

# Designing from ground up

**By Gwen Shrift Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, November 21, 2011 3:00 am**

Plenty of up-and-coming design talent resides in the Philadelphia region, and the Langhorne Carpet Co. wants to tap it.

The small weaving mill in Penndel recently established the Morrow Design Competition for college students, named for the family that started the company in 1930 and still owns it. The company specializes in high-end and custom carpeting.

The goal was to promote Langhorne Carpet, using the brainpower of budding textile designers to “hopefully, create a great product, because we are going to market it,” said company president Bill Morrow. Usually, the company’s products are designed in-house.

The contest offers cash awards for winning designs for two patterns, each to be manufactured in three colorways and sold by Langhorne Carpet under its newly established Eco line.

“We’re going to work with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Philadelphia Zoo, with sort of a flora and fauna kind of theme,” said Morrow, adding that some of the proceeds of the line will be donated to conservation groups.

All the major design schools in the region have signed on, including Philadelphia University, some of whose students recently visited the carpet mill.

“It’s a wonderful addition to the curriculum,” said Marcia Weiss, the university’s coordinator of textile design. “It gives our students a great opportunity to test their skills, and to make it real-world (through) actual manufacturing processes.”

Though it’s a student contest, it’s not for absolute beginners. At Philadelphia University, about 15 juniors, seniors and graduate students are expected to compete, according to Weiss.

“We know that some of the great designers and decorators of the world come from our region. The Morrow family could not be more energized,” said Stephan Rosenfeld, a marketing communications consultant to the carpet company.

He said a national design publication is interested in following the students’ progress, à la “Project Runway.” During the design phase, to take place in early 2012, students likely will be sketching at the Philadelphia International Flower Show and at the zoo, according to Rosenfeld.

The company hopes to make the competition ongoing, but for now, “We’ll take it the first year, one stitch at a time,” he said.

Morrow said the competition likely will be judged in May by New York designer Alex Papachristidis and others to be named.

“Once the judging takes place, it would take about three to four months to do the dyeing, cut cards (that produce the design on the looms) and weave the carpet,” he said.

Besides Philadelphia University, textile design departments have agreed to participate from the Art Institute of Philadelphia, Moore College of Art and Design and the University of the Arts, plus Temple, Penn State, Drexel, Arcadia, Delaware and Rider universities.