



## ► Sheldon Labs – bringing science to life

By Sharon Garrison

How does a company that traces its roots back to 1898 and Chicago, Ill., morph into a leading-edge supplier of laboratory equipment and furnishings? Sheldon Labs, now based in Crystal Springs, has found the formula for success.

Mississippi School Supply Company bought the company and moved it to the 86,000-square-foot plant in Crystal Springs. With a great respect for the company's history, Eddie Adkins, president of Sheldon, and Jenny Phillips, executive vice president and general manager, focus on the future – a future that helps fuel the education of young scientific minds across Mississippi and throughout the world.

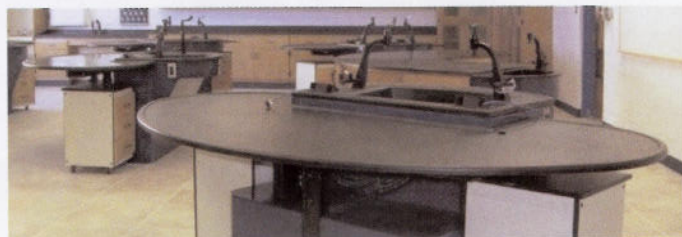
First introduced to *Pointe Innovation* readers in 2005, Sheldon Labs has continued its growth pattern and remained true to its mission.

“Not only are there no less than 15 to 20 new products, we have moved almost every piece of equipment in our factory,” Adkins said. “We have an unyielding desire to improve our operations. Since 2005, we have almost doubled our sales and we have done so with basically the same number of people. We have invested in equipment, people and processes to do more and do it more efficiently and with more velocity through the factory. As Yoda said in ‘Star Wars,’ ‘there is no try...we just do!’”

“Innovation and reliability focus on the needs of architects and end-users, while delivering products on time and complete focuses more on the contractor. Those are equally important to us,” said Phillips. “Our passion is to provide the most innovative products in the laboratory furnishings marketplace. Our team will never compromise the quality or reliability of our product.”

What used to seem like science fiction portrayed only in the movies has become a reality for many classrooms across the nation.

“There is a major emphasis in our country on improving the quality of science and math education,” Adkins said. “Many school districts have increased their requirements for math and




science credits. As this happens, it is critical they have the facilities to teach general science, chemistry, biology, physics, earth sciences, robotics and more.”

Sheldon designs and manufactures products that cover the entire spectrum of labs for all ages – from elementary to middle and high school to college and universities – as well as products for the research market.

Step into any science lab and you'll see the traditional tools of beakers, dissection trays, centrifuges, microscopes and the like. But increasingly, you will also see more students coming to class with laptops in hand and teachers using tools like Elmo document projectors and SMART boards. And those tools need to be matched with high-tech furnishings.

Sheldon makes it their business to help teachers make the most of the limited classroom time that is available for their students by ensuring that the furnishings in the room support technological advances and that they work in such a way to keep the students engaged. Sheldon works closely with the National Science Teachers Association to provide educationally correct furniture to help them meet and exceed emerging standards. New requirements demand flexible work stations that not only accommodate the various science disciplines in the same room, but can accommodate the changing technology in the room.



“While technology changes almost daily, the basics of engaging students are still the most critical factors in getting kids to learn,” Adkins explained. “Our engineering team brings about 200 years of experience to our organization. They look at flexibility in design, but keep safety and access for everyone at the forefront of their designs. And, our products are made to withstand the harsh environment of a classroom.”

One new innovation is the Axis Infinity, a flexible four-student workstation that is ADA compliant and can fill the needs of biology, chemistry, physics and all the science disciplines.

With a full line of imprint tops that can be used in conjunction with a teacher’s curriculum that allows students to record experiment results right on the table, Sheldon’s products for elementary-age students stand out from others in the industry.

“The apparatus panel boards provide a variety of experiments, with lesson plans, to help supplement and enhance the teacher’s curriculum,” Adkins said. “Our panel boards give them the lesson plan, the equipment and the in-service to help them make science fun.”

And because many elementary schools do not have the luxury of dedicated space for science labs, Sheldon also provides a full range of portable products that can be moved from room to room.

Sheldon’s products take the anxiety out of what might be an intimidating situation for working with the youngest of students. For instance, the Harmony Table is a demonstration table designed to mate up with the Axis Infinity workstation. It allows the teacher the ability to move from class to class safely with their experiments.

In challenging economic times, many companies are seeing sales plummet and school districts are experiencing budget cuts and finding it more and more difficult to fund art and science programs. Sheldon’s commitment to the customer and to improving education are getting a better result.

During the past five years, Sheldon’s sales have almost doubled. Their products are shipped throughout Mississippi, across the country and throughout the world to places including Doha, Qatar and the Caribbean.

“Our great country is built on our curiosity, our drive to make our lives better and our passion to leave this world better for our children and our children’s children,” Adkins said. “Our educational system is great in many ways but we absolutely have to invest in our teachers and their facilities so they can have the tools to engage our students and get those creative juices flowing. Our country’s future is absolutely dependent on our educational system.

“It is easy to compare this to the age-old saying ‘Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach him to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.’ If we can help get kids engaged and make the classroom a little more fun, we are doing our job.” ■

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