

## MEET NOTIONS SPONSOR: RNK Distributing

RNK Distributing is the corporate name behind the Floriani, Jenny Haskins, Quilters Select, Sew Much Cosplay, and the new exciting Embellish brands. The company was created for the sole purpose of providing outstanding products, education, and customer service to the embroidery, quilting, and sewing world of consumers.

RNK stands for Ricky and Kay Brooks, the husband-and-wife team who are the founders and still driving force behind the company.

Way before RNK was born, Ricky Brooks was an established name in the sewing world. He was the owner of a sewing machine sales and service store in Knoxville, Tenn. It grew to employ 30 people, 12 of them full-time educators who conducted classes daily. And it enjoyed a reputation as the single-location store with the largest volume of sewing machine sales and service in the world. Ricky and Kay owned the store for 12 years, then decided to sell it and retire. Retirement lasted only a few weeks when Ricky elected to become a consultant for a major sewing machine manufacturer. For the next five years, he traveled throughout the U.S., sharing his path to success with other sewing machine dealers.

In 2004, Ricky and Kay founded RNK Distributing. They were witnessing the rise of home embroidery machines and observed the lack of products suitable for this market. At the time, any specialized products that were available were designed for the commercial embroidery market, which focused mainly on hats, jackets, and uniforms. Home sewers wanted to do so much more! Ricky and Kay identified a whole string of problems those sewers encountered, including gummed-up needles and machines because of unsuitable stabilizers and metallic threads that left bits of residue in machines. They worked with a chemist to develop a formula for stabilizers that is still used today in RNK products and they introduced the Floriani Premium line of metallic threads. These threads have a polyester core, wrapped in metal and coated with Mylar. The thread performs like a regular sewing thread, with no need for a large-eye needle.

Kay, long an avid sewer, began developing tools that would make sewing easier. Ricky is quick to point out that Kay is the thinker, the creative one, while he is the talker. Together they are constantly on the alert for problems that need a solution. For example, early on they noticed that a large percentage of people who had embroidery software never used it. Kay set her mind to creating a formula that matches design stitch count to the proper stabilizer. As a result, Floriani software includes a recommendation for the type and amount of stabilizer to use, based on the stitch density of the design and the desired fabric.

To teach the sewing world how to use all their innovative products, RNK hired the best educators they could find. RNK is now recognized as the independent retailer's source for quality products for embroidery, sewing, quilting, crafting, and appliqué. After taking the company global in 2006, Ricky began looking for a buyer who would help RNK expand. In 2007, the New York-based Wallach Family purchased RNK and retained Ricky and Kay as general managers. Under this partnership, the company has tripled in size. There is a team of national educators for the Floriani, Jenny Haskins, and Embellish brands, offering workshops in conjunction with retailers around the country. Regularly scheduled webinars allow sewers to hone their skills in the comfort of their homes. Product innovation is constant and customer support is an important part of the corporate culture.



Today, the company produces and distributes products under six brands: RNK Micro Thread and specialty notions; Floriani machine embroidery stabilizers, thread, and software; Jenny Haskins quilting and embroidery supplies; Quilter's Select thread, software, batting, and other products for quilting; Embellish, inspired by Hope Yoder, machine embroidery stabilizers, thread, digital cutting designs, supplies, and software; and their latest, a partnership with Sew Much Cosplay to create a new line of products for the special requirements of cosplayers. (See *Industry Insider*, Summer 2017 *Notions*, page 30.)