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# 'Luck is the residue of design'

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BY SUSAN ERLER  
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**MERRILLVILLE** | Rising demand for environmentally friendly products is driving growth at locally based MonoSol LLC.

A planned new \$11 million facility in LaPorte and the company's recent purchase of equipment from United Kingdom-based Stanelco will make it possible to expand a line of biodegradable, recyclable and other eco-friendly products, President and CEO P. Scott Bening said.

"We're developing ideas and concepts constantly," Bening said. "With all the ideas for green and sustainable packaging, it's one of the main reasons we're breaking ground in LaPorte."

Plans are to start work next month on the 30,000-square-foot plant, to house MonoSol's new high-tech film

production line and facilities for piloting new products.

Development work is expected to get under way by June 2008, Bening said.

The company, founded in 1953 in Portage, got in on the ground floor of biodegradable products with its early water soluble films.

Now a player in the global marketplace, MonoSol's line ranges from single-unit dish soap in biodegradable, water-soluble packets to a spray that keeps dust from flying into the air, whether on a farm field or a helicopter landing pad.

Bening, a 17-year veteran of MonoSol, said he has seen demand for eco-friendly products rise over the past few years.

"It more than doubled in the last year," he said.

Bening got a glimpse into the future at a conference in Switzerland four years ago.

A speaker said sustainability is where everything is headed, Bening said.

MonoSol was poised for the future, Bening said. "But it doesn't happen overnight."

Single-unit doses of dish soap were first introduced in the early 1960s using MonoSol film, but they failed to catch on, Bening said. "The technology wasn't there."

Now gaining popularity in the United States, the soap packets have won over consumers in Europe, Bening said.

Putting soap in dissolvable packets, rather than the large plastic containers common in the marketplace, has a ripple effect on the environment.

"You save on freight, fuel and packaging," Bening said.

The next step is to find a way to dissolve the plastic bag that contains the single-dose soap packets, he said.

The company expects to get a boost in new-product development from its May purchase of equipment from Stanelco, an early entrant into the eco-friendly product market.

The purchase is expected to strengthen efforts by MonoSol to expand and diversify its environmentally sustainable product offerings, Bening said at the time.

"It's a cache of equipment we believe we're going to be needing," he said.

The company is marketing bio-degradable packaging which could replace bubble-wrap, and is working on a wafer-thin dissolvable film infused with just enough steak sauce to marinate a single steak.

MonoSol's founders might not have foreseen the full potential of its future, but it took more than luck to put the company in the right place at the right time, marketing vice president Woody Eaker said.

"Luck is the residue of design," Eaker said.

Highlights in MonoSol LLC history:  
 1953 - MonoSol is founded in Portage  
 2004 - MonoSol moves into the pharmaceuticals arena with the acquisition of Kosmos Pharma, a developer of film that dissolves on the tongue for oral drug delivery.  
 2005 - MonoSol LLC splits off from the pharmaceutical branch, MonoSol Rx, and moves its headquarters to Merrillville from Portage.  
 2006 - MonoSol LLC acquires Greensol S.A., a French maker of water soluble film products.

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