

Representing The Wiping Materials, Recycled Clothing, New Textile By Products and Fiber Industries

In My Opinion



Ask Not What SMART Can Do For You

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SMART Immediate Past President

I am one of five committed members who volunteered to serve on a Strategic Planning Task Force to keep SMART focused tightly on an agenda that will be relevant and give value to our members in the years ahead. Members of our lively little group are spending their own money for travel and accommodations as well as many hours on conference calls and meetings.

As I write on this inauguration celebration day, I am reminded of John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech when he uttered that famous line: "Ask not what your country should do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

This celebrated sentence really relates to SMART, our members and those companies in our industry who should be members but, inexplicably, are able to find reasons for not joining.

Let's consider simply one or two events that happened in just the past few weeks alone. The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (CPSIA) threatened to devastate thrift shops throughout the nation, and place our graders at risk. (See SMARTTalk, January 2009, Page 6, "CPSIA Makes a Big Splash".)

SMART's Executive Director Peter Mayberry went into action quickly, allying SMART with other affected organizations and preparing potential remedies to avoid the proposed disastrous consequences of the rule's enforcement. He is watching the situation very closely and reporting developments on *SMARTLine* to keep us informed. In the same week, a highly inaccurate article was published in the *Toronto Globe* newspaper which portrayed our graders, in concert with Goodwill, as being an impediment to the development of textile industries in lower income countries to where we export our graded clothing.

Again, Peter was in action, assuaging our collective anger by sending a pointed Letter to the Editor harshly criticizing the inaccuracy of "the scholarship" involved. Peter was fortified by facts and statistics accumulated by SMART over many years.

So often our Board is concerned with how to make SMART even better than it is and, as I mentioned, our Strategic Planning effort is another major commitment to excellence – which is as it should be.

Which leads me back to President Obama's historic inauguration day and President Kennedy's famous speech in 1960 – whether it is helping to get new committed members, or serving on a committee, or attending regional and yearly meetings and conventions, or simply going on *SMARTLine* to express support for our association. Perhaps we should all be asking ourselves this:

What can we do for our association?

As recent events have shown, the very health of our industry may depend on it!