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(54) **SHOE**

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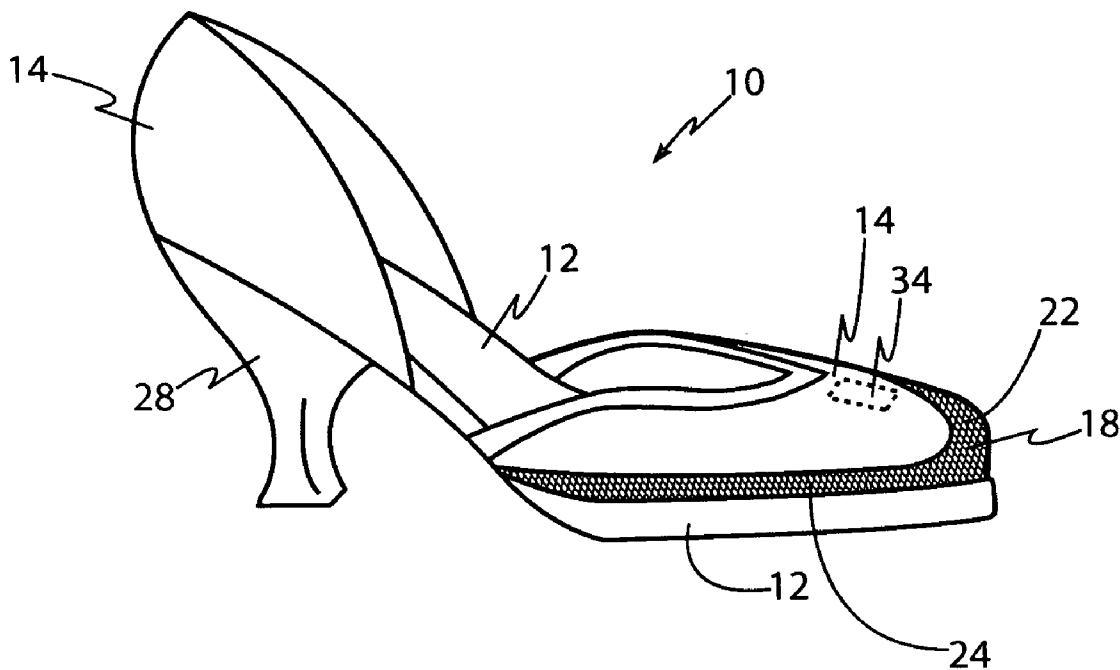
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A shoe is provided. Such shoe includes a sole member having a first predetermined size and a first predetermined shape. At least one upper member is operably connected to such sole member for releasably securing such shoe to a wearer's foot. At least one of a flexible portion, a stretchable portion, and a combination thereof forms at least one portion of such at least one upper member. Such at least one of such flexible portion, such stretchable portion, and such combination thereof is manufactured from a first predetermined material.

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/064,037, filed on Feb. 12, 2008.



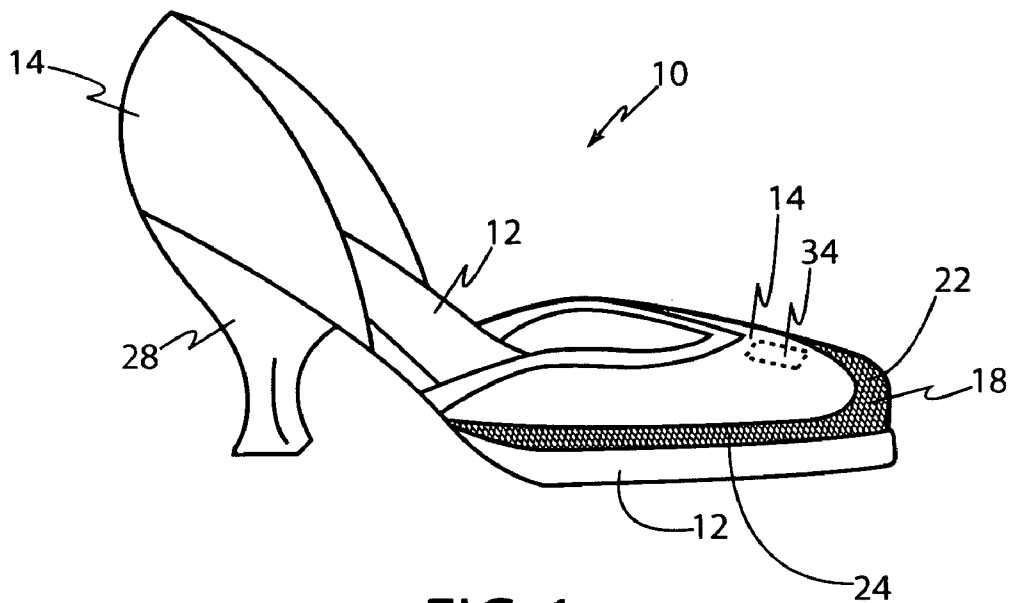


FIG. 1

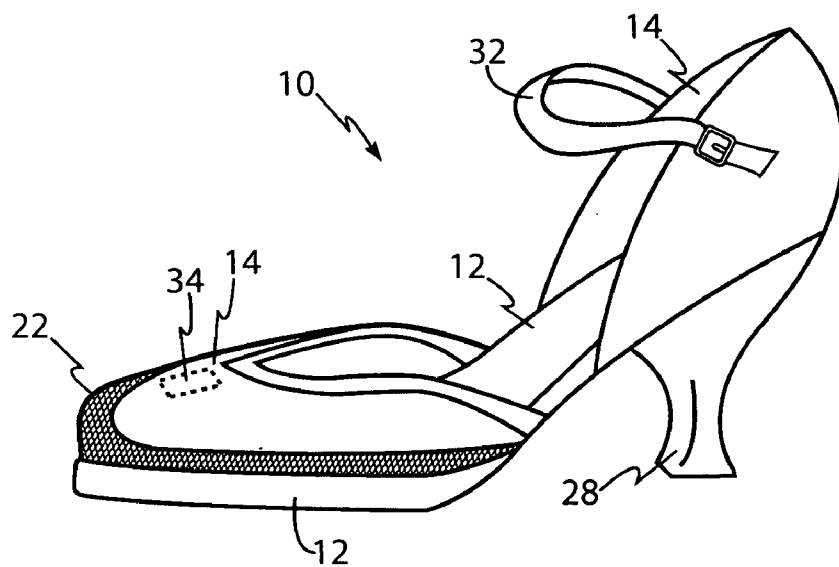


FIG. 2

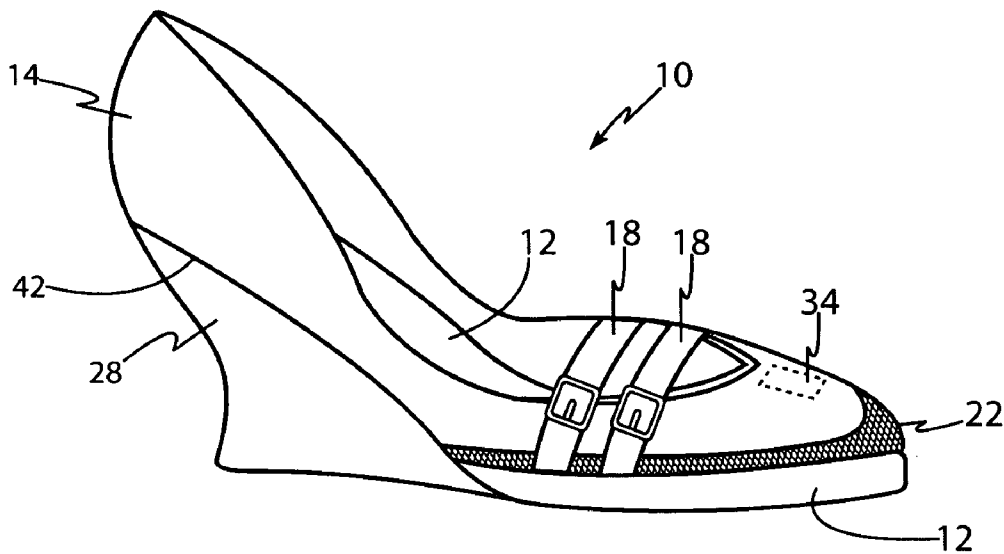


FIG. 3

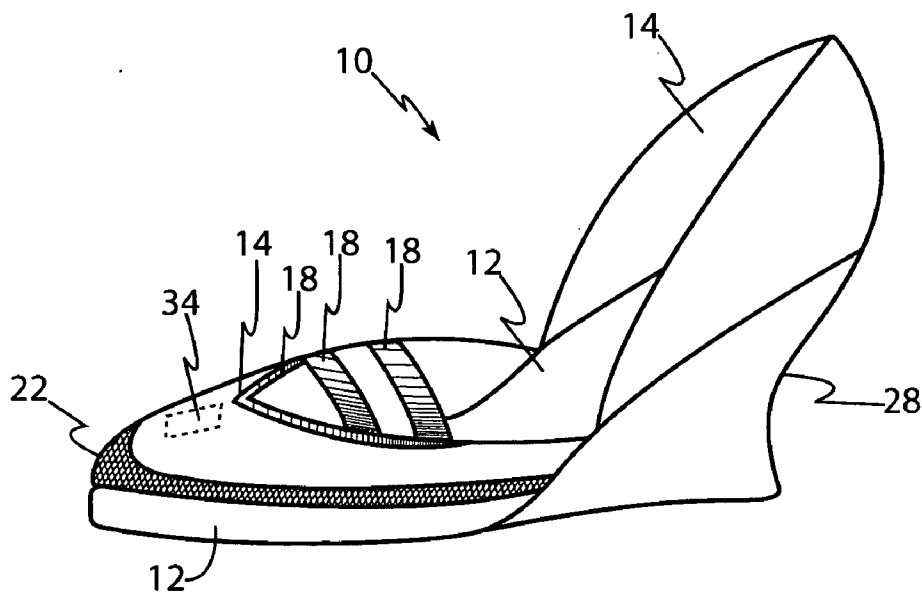


FIG. 4

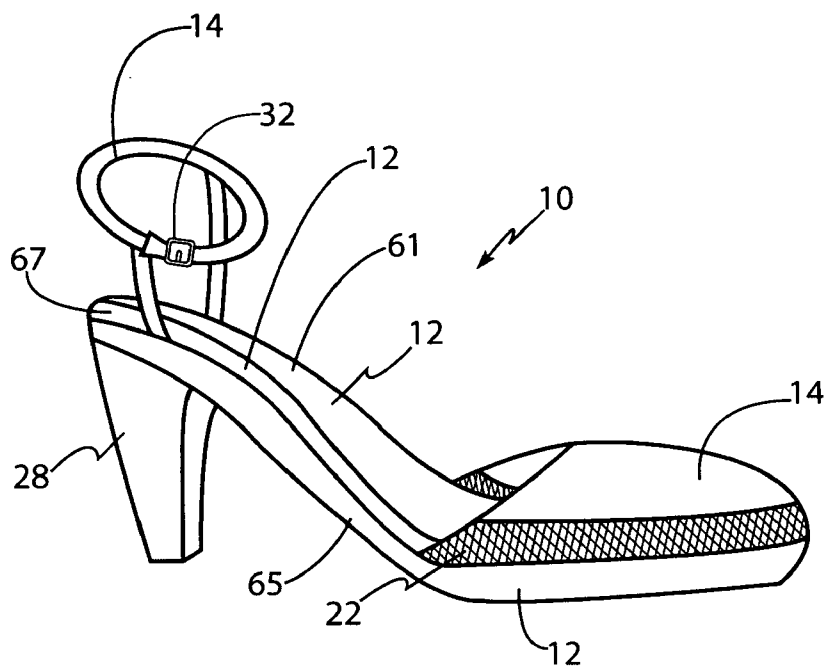


FIG. 5

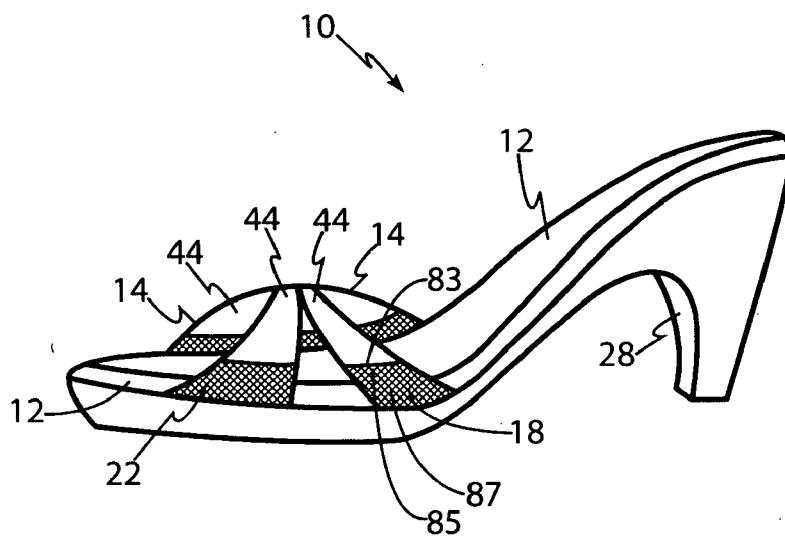


FIG. 6

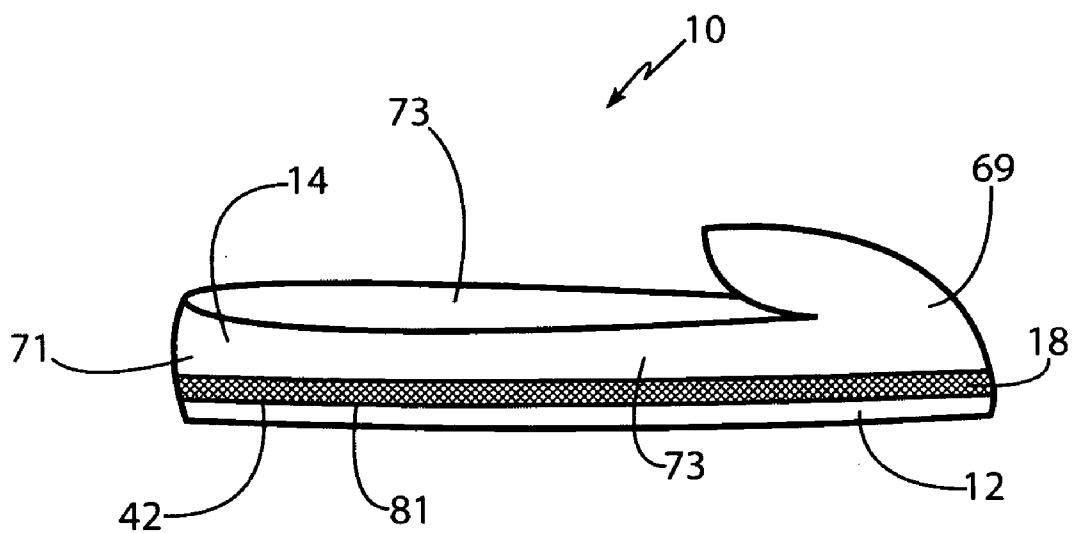


FIG. 7

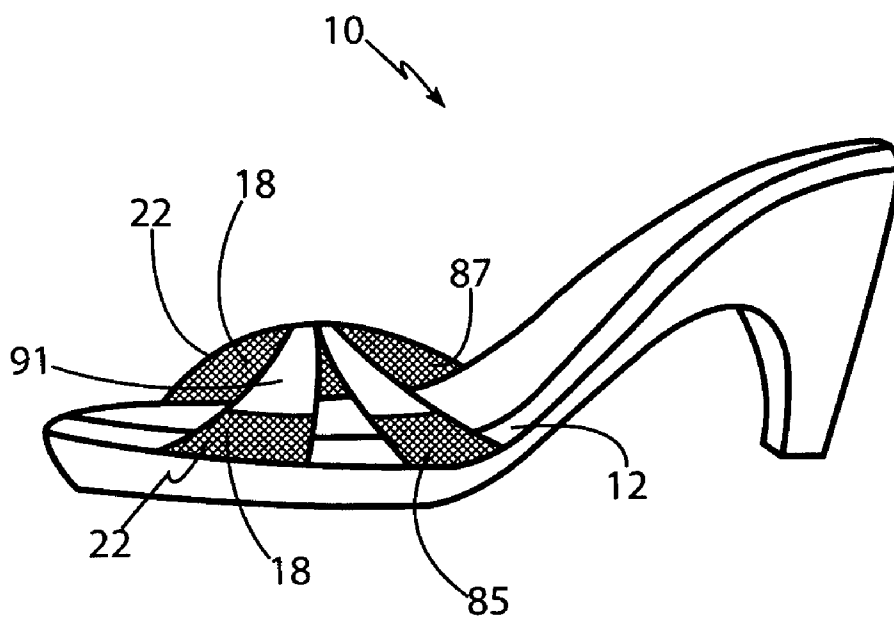


FIG. 8

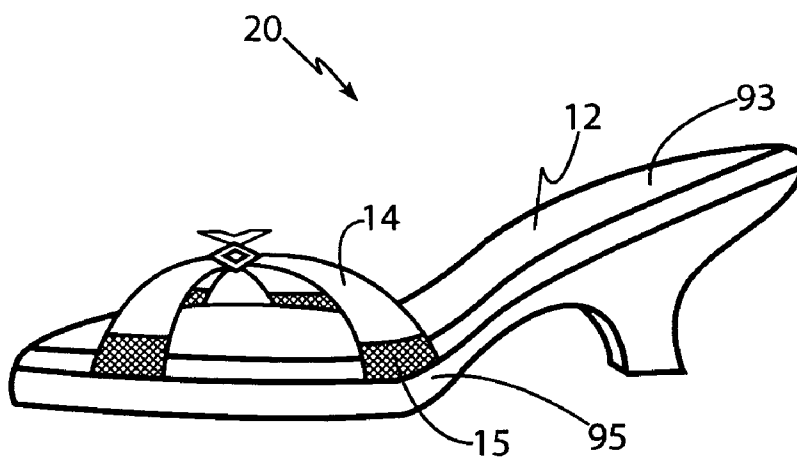


FIG. 9

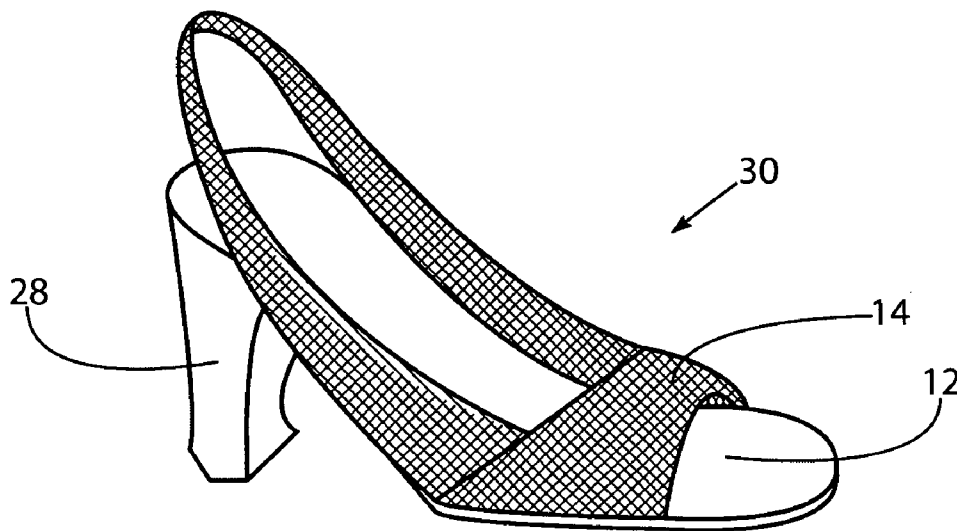


FIG. 10

SHOE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This patent application is related to and claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/064,037 filed Feb. 12, 2008.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates, in general, to shoes and, more particularly, this invention relates to shoes designed to be worn by persons suffering from bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like as well as footwear which is comfortable for plus-sized individuals.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Prior to the conception and development of the present invention, shoes, as are generally well known in the prior art, have been worn to protect a person's feet. Eventually shoe wearer's desired aesthetically pleasing shoes as well as comfortable protective footwear. Unfortunately, people who suffer from bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like on their feet, find it painful, uncomfortable, and sometimes even impossible to wear shoes since sections of such shoes may press upon and impinge against the afflicted areas. In an attempt to avoid the discomfort and pain, loose-fitting comfortable footwear such as casual footwear, bedroom slippers and the like may be worn, unfortunately these types of footwear may not be appropriate for events which a wearer may desire or be obligated to attend.

[0004] In some cases, people suffering from bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like, may attempt to alleviate the difficulty and pain of wearing footwear by purchasing and wearing footwear that is one or several sizes too large for his or her feet. This alternative can exacerbate the swelling and pain associated with the bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like, since such wearer's foot may slide and move within the ill-fitting shoe as it is being worn, thereby causing the afflicted or injured area to bump against the shoe. Furthermore, additional foot problems, such as blisters and heavy calluses and the like, may result from wearing such oversized footwear. Additionally, plus-sized individuals often find it difficult to find comfortable shoes since such individuals may have large feet which often require special sizing and since their feet must support a greater amount of weight.

[0005] Specifically of interest to the present invention are the following: Grim et al, U.S. Pat. No. 5,329,705 discloses footgear with an inner sole having a grid of removable resilient elements to permit removal of selected elements to provide relief to ulcerated or otherwise injured areas of the foot.

[0006] Grim, et al, U.S. Pat. No. 5,761,834 discloses footgear with an inner sole having a grid of removable resilient elements to permit removal of selected elements to provide relief to ulcerated or otherwise injured areas of the foot.

[0007] Brooks, U.S. Pat. No. 6,671,981 discloses footwear having recesses for accommodating protrusions of the foot.

[0008] Long, et al, U.S. Pat. No. 6,792,699 discloses an orthopedic shoe having an outsole and a special insole including an array of independently vertically movable sections or elements which are heat moldable to retain the contour of the users foot and which serve to reduce or avoid peak pressures and evenly distribute pressure during walking. The resilient

sections are meant to permit swaying action and to reduce shear forces on the user's feet.

[0009] Crunkleton, U.S. Pat. No. 6,881,196, discloses a system, method and device for the symptomatic relief of soft corns by injecting a medical grade molding substance between the toes between which a corn is located, forming a molded-in-place, custom-shaped high definition mold, unique to the individual's physical conformation and which reduces friction and eliminates pressure points on the corn.

[0010] The aforementioned designs are not suitable for the purposes of the present invention and do not solve the problems solved by the present invention. Such designs are, in fact, overly complex and cumbersome and do not provide the benefits attendant with the present invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] The present invention provides a shoe. Such shoe includes a sole member having a first predetermined size and a first predetermined shape. At least one upper member is operably connected to such sole member for releasably securing such shoe to a wearer's foot. At least one of a flexible portion, a stretchable portion, and a combination thereof forms at least one portion of such at least one upper member. Such at least one of such flexible portion, such stretchable portion, and such combination thereof is manufactured from a first predetermined material.

[0012] According to another embodiment a shoe is provided. Such shoe includes a sole member having at least an insole portion and an outsole portion. At least one flexible stretchable member is operably connected to a predetermined portion of such sole member, such at least one flexible stretchable member being manufactured from a second predetermined material. At least one upper member is operably connected to at least one of such sole member, such at least one flexible stretchable member, and a combination thereof for releasably securing such shoe to a wearer's foot, such at least one upper member being manufactured from a third predetermined material.

[0013] According to yet another embodiment a shoe is provided which includes a sole member having a first predetermined shape and a first predetermined size. At least one upper member is operably connected to such sole member. Such at least one upper member is manufactured from flexible stretchable material for enabling such at least one upper member to conform to a wearer's foot and for releasably securing such shoe to such wearer's foot.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

[0014] It is, therefore, one of the primary objects of the present invention to provide a low cost, easy to manufacture, and easy to market shoe with a stretchable portion for relief of bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like.

[0015] Another object of the present invention is to provide an easy to use and versatile shoe with a stretchable portion for relief of bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like.

[0016] Still another object of the present invention is to provide a shoe having a stretchable portion for relief of bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like such shoe including a heel and a sole, at least one of a toe cover, an arch cover, and a combination thereof, and wherein such toe

cover and/or arch cover includes at least one solid portion and at least one of a layer of mesh, a panel of mesh and a combination thereof.

[0017] Yet another object of the present invention is to provide a shoe which may be worn by a person suffering from bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like, such that such person can wear such shoe without experiencing the discomfort and pain that would otherwise occur should such person wear a conventional shoe.

[0018] An additional object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved shoe for wearing by plus-sized individuals such that such wearer may wear such shoe without experiencing discomfort and pain associated with conventional shoes.

[0019] Still another object of the present invention is to provide comfortable shoes for persons who are plus sized, suffer from bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like, and wherein such shoes are manufactured in a variety of styles such that such shoes are appropriate for various events including but not limited to formal events, professional events, casual events, sites, and venues.

[0020] In addition to the various objects and advantages of the present invention described with some degree of specificity above it should be obvious that additional objects and advantages of the present invention will become more readily apparent to those persons who are skilled in the relevant art from the following more detailed description of the invention, particularly, when such description is taken in conjunction with the attached drawing figures and with the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0021] FIG. 1 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0022] FIG. 2 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0023] FIG. 3 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0024] FIG. 4 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0025] FIG. 5 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0026] FIG. 6 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0027] FIG. 7 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0028] FIG. 8 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0029] FIG. 9 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

[0030] FIG. 10 is a partial perspective view of the invention according to one embodiment of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A PRESENTLY PREFERRED AND VARIOUS ALTERNATIVE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0031] Prior to proceeding to the more detailed description of the present invention it should be noted that, for the sake of clarity and understanding, identical components which have identical functions have been identified with identical reference numerals throughout the several views illustrated in the drawing figures.

[0032] Reference is now made, more particularly, to FIGS. 1-10.

[0033] A shoe, generally designated 10, is provided. Such shoe 10 includes a sole member 12 having a first predetermined size and a first predetermined shape. It is presently preferred that such sole member 12 further includes at least one of an insole 61, an outsole 65, a mid-sole 67, and a combination thereof, as illustrated in FIG. 5.

[0034] At least one upper member 14 is operably connected to such sole member 12 for releasably securing such shoe 10 to a wearer's foot (not shown). It is presently preferred that such upper member 14 further includes at least one of a toe covering portion 69, a heel covering portion 71, at least one side portion 73, and a combination thereof.

[0035] At least one of a flexible portion 18, a stretchable portion 22, and a combination thereof forms at least one portion of such at least one upper member 14. Such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof is manufactured from a first predetermined material. It is presently preferred that such first predetermined material is an elastomer. It is further presently preferred that such first predetermined material is at least one of mesh, fabric, lycra, nylon, and a combination thereof.

[0036] It is meant that such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof will flex and stretch to accommodate the shape of the foot and toes of a wearer including any bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, and sensitive areas on such wearer's foot, and will also accommodate movement of such foot and any resulting pressure exerted by the foot, toes, bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like so as to provided a comfortable fit for the wearer.

[0037] It is presently preferred that such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof is connected at a first predetermined edge 24 thereof to at least one of such insole 61, such outsole 65, such mid-sole 67, and a combination thereof. It is meant that such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof may be secured between at least two of such insole 61, such outsole 65, such mid-sole 67, and a combination thereof, however the shoe 10 is not meant to be limited as such. It is meant that such at least one of such such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof may be secured to any portion of such shoe as to reasonably facilitate its purpose.

[0038] It is presently preferred that such shoe 10 further includes a securing means 32 operably connected to at least one of such sole member 12, such upper member 14, and a combination thereof for releasably securing such shoe 10 to a wearer's foot. It is presently preferred that such securing means 32 includes at least one of a shoelace, a zipper, a hook and loop type securing means, a strap, a buckle, and a combination thereof. However, such securing means 32 is not meant to be limited as such and any type of securing means 32 may be implemented which reasonably facilitates its purpose.

[0039] It is presently preferred that such shoe 10 further includes a heel member 28 operably connected to a predetermined bottom portion of such sole member 12 closely adjacent a predetermined end of such sole member 12, such heel member 28 being manufactured from a second predetermined material and having a second predetermined size and a second predetermined shape. Such sole member 12 or any portion thereof and such heel member 28 may be formed of substantially identical materials if desired. Furthermore, such sole

member 12 or any portion thereof (such as an outsole) and such heel member 28 may also be formed integrally in whole or in part if desired.

[0040] It is presently preferred that such shoe 10 further includes padding 34 (shown in dotted lines) operably disposed at least one of on and within at least one of a first predetermined portion of such sole member 12, a first predetermined portion of such upper member 14, and a combination thereof, such padding 34 having a third predetermined size and a third predetermined shape and a first predetermined thickness.

[0041] According to one embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIGS. 1, 2, 5, and 6, such upper member 14 is operably connected to such sole member 12 at a plurality of locations thereon.

[0042] According to another embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIGS. 3 and 7, a first predetermined edge 42 of such upper member 14 is connected to such sole member 12 closely adjacent a first predetermined edge 81 of such sole member 12.

[0043] According to still another embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIG. 6, such upper member 14 includes at least one strap type member 44 for crossing over a predetermined top portion of a wearer's foot and wherein such at least one strap type member 44 is connected at a first side edge 83 thereof to a first side edge 85 of such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof and further wherein such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof includes a second side edge 87 operably connected to such sole member 12 closely adjacent an edge portion thereof.

[0044] According to an additional embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 6, such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof is attached at a first side edge 85 thereof to a cooperating portion of such upper member 14 and wherein such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof is attached at a second side edge 87 thereof to a cooperating portion of such sole member 12 closely adjacent an edge thereof.

[0045] According to still another embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 8, such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof is attached at a first side edge 85 thereof to such sole member 12 at a first predetermined location thereon and wherein such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof is attached at a second side edge 87 thereof to such sole member 12 at a second predetermined location thereon, and wherein a semi-rigid portion 91 of such upper member 14 is disposed at least one of on and within such at least one of such flexible portion 18, such stretchable portion 22, and such combination thereof.

[0046] According to another embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 9, a shoe, generally designated 20, is provided. Such shoe 20 includes a sole member 12 having at least an insole portion 93 and an outsole portion 95. At least one flexible stretchable member 15 is operably connected to a predetermined portion of such sole member 12, such at least one flexible stretchable member 15 being manufactured from a second predetermined material. At least one upper member 14 is operably connected to at least one of such sole member 12, such at least one flexible stretchable member 15, and a combination thereof for releasably securing such shoe 20 to a

wearer's foot (not shown), such at least one upper member 14 being manufactured from a third predetermined material.

[0047] According to still another embodiment, as illustrated in FIG. 10 a shoe, generally designated 30, is provided. Such shoe 30 includes a sole member 12 having a first predetermined shape and a first predetermined size. At least one upper member 14 is operably connected to such sole member 12. Such upper member 14 is manufactured from a flexible stretchable material for enabling such at least one upper member 14 to conform to a wearer's foot (not shown) and for releasably securing such shoe 30 to such wearer's foot.

[0048] It is meant that the various embodiments of such shoe be used to reduce or mitigate the pain of wearing conventional footwear for user's suffering from bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like as such shoe in all its embodiments provides footwear having at least one of a stretchable and flexible portion for coming in contact with the area of a user's foot afflicted with bunions, corns, blisters, injuries, sensitive areas, and the like. Furthermore, such shoe is meant to be made in a variety of styles, shapes, sizes, and configurations such that a user may wear such shoe to various events including but not limited to formal events, professional events, casual events, sites, and venues. Additionally, such shoe may also provide comfortable aesthetically pleasing footwear for plus sized individuals. It is further meant that such shoe, as described herein, may further incorporate any shoe components which may further complement such shoe, add to its functionality, add to its comfort, improve such shoe aesthetically, and which may be desired by a wearer of such shoe.

[0049] While a presently preferred and various alternative embodiments of the present invention have been described in sufficient detail above to enable a person skilled in the relevant art to make and use the same it should be obvious that various other adaptations and modifications can be envisioned by those persons skilled in such art without departing from either the spirit of the invention or the scope of the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A shoe comprising;
 - a. a sole member having a first predetermined size and a first predetermined shape;
 - b. at least one upper member operably connected to said sole member for releasably securing said shoe to a wearer's foot; and
 - c. at least one of a flexible portion, a stretchable portion, and a combination thereof forming at least one portion of said at least one upper member, said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof being manufactured from a first predetermined material.
2. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said upper member is operably connected to said sole member at a plurality of locations thereon.
3. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein a first predetermined edge of said upper member is connected to said sole member closely adjacent a first predetermined edge of said sole member.
4. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said sole member further includes at least one of an insole, an outsole, a midsole, and a combination thereof.
5. A shoe according to claim 4 wherein said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof is connected at a first predetermined edge

thereof to at least one of said insole, said outsole, said midsole, and a combination thereof.

6. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said upper member further includes at least one of a toe covering portion, a heel covering portion, at least one side portion, and a combination thereof.

7. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said shoe further includes a securing means operably connected to at least one of said sole member, said upper member, and a combination thereof for releasably securing said shoe to a wearer's foot.

8. A shoe according to claim 7 wherein said securing means includes at least one of a shoelace, a zipper, a hook and loop type securing means, a strap, a buckle, and a combination thereof.

9. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said shoe further includes a heel member operably connected to a predetermined bottom portion of said sole member closely adjacent a predetermined end of said sole member, said heel member being manufactured from a second predetermined material and having a second predetermined size and a second predetermined shape.

10. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said shoe further includes padding operably disposed at least one of on and within at least one of a first predetermined portion of said sole member, a first predetermined portion of said upper member, and a combination thereof, such padding having a third predetermined size and a third predetermined shape and a first predetermined thickness.

11. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said first predetermined material is an elastomer.

12. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said first predetermined material is at least one of mesh, fabric, lycra, nylon, and a combination thereof.

13. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof is attached at a first side edge thereof to a cooperating portion of said upper member and wherein said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof is attached at a second side edge thereof to a cooperating portion of said sole member closely adjacent an edge thereof.

14. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said upper member includes at least one strap type member for crossing over

a predetermined top portion of a wearer's foot and wherein said at least one strap type member is connected at a first side edge thereof to a first side edge of said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof and wherein said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof includes a second side edge operably connected to said sole member closely adjacent an edge portion thereof.

15. A shoe according to claim 1 wherein said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof is attached at a first side edge thereof to said sole member at a first predetermined location thereon and wherein said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof is attached at a second side edge thereof to said sole member at a second predetermined location thereon, and wherein a semi-rigid portion of said upper member is disposed at least one of on and within said at least one of said flexible portion, said stretchable portion, and said combination thereof.

16. A shoe comprising;

- a. a sole member including at least an insole portion and an outsole portion;
- b. at least one flexible stretchable member operably connected to a predetermined portion of said sole member, said at least one flexible stretchable member being manufactured from a second predetermined material; and
- c. at least one upper member operably connected to at least one of said sole member, said at least one flexible stretchable member, and a combination thereof for releasably securing said shoe to a wearer's foot, said at least one upper member being manufactured from a third predetermined material.

17. A shoe comprising:

- a. a sole member having a first predetermined shape and a first predetermined size; and
- b. at least one upper member operably connected to said sole member, such at least one upper member being manufactured from flexible stretchable material for enabling said at least one upper member to conform to a wearer's foot and for releasably securing said shoe to such wearer's foot.

* * * * *