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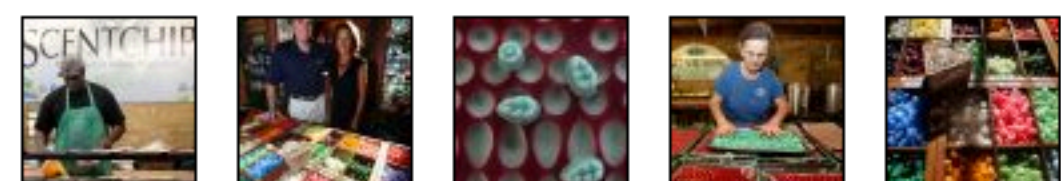
On scent of new markets
San Antonio-based Scentchips is going global in scope.

By William Pack
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 Updated 07:45 p.m., Thursday, September 15, 2011

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Derrick Carter pours scented melted wax into molds on the production line at Scentchips. The local company makes scented wax products that when melted give off a scent. Photo: SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS, BOB OWEN / rowen@express-news.net



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What's local and soon to be smelled all over Europe?
 It's Scentchips a home fragrance producer whose reach is expanding globally.

Last month, a European distributor for the company opened in the Netherlands. South Africa should get Scentchips home fragrance products in the next two months and then Malaysia.

Next year, England and China could become part of the Scentchips territory.

Husband and wife owners Barry and Tanya Clark, said retail operations have faced tough times in the U.S. since last year, but the new European operations and other international opportunities are giving the company a boost.

While the company did not divulge its revenue projections for the year, Barry Clark said financial data from the past three months show international sales made up about 45 percent of the company's wholesale totals.

He expects with the U.S. economy still struggling that Europe and other international markets will provide much of the company's revenue growth next year.

It also is expected to be a key reason the company adds manpower and manufacturing space next year.

Scentchips, which currently employs 12 people in San Antonio, plans on hiring five or six more people in the coming months and open a second manufacturing facility in San Antonio, Barry Clark said.

"Wherever business comes from, it's good," Tanya Clark added.

The Clarks said they haven't necessarily sought out foreign operations. Instead, foreign visitors who have found their products in San Antonio or in the company's 26 U.S. franchise operations typically have approached the Clarks about lining up distribution networks in different countries.

Scentchips began producing in 1979 its scented wax products that customers mix and match into their own customized fragrances.

Barry and Tanya Clark acquired the business from one of Tanya Clark's cousins in 2001 and began a franchise network of Scentchips outlets that reach across Texas and into 12 other states. Barry Clark said 15 more retail franchise could open next year

The company's prior owners also had retail outlets in Japan, said Barry Clark, but he and his wife expanded the international footprint to include Australia, Singapore, Costa Rica and now Europe.

Eric Verhagen, who represents the Amsterdam-based distributor for Europe, said in an e-mail that the company is setting up Scentchips outlets in the Netherlands, Germany, France and three other countries that could boost sales by 20 percent a year for the next three years.

Among the companies the distributor hopes to line up are Intermarche, which Verhagen characterized as the French Walmart, and the leading perfume retailer in Germany.

"It's going to be a very good market for us," Clark said.

Doug Smith, assistant director of the International Trade Center at the University of Texas at San Antonio, said he wasn't surprised Scentchips had found an international market because it focuses on producing a quality product at affordable prices.

It is likely to find challenges with its supply chain and in other areas internationally, he said. But Smith said Scentchips appears to have gained enough knowledge about the workings of export markets on its own to succeed in a profitable international marketplace.

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