

## Closer look at biotech

*Expo to examine state's emerging industry*

Max Jarman

Biotechnology leaders from Arizona and around the West will convene in Phoenix today and Wednesday for the third-annual Arizona Bio Expo.

The event, which alternates between Phoenix and Tucson, has grown steadily over the past three years, along with the state's biotechnology industry. This year's event is being held at the Squaw Peak Pointe Hilton.

Jon McGarity, chairman of the Arizona BioIndustry Association, said more than 300 people are expected to participate in this year's event, substantially more than last year.

"It will be the state's largest grouping of people and companies related to bioscience," he said.

The expo will feature a series of speeches and panel discussions that will provide insight into the status of the state's emerging biotech industry as well as relevant information on many key topics.

"We are trying to have a meeting that will meet the needs of the emerging bioscience companies in Arizona," McGarity said.

Breakout sessions will cover such topics as "Working with Investment Banks," "Future of Drug Discovery" and "Building Alliances with Pharma."

This year's event will break ground with the first-ever Arizona Biotech Awards. Accolades will be given to the year's top biotech company, best start-up, best medical-device company, a life science leader of the year and a life science executive of the year.

McGarity said the companies and individuals were nominated by their peers and the winners selected by an independent panel of judges.

Besides the awards, panel discussions will include sessions such as:

- "Are We There Yet? Progress and Challenges on Arizona's Bioscience Road Map," led by Sandra E. Johnson, vice president of the Phoenix-based Flinn Foundation.
- "How to Start Up a Biotech Company," led by Robert Green, president of **Integrated Biomolecule Corp.**
- "Bio Research Update," led by Michael Mobley, associate director of the Biodesign Institute at Arizona State University.

The expo also will spotlight six Arizona bioscience companies: Machine Solutions Inc. of Flagstaff; Amplimed Inc. and Biovigilant Inc. of Tucson; Kinetic Muscles Inc. of Tempe; Virionics Inc. of Scottsdale; and LeMaitre Inc. of Phoenix.

"Each company will have 10 minutes to tell their story," McGarity said, noting the six were selected from a group of 30.

Arizona has made tremendous progress in the past year, McGarity said. Highlights include:

- The \$46 million building for the Translational Genomics Research Institute was officially opened this month. The institute is seen as a cornerstone of a planned bioscience and medical research campus in downtown Phoenix.
- In February, Phoenix's bold efforts to create a biotech center were recognized in a *New York Times* article.
- The Mayo-Scottsdale medical center was awarded a key role in a \$10.8 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to search for therapies that could reduce deaths caused by a specific form of brain cancer.

"We're up against communities such as San Diego, Boston and San Francisco, and they've been at this for a long time," McGarity said. "When you look how far we have come in the past two years, it's pretty phenomenal."