

ImageFirst Clearwater cuts its water bill in half



HEALTHCARE LAUNDRY: ImageFIRST is the largest provider of linen and garment rental and laundry services to medical practices throughout continental United States and Puerto Rico. Its Clearwater laundry processes linen from area out-patient, ambulatory, diagnostic, endoscopy, imaging centres, hospices, and surgery centres

Pictures courtesy of Rossie Newman Photography, St Petersburg FL

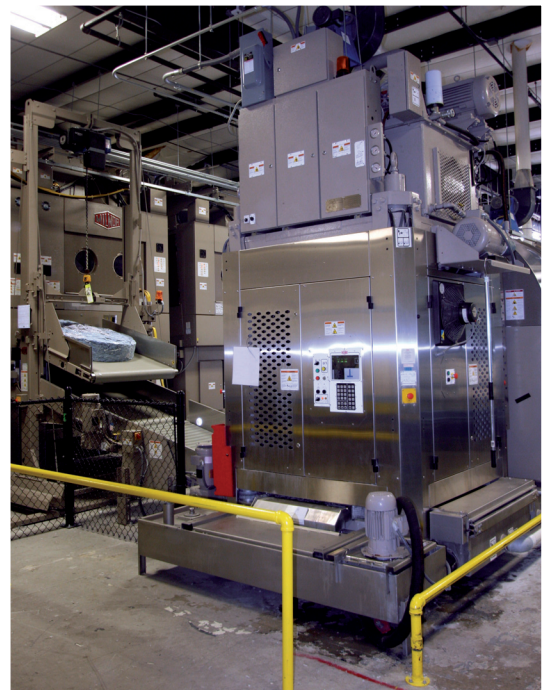
One recent success for Milnor's PulseFlow® Technology is the installation of a PulseFlow tunnel at the ImageFIRST healthcare laundry in Clearwater, Florida

Since 2009, Milnor's PulseFlow® Technology has been winning over customers who are impressed with the unprecedented water and utility savings. An estimated 500 million gallons of fresh water will be saved in 2013 alone thanks to more than 150 PBWs™ sold worldwide.

One of Milnor's latest successes is the installation of an eight-module PulseFlow tunnel at the ImageFIRST laundry in Clearwater, Florida. ImageFirst is the largest provider of linen and garment rental and laundry services to medical practices throughout the continental United States and Puerto Rico.

Despite PulseFlow's many successes, Tim King, partner and general manager at the Clearwater plant admits he was never a fan of tunnels, believing that they couldn't get whites white because there is no agitation.

His 43-year career had included posts at four commercial laundries but none of them had used tunnel washers. When he decided to retire in 2003, aged 50, he had never run a tunnel-washer laundry. Then just two weeks later his friend Rich McKeivitt at Steiner Atlantic called to tell him that ImageFirst Clearwater, a small healthcare laundry, was looking to expand. So King came back out of retirement and returned to the laundry business as partner and general manager.



PBW TUNNEL LINE: In addition to an eight-module 70kg PBW, the tunnel line includes the MP1656 70kg 56bar single-stage press (pictured) and six 64058 TG1 140kg pass-through dryers

ImageFIRST, Clearwater was founded by Tim Ryan and Sharon Pulnik in December 1999. It owns various types of healthcare linen, including 18 different styles of hospital gowns and also processes doctor coats, employee scrubs, bed linen, operating towels and bath towels.

The laundry has now grown from its original 185m² (2,000ft²) to encompass all ten units in the office park at a total of 3,716m² (40,000 ft²). The weekly sales have gone from zero to nearly \$160,000.

As business grew, so did the demand on the ageing equipment – two 204kg (450 lb) open-pocket washers.

As ImageFIRST Clearwater's partner and general manager,



SUCCESSFUL PROJECT: Rich McKeivitt (left) of Steiner-Atlantic Corporation with the ImageFirst partners, general manager Tim King, sales manager Sharon Pulnik, president/owner Tim Ryan, and CEO J C Ryan, in front of a Milnor 64058 TG1 dryer at Clearwater

Tim King understood that the production would benefit from a tunnel washer, but was unsure of the quality.

Rich McKeivitt introduced him to the PulseFlow Technology and they both flew to New Orleans to tour the Milnor factory with regional sales manager Sam Kielman and president Jim Pellerin. The tour was followed by a visit to one of the first PulseFlow laundries, which processes healthcare linen.

King said: "I saw at first hand how white the linen came out. PulseFlow is what changed my mind about tunnel washing. With a top-transfer tunnel, you get the lift-and-drop effect just as you do as in a washer-extractor."

ImageFIRST worked with Pellerin Milnor, Steiner-Atlantic, and Speed Check to design the new tunnel system, which included one eight-module 76039 70kg capacity PBW tunnel washer, one MP1656 70kg capacity 56bar single-stage press, and six 64058 TG1 140kg capacity pass-through dryers.

When it was time for the installation, Tim King relied on Rich McKeivitt again. King knew that McKeivitt could see the project through seamlessly even though this was his first major installation.

McKeivitt was responsible for every person involved in the installation – from plumbers and contractors, to every manufacturer represented – Milnor, Chicago and Speed Check.

"We never missed a heartbeat of production," said King. "To be able carry out an installation without having to shut me down kept me from outsourcing my linen, which would have been a huge expense."

"Steiner-Atlantic's Ralph Munson did an amazing job of ensuring the safety and professionalism, too. I can't say enough about how good our environment was during the installation. It went flawlessly."

Along with large open-pocket washer-extractors, the laundry features two 42026 V6J 64kg capacity washer-extractors, one 30022 V6J 27kg capacity washer-extractor, one M175 77kg capacity dryer, and one M410 186kg capacity open-pocket dryer.

This equipment mix processes hospital scrubs (with

snaps), mats, and rewash items, which accounts for approximately 17% of the daily production – 2,200kg per day.

Cutting water costs and saving labour

ImageFIRST Clearwater now runs as much linen as possible through the tunnel because of its inherent savings. Since the plant began using the tunnel in December 2012, the laundry's water and sewer bill has been effectively halved even with the continued use of the two large open-pocket washer-extractors.

The PulseFlow tunnel is consistently consuming 3.49litre/kg and has allowed the laundry to go from a 17.5hour day to a seven hour day, eliminating an entire shift.

The laundry also uses Milnor's MILDdata® software to monitor, record and analyse production data.

Tim King and the company's partners – president/owner Tim Ryan, CEO/partner J C Ryan, and sales manager/partner Sharon Pulnik – are delighted with their decision to purchase a Milnor PulseFlow tunnel.

King is also excited about introducing PulseFlow Technology to other ImageFIRST franchisees next month during the biannual profit enhancement meeting.

ImageFIRST requested that the next meeting be held in Clearwater so group members could better understand the revolutionary tunnel washing concept and potentially implement it in their own laundries.

Tim King and his ImageFirst partners hope to grow their business even more, so they may purchase another PBW tunnel. They already know where it will go – in the building across the street, as they've already leased all 10 units in their complex.

King said: "I am an extreme stickler for quality. I demand it from my vendors and employees, so I can give the best quality linen to our customers for their patient care. PulseFlow has enabled me to offer the very best to our customers, while allowing us to reduce our work day to only one shift and to cut our water bill in half." ■