

World trade

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time we will be the third-largest English-speaking country – behind China and India.”

In addition to improving its educational infrastructure, Eskew said, the United States needs to improve its physical infrastructure, specifically its transportation system.

Increased global trade means more pressure on the country's highways, railways, waterways and aviation system, he said. And he's not sure they can handle more pressure.

“We have to act, and we have to act now,” Eskew said.

Solving the United States' educational and physical infrastructure problems to improve its competitive edge in world trade would involve partnerships between companies and government, he said.

Bryant President Ronald K. Machtley earlier in the day announced that the university was being responsive to one of Eskew's points. From May 21 through June 4, Bryant hosted a dozen students from Lingnan College, a part of Sun Yat-sen University in Zhongshan, China.

At the end of that period, the students, along with the 13 Bryant undergraduates who have been hosting them, will return the favor by hosting the Americans in Zhongshan. The program, which entailed

classes and cultural events, including a **Pawtucket Red Sox** game, is a pilot for a much broader initiative that Machtley wants to undertake.

The next step in that program is a two-week period during the winter break next year that will see about 150 Bryant students travel on one of three trips – to Europe, Latin America or China – for cultural enrichment. Machtley hopes that within a few years, the entire sophomore class (which stands at about 700 students today) will take part in what would be called the Sophomore Experience, and travel to one of the three locales for those two weeks, further marking Bryant's commitment to preparing its students for a more interconnected world.

'Free trade is anything but free.'

DANIEL R. DIMICCO
Nucor Corp. CEO

China and its neighbors also formed the core of the conference's morning speakers, Erik R. Peterson, a senior vice president with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and William R. Evans, senior vice president for **Bank of America**.

While Evans gave an overview of the economy of China and its position relative to the United States, Peterson spoke of the “Seven Futures.” His speech was an analysis of the forces driving change over the next two decades and beyond in seven regions of the world that will have a great impact on the United States – East Asia and South Asia, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa and Russia. A core point of his message was that population growth, and the pressure



PBN STAFF PHOTO/STEPHANIE EWENS

DANIEL R. DIMICCO, vice chairman and CEO of Nucor Corp., the largest U.S. steelmaker, addresses about 600 people at World Trade Day 2006 at Bryant University.

on resources that it brings, is happening largely in the regions of the world least able to handle it, namely the poor countries of the Third World.

The picture Peterson painted of the coming years was sobering, and made clear the interdependence of the world's economies, and why global trade is a complex dynamic.

In closing his speech, DiMicco offered another solution to help the United States meet those free-trade challenges. “We live

in a world of managed trade,” he said. “We need to change our approach and stop calling it free trade.”

In addition, people need to “wake up” elected officials to level the playing field for U.S. manufacturers, he said. It should be a grassroots movement.

“Shame on our government if they don't do it,” DiMicco said. “It's time for China to act responsibly. ... If we don't hold them accountable, then shame on us.” ■

Fit & Fresh

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stores selling them has grown to 12,000 nationwide, making Fit & Fresh the fastest-growing product line in MEDport's history, said Brian Carey, vice president of sales and marketing.

The product is sold at stores such as **CVS**, **Shaw's**, **Whole Foods**, **Wegmans Food Markets** and **Albertson's**, in addition to other lesser-known stores.

“People told us they like to take salads to work,” said Larry Wesson, president of MEDport, which employs 15 people in the United States and six in China, where its products are manufactured. “We wanted to address healthy eating on the go.”

The idea to create Fit & Fresh started in a brainstorming session with MEDport designers, engineers, marketing and sales personnel.

“Almost everything we create comes from internal brainstorming,” Carey said, adding that the company uses formal and informal methods of research, from consumer focus groups to conversations with family and friends.

The brainstorming team designed containers with removable freezer packs to address the issue of keeping healthy foods fresh, he said. The freezer packs keep food cold for six hours, long enough to last until lunch.

The Fit & Fresh “Salad Shaker,” for example, has a freezer pack and dressing dispenser built into the lid. When twisted, the dressing dispenser releases its contents. Then a person can shake the container to distribute the dressing evenly.

“Lunch on the go” incorporates a freezer pack and two smaller containers that fit into one larger container so that it stores a main course and two sides.

“This product has gotten remarkable pickup in a short time,” said Carey, adding it is the first time **Bed, Bath & Beyond** and **Linens 'n Things** ever picked up a MEDport product. “In terms of units,” he said, “we're probably shipping 50,000 pieces in June, which is twice what we sold in April.”

The products sell for \$7.99 to \$9.99. **Bed, Bath & Beyond** “blew through the initial inventory in the first month,” he said. “The product must be selling well.”

Fit & Fresh is a new type of product for MEDport,

known more for its **Timex Accu-Curve Digital Thermometer**, a thermometer designed with a curve to prevent gagging; medication organizers; and diabetes organizers with cold packs for insulin storage and separate compartments for blood sugar meters and testing strips.

“We try to take everyday products and make them more convenient,” Carey said.

But there are some restrictions. Wesson said the company only develops products that “help people monitor and maintain their health and wellness,” per MEDport's mission statement.

In addition to its diabetes products, the company develops medical products for people with cardiovascular disease and osteoarthritis, said Carey.

“As you look at these populations, there is tremendous overlap with obesity,” he said. “We want to create products that help people delay the onset of these conditions.”

Wesson said the Fit & Fresh experience has “changed our view of the market.” Smaller cans of soda and “100 calorie” snack packs are examples of where the market is going.

MEDport will launch a “Soup and Salad” container this month. It is designed to keep salads cool and soups hot within one container.

The company will launch “Snack Clips” in August. Designed for children, the two-compartment containers are small enough to clip on a backpack and incorporate a freezer pack.

“The greatest challenge with this product line was making sure that the packaging clearly conveyed that this was not a standard food container,” Carey said. “We went through several renditions before we were satisfied and people understood it.”

The company created a Fit & Fresh Web site with recipes and tips for healthy living, Carey said. It cross-promotes products and puts them on home shopping networks and in catalogs to increase visibility.

MEDport spends 8 to 12 percent of its budget on product research and development, said Wesson. It will introduce eight more Fit & Fresh products between now and January.

“We're banking that this trend will continue to grow,” he said. “We want to provide the tools so that people can prepare their own food while sticking to healthy portions and good food choices.” ■

'We try to take everyday products and make them more convenient.'

BRIAN CAREY

MEDport vice president of sales and marketing

Gilbane

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Narragansett.”

Cotter said the company hopes to start work on the residential portion of the project this summer.

On the commercial side, Gilbane plans to bring Belmont Market to the supermarket building, he said. “It will bring a nice, full-service grocer back to the site, which people have been asking for,” Cotter said. A new addition is also slated to be built, to house a liquor store.

Cotter said that there are plans to build a “high-end” restaurant on the site of a former gas station that was recently demolished. And Cotter said if Gilbane is able to retire existing leases in the portion of the property that it controls – which does not include a movie theater or Narragansett police station – existing structures could be torn down and rebuilt to accommodate both commercial and residential uses.

The council's approval came after a year of often contentious debate. Narragansett Town Council President Anne-Marie Silveria, who could not be reached for comment last week, told PBN in February that the Gilbane proposal before the council at the time was “not what we're looking for.” Silveria said she wanted commercial uses to be included in the apartment buildings, creating a “downtown” feel.

Residents also criticized the plan for its aesthetics and the company's opposition to reconstructing Narragansett Avenue to run through the property as a public road.

But ultimately, the council voted in favor of the project, granting unanimous approval for the commercial portion of the project and handing Gilbane a narrow victory on the residential component.

Conditions attached to the approval require Gilbane to develop a long-term plan for redevelopment that accounts for expired leases and that the company appear before the council again in the future to discuss the possibility of a pedestrian bridge.

Town Solicitor Mark McSally did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment last week.

While the town formalizes the conditions, Cotter said Gilbane will continue developing more advanced plans for the property. Cotter said he is unsure of how much the project is expected to cost. ■