Connect Marks 30th Year of Most Innovative New Product Awards

Bruce V. Bigelow   December 1st, 2017

In its yearly celebration of entrepreneurship and invention, San Diego's Connect gave its Most Innovative New Product Award to 10 local companies at a dinner gala Thursday evening.

Speaking in an interview before the late-night ceremony, Connect CEO Greg McKee said the awards highlighted the diversity of innovation in San Diego—from an oxygen mask that signals if a patient develops trouble breathing (TereoPneuna) to artificial intelligence technology developed for self-driving vehicles (Brain Corp.).

While A.I. has been advancing at a breathtaking pace, McKee said a recent, massive explosion of data is threatening to overwhelm existing technologies—and that's likely to drive a new wave of innovation. "The data stream has gotten so high that we have to figure how to manage and triage this river of information," he said.

During the fete, Connect also inducted longtime Illumina (NASDAQ: **ILMN**) CEO Jay Flatley into its Entrepreneur Hall of Fame, along with four local innovation leaders: Richard C. Atkinson, president emeritus of the University of California, received the Connect Founder's Award; Joe Markee, a longtime tech investor and entrepreneur, was given the Duane Roth Award for his distinguished contribution in technology; Richard Lerner, the research chemist who served as president of The Scripps Research Institute for 20 years, received the Duane Roth Award in life sciences innovation; and Larry Bock, the late life sciences investor, was posthumously awarded the Duane Roth Award in life sciences innovation.

It was the 30th annual ceremony for Connect's Most Innovative New Product Awards, a competition that began in the spring with companies submitting close to 100 new products for consideration. By September, **Connect culled the list to 33 finalists** who pitched their products last month to an assemblage of outside judges, who selected the winners in 10 categories.

Listed below are the winners in each category:

Cleantech, Sustainability, and Energy: Amionx

With **backing from Qualcomm** (NASDAQ: **QCOM**), Amionx has developed SafeCore technology that is intended to act like a circuit breaker to prevent a lithium-ion battery from exploding or catching fire. Amionx says SafeCore adds minimal cost to lithium battery production costs.

Defense, Aerospace, and Transportation: Fuse Integration

Fuse Integration has developed a miniaturized mobile server, with embedded encryption and advanced cybersecurity, that meets military requirements for ruggedized electronic networking systems. Fuse says its CORE server can be used aboard military aircraft and vehicles to provide secure data communications over IP networks, as well as command and control, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations.

Information Communication Technologies: Nextivity

Nextivity specializes in technology that addresses "the universal challenge of poor cellular coverage in the office, at home, or on the road." The company says its Cel-Fi GO device improves cellular voice and data service in industrial settings by eliminating dead zones and dropped calls.

Life Science Diagnostics and Research Tools: StemoniX

StemoniX developed its microHeart product for use by major pharmaceutical companies in drug toxicity screening. Using stem cells derived from skin

cells, StemoniX says it can create biologically accurate beating heart micro-organs in the wells of high-density assay screening trays.

Life Science Products, Clinical Stage: [ViaCyte](#)

ViaCyte has developed PEC-Direct as a functional cure for patients with high-risk Type 1 diabetes. The product is composed of stem cell-derived pancreatic progenitor cells contained within a semi-permeable packet that is implanted just beneath the skin. After implantation, ViaCyte says the precursor stem cells mature into the full complement of islet cells that secrete insulin and other hormones to a way that regulates blood sugar levels.

Medical Devices: TereoPneuna

TereoPneuna has developed an oxygen facemask with a sensor display that provides a visual signal of how well a patient is breathing. The ReDe Mask is green if a patient is breathing normally, turns yellow to alert caregivers to potential breathing problems, and red if the respiration rate is too irregular.

Mobile Apps: NotesFirst

NotesFirst has developed a mobile app for capturing and improving the quality of health data for lower-middle income regions of the world.

Robotics and Unmanned Vehicles: [Brain Corp.](#)

[With backing from Qualcomm and SoftBank, Brain Corp](#). has developed a proprietary "brain" operating system for self-driving vehicles. Brain Corp. says its A.I. technology enables robots to perceive their environment, control their motion, and navigate using visual cues and landmarks while avoiding people and obstacles.

Software & Digital Media: [Sourcify](#)

Sourcify has developed Web-based technology that enables companies to

connect with factories in China, and uses project management tools to guide them through the product development cycle.

Sport & Active Lifestyle Technologies: [Levitate Technologies](#)

Levitate Technologies has developed lightweight and wearable exoskeleton technology that has been engineered to support the upper extremity of professionals and skilled trade workers whose work requires repetitive arm extension and elevation. Levitate says its "Airframe" provides ergonomic support and reduces muscle fatigue.

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