

BUSINESS

The Star-Ledger

Exclusively On NJ.com

A convenient companion for a pack of smokes - Westfield resident targets smokers with fresh spin on mints

DAN WEISSMAN
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

9 May 2004

[The Star-Ledger](#)

The breath mint and the cigarette smoker have always been linked. A Westfield resident says he came up with a way to tighten the connection. Anthony Shurman is the man behind **Momints**, liquid-filled capsules that provide quick minty deployment and come in packaging that fits neatly in the cellophane wrapper of many cigarette packs.

"We really hung our hat on the uniqueness of the product," Shurman said. "Breath mints are historically pretty limited in true product innovation. This is the next evolution of the breath mint." Shurman said his company, Yosha Enterprises, has been able to strike deals to place its product on the shelves of major retailers, including CVS Pharmacies, Barnes & Noble College Bookstores and 7-Eleven stores.

"We're always looking for innovation," said Derek Schmitt, Dallas-based 7-Eleven's confectionery category manager. 7-Eleven put **Momints** on the shelves of its 5,300 United States and 26,000 foreign stores. Schmitt said he gave Shurman an initial order for 15,000 boxes, at a time when Shurman had only 4,000 in inventory. Schmitt said **Momints** was an immediate hit.

"In the whole mint category, it's the No. 1 seller for 7-Eleven," Schmitt said. "Tony has been right in sync with 7-Eleven and how we like to bring products to market." Shurman said before launching his venture, he was working for Warner-Lambert when it was bought out by Pfizer.

"I have a background in the breath mint and chewing gum market," Shurman said. "I just had kids, and I figured if was ever a time to take a risk, that was the time to do it." Shurman said he drew up a business plan and went out to raise funding for his idea, which was then to package breath mints and cigarettes together. "If we could get cigarette smokers to carry breath mints in the cellophane of their cigarettes, they could dispense the mints directly without having to remove them from the package."

The idea was to make it so convenient cigarette smokers would reach for a breath- sweetening mint every two cigarettes rather than eight or nine, he said. "Even though there's been a decline in cigarette smoking, almost a billion cigarettes are sold in the United States alone. So if we get 1 percent of the cigarettes, its a big market."

He said he found what he was looking for, a liquid-filled mint in a seamless capsule that dissolved more quickly than the traditional pharmaceutical gel capsule, which is made up of two parts. A seamless capsule, he said, can be made much thinner.

And he named it **Momints**, a catch phrase that has caught on in the competitive marketplace and has earned him the nickname, "Moment Man." He said the company name, Yosha, is based on a Japanese word that means "an exclamation of great satisfaction as a result of one's achievement - often accompanied by the pump of a fist."

Shurman said Yosha has five employees and contracts the manufacturing of the product out to a European company. When the company was launched, he and three others literally walked through

the streets of New York City with luggage carts filled with the mint product, "going to mom-and-pop stores and trying to sell a box of mints," he said.

Sales to bigger players, such as 7-Eleven, has brightened the outlook. "We're projecting \$15 million (in sales) this year," he said. In the aftermath of the 7-Eleven launch, Shurman said he is marketing **Momints** to "a number of large accounts, and now it can be found on the shelves of other chains and large stores. We're now revisiting New York and going back with a different approach, a broker network."

Shurman said **Momints** started with peppermint flavor and have since expanded to cinnamon and winterburst. The company's Web site asks visitors to vote on suggestion for additional flavors, including blueberry, red wine and espresso. "It's the ultimate perfume for the breath," he said.

Dan Weissman writes about small business. He can be reached at dweissman@starledger.com.

Biography | ANTHONY SHURMAN Personal: 33, founder and president of Yosha Enterprises, Westfield (www.momints.net) Lives: Westfield, with his wife, Jennifer, and their son Education: Undergraduate degree, Macalester College, St. Paul, Minn.; master's in management, Northwestern University, Chicago In his spare time: "I am someone who doesn't like to sit around, but I don't have a lot of spare time. I do a lot of diaper changing, that kind of stuff, and play a lot of sports. I read, I guess."