PortTechExpo Brings Technology Companies to San Pedro

by Herb Zimmer

Advanced Algae, Inc., a company that uses algae to capture and convert carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide emitted in diesel exhaust into fuel, animal feed or soil amendment, was the winner of the Most Innovative Technology Award at PortTechLA's first annual PortTechExpo held at the Doubletree Hotel on September 15. Advanced Algae's technology can produce alternative energy through a gravity-fed, automated algae reactor that reproduces its algae feed stock in just four hours!

Creating good local jobs by attracting companies with technologies applicable to the Port of Los Angeles' environmental, energy, security and logistics challenges, is at the heart of PortTechLA's mission. PortTechExpo 2010, which put entrepreneurs, technology investors and service providers together in an Expo environment, was one element in accomplishing that mission.

More than 300 people came to San Pedro to attend the daylong event. Twenty-four companies showcased their emerging technologies, sixteen companies made formal "venture pitches" to potential private equity and venture capital investors, and panel discussions were offered on investing in technology and finding the right partners to help grow a start-up company.

Assemblywoman Bonnie Lowenthal, County Supervisor Don Knabe, Councilwoman Janice Hahn, Harbor Commission President Cindy Miscikowski and Keynote Speaker, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, all addressed the Expo attendees. Each brought their perspective on the need for job creation and the importance of the Port of Los Angeles, not only in creating local jobs, but to the state and national economies. All pledged strong support and offered high praise to the community and the Port for coming together in founding the PortTechLA private/public partnership.

The event even drew a brief visit from His Royal Majesty Melizwe Dlamini, leader of the Nhlangwini Traditional Council from South Africa who was in town visiting the Port and asked to attend. His Majesty rules over one of South Africa's port cities.

Additional award winners at the PortTechExpo included UtopiaCompression Corporation as the Company Most Likely to Receive Funding. UtopiaCompression develops cutting-edge software systems that take raw data (photo, video or text) and, in real-time, converts it into something useable for strategy development. Ultimately, it allows quick decision-making when time is of the essence. UC's systems have many applications, including Port security. SensorWare Systems won the Best Management Team award. SensorWare's Sensor Web system is a wireless sensor infrastructure for collecting, synthesizing, distributing, viewing, and reacting to information.

The system is well suited to collecting data when monitoring must be accomplished over an extended area. It has homeland security applications, can be used to monitor different kinds of sensors, and could be applied to things such as tracking the movement of pollution plumes.

The People's Choice Award, voted on by all attendees at the Expo, went to Industrial Technology & Science LLC. The Wilmington company has developed the UTR-Plus Propane Re-Power engine technology that meets all CARB, CAAP and SCAQMD emissions requirements, while at the same time exceeding the power and torque of a standard diesel engine. (Having taken a test ride in their vehicle last month, I can attest to the fact that it has enough torque to really set you back in your seat!).

PortTechExpo was a great success. Attendees were warmly welcomed to San Pedro. Local leaders stressed the important role that technology and entrepreneurs will play in setting the standards for clean, green, secure ports in the future. Many connections were made between entrepreneurs, investors and service providers. Two companies immediately signed on as PortTechLA incubator clients and several companies already signed up for PortTechExpo 2011. spt

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