

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Bio device by Tempe company acclaimed

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The Arizona Republic, Mar. 31, 2005



A Tempe company that makes bionic muscles to help people recover from strokes and other neurological injuries was named Medical Device Company of the Year at the Arizona BioIndustry Association's first awards dinner.

The awards on Tuesday night concluded the first day of Arizona Bio Expo 2005, a two-day conference in Phoenix devoted to furthering the state's emerging biotech industry.

Kinetic Muscles Inc.'s initial product, Hand Mentor, simulates natural motion of the hand that has been lost because of neurological damage. The repetitive movement, in conjunction with neurological treatments to stimulate regeneration of damaged brain cells, has been found to help patients regain lost motion.

"Our success would not be possible without the support of the community," Kinetic Muscles President James Koeneman said.

Indeed, community support over the past two years has helped build a leading-edge genomics-research facility and stimulate a burgeoning biotech industry in Arizona.

The Bioscience Leader of the Year award went to George Poste, director of the Biodesign Institute at Arizona State University. The institute is developing an 800,000-square-foot research campus at ASU in Tempe that has attracted leading scientists to study the engineering of life to improve human health and quality of life. Poste is an established leader in international science with extensive experience in academia, industry and government. The Biodesign Institute project is Arizona's largest investment in bioscience infrastructure to date. The first building, with 170,000 square feet, opened in December. More than 200 scientists now work in the facility.

"Remarkable things are happening in this state," Poste said. "I hope to be back next year in a larger, more buoyant fashion."

Robert Penny, president of the Molecular Profiling Institute, took home the Bioindustry Executive of the Year award. The institute was formed in December to help translate discoveries made by the Human Genome Project into practical applications that can improve the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. The institute's first product, a breast-cancer prognostic test that helps identify how a tumor will behave, will be distributed soon through physician referral to patients.

Isotechnika Inc., a Canadian biopharmaceutical company, was named Biotechnology Company of the Year. The firm is focused on the development of immunosuppressive therapies that are safer than current treatments. The company opened its U.S. headquarters in Scottsdale in 2003 after considering San Diego and Boston. The company was drawn to Arizona by the state's aggressive efforts to develop and stimulate biotech industries.

Finally, the Startup Life Science Company of the Year award went to NanoBiomics Inc., a company co-founded by noted genomics researcher and TGen President Jeffrey Trent to aid in the development of diagnostic products and treatments. The company has agreements to license technologies developed by TGen, ASU and other research facilities and help bring them to market.