

# IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

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## SUCCESS STORY: STURGES MANUFACTURING TURNS 101



turer of custom-designed engineered straps and webbing for the safety, firefighting, military and mountain climbing industries. Stur-

oyer full of awards and plaques.

Leading the company into the 21st century is President Rick Griffith. Over 38 years ago, Rick joined Sturges and in 2000, he transitioned from one of the owners to the majority owner. Within a year, Rick's son Tyler came on board for new market development. The father and son leadership team has been good for both the family and the business.

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Founded by Henry Sturges, Sturges Manufacturing, Inc. began producing suspenders in Utica, NY in 1909. Today, Sturges is an ISO-9001 certified manufac-

ture is renowned for its outstanding performance in quality, value and customer service, and recognition from customers across the world is evident from the

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## COMMERCE & SBA LAUNCH NEW ONLINE EXPORT TOOL

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Helping small businesses **start, grow** and **succeed**.



Your Small Business Resource

Small businesses interested in exporting now have a new online tool to help them tap into the global marketplace to grow their business. Developed by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Small Business Administration, Six Steps to Begin Exporting, [www.export.gov/begin](http://www.export.gov/begin),

is the latest tool in the National Export Initiative toolbox to help entrepreneurs begin exporting.

The six-step process begins with a self-assessment to help potential exporters gauge their readiness to successfully engage in international trade. The self-assessment is followed by sections on training

and counseling programs; resources to create an export business plan; information on conducting market research; assistance for finding foreign buyers; and investigating financing for your small business exports, foreign investments or projects.

Upon completing the self-assessment, businesses receive a score

*Cont. on p. 3*

## SBA RENEWS POPULAR PATRIOT EXPRESS LOAN PROGRAM

A very popular initiative that in just three-and-a-half years has provided more than \$560 million in loan guarantees to nearly 7,000 veterans to start or expand their small businesses is being renewed for three more years. Patriot Express offers an enhanced guaranty and interest rate on loans to small businesses owned by veterans, reservists and their spouses.

"America's veterans have the leadership skills and experience to become successful entrepreneurs and small business owners," said SBA Administrator Karen Mills.

Patriot Express loans can be used for most business purposes, including start-up, expansion, equipment purchases, working capital, inventory or business-occupied real-estate purchases. Details on the initiative can be found at [www.sba.gov/patriot-express](http://www.sba.gov/patriot-express).

## SUCCESS STORY: STURGES MANUFACTURING TURNS 101

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"I think working with my son is the greatest thing going," said Rick Griffith. "He has come in here and taken a whole different look at things with a completely different perspective."

Sturges has been able to achieve an advantage over competitors by designing innovative solutions for its customers, with two patents on file and two more pending. The company just received a patent this month on a energy-absorbing webbing that is designed to reduce the shock for workers falling from heights, such as construction workers or window-washers.

In 2004, the company invested over \$100,000 to build a testing lab inside one of its three buildings. Since the lab acts as an independent facility within the company, Sturges has applied for it to be certified as an ISO 17025 test lab. The ability to conduct internal quality control testing has made Sturges's webbing and straps even more marketable. With a continued increase in foreign demand for its engineered products, particularly in Canada and Mexico, exporting activity has increased significantly

over the past several years.

Selling to the federal government was once a strong source of revenue for Sturges; during World War II, the company sold over two million rifle slings to the military for U.S. soldiers. The number of government contracts received by Sturges had slowed over recent years, and in 2009 Tyler Griffith sought assistance to improve sales from the NYS Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Procurement Assistance Center located at SUNY Institute of Technology in Utica (see article on p.4).

The SBDC Procurement Assistance Center's Government Contracting Coordinator, Roxanne Mutchler, provided training in accessing technical data packages, qualified product and manufacturer lists and federal bidding opportunities.

Sturges hired Patrick Fiegl as a government sales representative the same year and attended the Rochester Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) matchmaker in 2010. With a renewed emphasis on procurement, government sales have once again increased. Sturges recently was awarded a contract from the U.S. Army Pine Bluff Arsenal to



**Company:** *Sturges Manufacturing Co., Inc.*

**President:**  
*Richard Griffith (r.)*

**Vice President:**  
*Tyler Griffith (l.)*

**Employees:** 75

**Years in business:** 101

**Products:** *Custom-designed engineered straps and webbing*

**Location:** *Utica, NY*



manufacture over 40,000 straps for mortar shells.

"We contacted the SBDC to learn what we needed to do to obtain government contracts and how to expand our presence," said Tyler Griffith, vice president. "We continue to turn to the SBDC when we run into a roadblock."

# TAKE YOUR BUSINESS GLOBAL **SBA**

Many businesses think they are too small to compete in the world market. In fact, 97 percent of all exporters are small business. While 96 percent of the world's customers reside outside the United States, most U.S. companies never think of foreign markets and do not realize that foreign sales opportunities are now well within reach.

Consider the many advantages of exporting:

- Increased purchasing power in many export markets due to favorable exchange rate
- Available productive capacity in the U.S. to handle manufacturing expansion and a ready supply of workers

- Reduce dependence on the domestic market alone

- Enhance the sales potential and product life of existing products
- Stabilize seasonal market/sales fluctuations

United States Export Assistance Centers, located nationwide, provide one-stop trade pro-

motion, financing and export insurance programs. The SBA, the U.S. Commercial Service and the U.S. Export-Import Bank work together to support small businesses interested in exporting. To locate the SBA senior trade promotion and finance specialist nearest to you, go to [www.sba.gov/international](http://www.sba.gov/international).



## EXPLORE INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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indicating their level of readiness. Based on the score, additional resources are identified fitting their specific needs, including SBA and its nationwide resource partners SCORE and Small Business Development Centers, as well as Commerce's U.S. Export Assistance Centers, which provide individualized support."

"With nearly 96 percent of the world's customers living outside the United States and two-thirds of the world's purchasing power in foreign

countries, tapping into opportunities in the global market makes perfect sense and is more attainable than ever for small business owners," SBA Administrator Karen Mills said. "One of the main hurdles potential exporters face is their fear that exporting is too complicated. This six-step process addresses and dispels that concern. Across the administration, we continue to strengthen the tools and resources so we can be the best possible partner in helping small business owners grow their customer base be-

yond our borders and, in doing so, create new jobs here at home."

This joint Commerce-SBA effort is part of an array of activities by federal agencies to support President Obama's National Export Initiative, which calls for doubling U.S. exports and supporting 2 million jobs over the next five years. So far this year, U.S. exports have increased nearly 18 percent compared to the same period in 2009.

President Obama has outlined five steps the Administration is taking to help U.S. firms expand sales of their

goods and services abroad: creating a new Cabinet-level focus on U.S. exports, expanding export financing, prioritizing government advocacy on behalf of U.S. exporters, providing new resources to U.S. businesses seeking to export, and ensuring a level playing field for U.S. exporters in global markets.

For more information on export services for small businesses or to find local counseling and technical assistance resources, please visit [www.export.gov](http://www.export.gov).



## DID YOU KNOW? NYS SBDC PROCUREMENT ASSISTANCE CENTER

The New York State Small Business Development Center Procurement Assistance Center provides specialized assistance to small and/or disadvantaged firms interested in supplying goods and services to federal, state and local government agencies and to participating commercial firms.

This includes counseling and research to:

- Understand the bid process, including federal and state regulations such as the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR). Learn about bid, perform-

ance, and payment bonds, including how to establish a bonding line and the associated cost factors. Counseling is also available on state/federal law requirements relating to wages and fringe benefits.

- Market to those government agencies that buy your products or services. Advisors will assist you in identifying synopses and market leads of bid opportunities extracted from national and state data banks. Strategic market planning assistance is also available.

- Prepare documentation and interpret regulations referenced in federal/NYS government bids, proposals and contracts. This includes federal standards and specifications, military standards, specifications, and drawings, DOD adopted industry standards, NYS backdrop contracts, NYS OGS and much more.

- Analyze and respond to an invitation for bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP). This incorporates cost considerations and pricing history including material, labor and overhead allo-

cation relative to a specific opportunity. Also, assistance in quality control, pre-award surveys and contract administration is available.

- Win and fulfill contracts profitably.

Please contact Government Contracting Coordinator Roxanne Mutchler at the NYS SBDC Procurement Assistance Center at (toll-free) 1-877-789-BIDS or [bids@sunyit.edu](mailto:bids@sunyit.edu). All counseling is confidential and free of charge, thanks in part to funding from the SBA.

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## ALBANY SCORE'S FRANCHISING BASICS WORKSHOP

Are you considering a franchise opportunity? The Albany SCORE Chapter will present the Franchise Ownership-Is It Right For You? workshop on Thursday, Jan. 13 at 6 p.m. at the Sanford town library, 629 Albany Shaker Road in Colonie.

Learn the pros and cons of owning a fran-

chise, including comparisons to start ups and existing business purchases, costs, financing options, and the research, validation, and purchase process.

Register for this free workshop at [seminars@scorealbany.org](mailto:seminars@scorealbany.org) or call 518-446-1118 ext 233.



Congratulations and best of luck to the 12 entrepreneurs who recently graduated from the New York State Women's Business Center's six-week Small Business Training Program that was conducted in Little Falls, New York!