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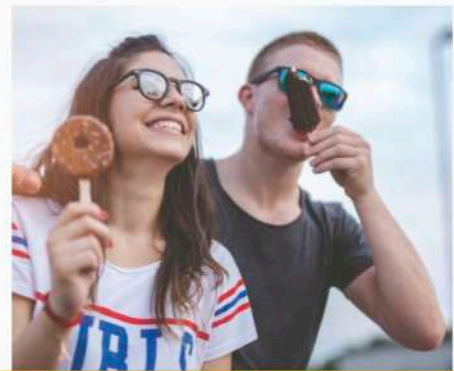
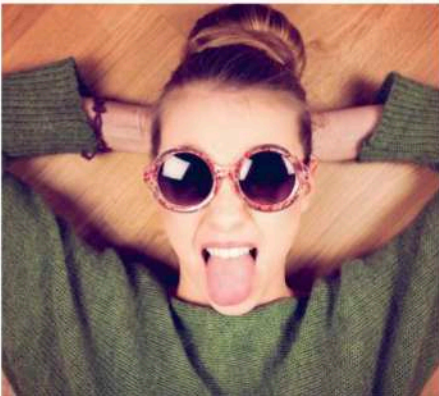
Expo East Preview—An inside look at the education, exhibits and events planned for this month's show. —18

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Emilio H. Balius, OD

SECO INTERNATIONAL NAMES EMILIO H. BALIUS, OD, AS PRESIDENT

ATLANTA—SECO International announced that Emilio H. Balius, OD, will become the next SECO International president. He was formally introduced to the industry on March 2 during the House of Delegates meeting here at SECO 2018.

Balius becomes the first Hispanic president to lead the organization, according to the SECO announcement. Born in Cuba, his family migrated to Madrid, Spain, before moving to Miami. Balius began his optometry journey at Florida State University, before entering optometry school at the University of Houston College of Optometry and completing his residency at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. Balius was introduced at a delegates' session on March 2.

SECO, a leading international meeting providing optometrists and ophthalmic professionals outstanding educational opportunities since 1924, began on Feb. 28 at the Georgia World Congress Center.

Balius has enjoyed managing his own practice in Florida for the past 25 years. As a result, he is well versed in the needs and concerns of optometrists in today's business climate.

"SECO International has a storied history of engaging the best and the brightest in the industry to help lead and drive the industry forward," Dr. Lynn Hammonds, OD, president of SECO International LLC. "We are delighted to recognize Dr. Balius as the next president and look forward to drawing from his years of experience, esteemed background and enthusiasm to build upon SECO's success in engaging and supporting the industry."



Michael J. Bender

EYEMART EXPRESS NAMES NEW CEO AND PRESIDENT

DALLAS—Eyemart Express has named Michael J. Bender as chief executive officer and president, effective January 1, 2018. He most recently served as chief operating officer of Walmart's Global eCommerce business.

Former Eyemart Express CEO Doug Barnes, Jr. is now serving the company as chairman. Under his leadership, Barnes brought in a new executive team. He also saw the organization through an ownership change from a private family to private equity company FFL Partners.

"We are honored to have Michael join our executive team," said Barnes. "We have spent the last two years rounding out our leadership team, and Michael's long record of retail experience and leadership style made him an ideal fit for Eyemart Express. "We are confident that he will continue the momentum we established in providing a convenient and quality eyecare solution for our customers nationwide."

Bender has a comprehensive manufacturing, retail and health care background with over 30 years of experience developing high caliber work teams, optimizing supply chain operations and leading strategic growth in stores and online. He developed his career with positions at Walmart, Cardinal Health, Victoria's Secret Stores and PepsiCo.

KERING EYEWEAR APPOINTS JENNIFER BROWN TO SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF U.S. OPTICAL SALES

PADUA, Italy—Kering Eyewear has announced the promotion of Jennifer Brown to the position of senior vice president of sales for the optical channel, effective immediately. As *VM* reported last September, Brown was most recently the vice president of



Doug Barnes, Jr.



Jennifer Brown

sales for the U.S. East Coast.

In this role, she will report to Glenn Rusk, head of Kering Eyewear North America and will be based in New York. Brown will be in charge of developing the independent optical channel and growing the Kering Eyewear presence in the U.S.

"We are very pleased that Jennifer has accepted this additional responsibility and are confident that she will take the business to the next level and build on our current success," Rusk said.



Michael DeBono

WESTGROUPE NAMES MICHAEL DEBONO CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

MONTREAL—WestGroupe has announced the promotion of Michael DeBono to the position of chief operating officer. DeBono has a background in optical that spans more than 25 years. He started his career with WestGroupe in 2006 as Canadian national sales manager where he oversaw the expansion of the Canadian sales force. In 2010, he was promoted to vice president of North American sales, and in 2015 was promoted to executive vice president of global sales. In this new role, DeBono will continue to oversee the sales teams along with the corporate head office.

"Mike is an experienced leader who takes the time to listen to his team, finds solutions and leads by example," said Michael Suliteanu, WestGroupe president. ■