In Crowley:

**Company hopes to bag market share**

By Bill Brocato
Business Writer

CROWLEY — Cashing in on growing markets, both domestic and foreign, one Acadiana company is smiling about increased worldwide trade in the food products industry.

Cajun Bag & Supply Co., a subsidiary of Intertape Polymer Group Inc. (IPG), develops and produces specialized polyolefin plastic packaging products for industrial use. The company's products are sold to industrial distributors and large corporations in the forest and paper products, chemicals, agricultural, mining, geotextile and beverage industries.

Cajun Bag's local production primarily serves the chemical industry, with mining and agriculture following close behind, a company spokesman said.

Jules Marais, president, said the company is positioning itself to further its market penetration into the food products industry. He said changes in concepts and designs in the handling of large and transportable products is driving innovation in the woven bag industry.

The company's top seller is the "Le Grand Sack," which replaces steel and fiber drum containers, and many corrugated box forms. The sack is reusable, repairable, economical, weatherproof and sanitary, Marais said.

Bags are made from woven polypropylene and treated to retain 70 percent of its strength after 1,200 hours of sunlight exposure. Bags are made of coated fabrics to create a non-breatheable weave designed to control air and moisture movement through the fabric.

The U.S. and Canadian market today for poly-bags is about $300 million, Cajun Bag is positioning itself to take a hefty 30 percent share.

Cajun Bag's success, along with its attractiveness to IPG, is closely tied to a willingness to adapt to each client's needs, Marais says.

"The industry is customer driven," he said. "Dockside services and cargo handling equipment changes forced changes in the development of bulk bag construction, leading to product evolution."

Hoping to capture a larger market share, Marais said, Cajun Bag is moving into intermediate-size constructed bags.

"We're looking at the food products industry. This is where future growth is," he said. "The company has developed a national marketing strategy to capture shares of this new market."

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"We couldn't succeed without our employees," he said. "So we want to cultivate our employees, give them opportunities, and ensure management demonstrates its concern for their needs."

To that end, Marais initiated a day-care center for the company's employees. He said he recognized that fewer worries and fewer scheduling headaches can be avoided when workers can depend on stable daily care.

The company's modern day-care facility sits across the street from its main offices. Cajun Bag was the first Louisiana-based private company to offer its employees a day-care center.

The company charges employees about $5 a day for its services, Marais said.

Marais said the Cajun's future and the future of its workforce are deeply grounded in the company's relationships with USL. In general, he said the company relies on the university's programs to give its workers a more productive role.

"The Productivity Center and ACIM are vital resources that enhance our abilities and can help any company wanting to look closely at its manufacturing processes," said Marais.

He predicts U.S.-based bag manufacturers have to move away from older, labor-intensive production methods. And, he believes, the key to growth is advanced equipment that requires fewer workers, but higher-skilled operators to control the machines.

Marais said the company's gross revenues could grow to $30 million once new modifications, advanced equipment, and workers are added.