.

"We have already experienced a shift to and a resurgence of the \$1,299 and up retail price points," Balsavich said. "If there are real benefits the consumer can see and feel they are willing to pay the higher price points and invest in better sleep. Our two-sided mattresses continue to be very strong. This is an obvious feature/benefit that consumers can easily understand. And by continuing to rely on quality components and not compromising on materials or production methods we experience a return rate of less than 0.5%."

Clare Bedding supplies Restonic-branded bedding to about 200 home furnishings retailers and bedroom specialty stores



Don Balsavich, center, supervises construction of the Flexsteel-designed box spring used in Restonic bedding line.

throughout the Midwest, including Darvin Furniture in the Chicago market; Golden Fowler Furniture and Currie's Furniture in Traverse City, Mich.; Land-O-Dreams, Rochester, Minn.; Al Grace, Rockford, Ill.; and Kirkish Furniture, Houghton, Mich.

As part of its decision to emphasize its Restonic roots, Clare Bedding has discontinued its affiliation with the Eclipse and Eastman House brands, Balsavich said. That will enable the company to streamline its production and increase manufacturing efficiencies; three national brands were difficult to manage and support, he said.

Clare Bedding will continue to manufacture its successful private label Platinum Dreams line

for retailer Penny Mustard Furnishings, formerly known as PM Bedroom Gallery, with stores in Chicago, Milwaukee and Minneapolis. And it will continue to market its own Clare Bedding products.

There are openings in the current bedding market that favor companies like Clare Bedding, according to Balsavich.

"Locally owned factories can tailor their beds and their programs to fit the region and the dealer base that they serve," he said. "And the local factory owners and management usually know the retail store owners and have open lines of communication with them. That makes for a stronger, mutually beneficial business partnership."