

Revolutionary prosthetic foot a step ahead at Bard competition

DENVER – The creator of a technologically advanced, lightweight prosthetic foot received first-place and biotechnology honors June 14 at the fifth annual Bard Center Business Plan Competition at the Grand Hyatt in downtown Denver.

Unlike the clunky prosthetic foot of 25-years ago and the metal foot geared for high-activity users, Tensegrity Prosthetics is introducing “The Liberator,” a model that will “change the face of prosthetic feet,” explains creator and CEO Jerome Rifkin.

There are more than 1.4 million lower-limb amputees in the nation creating a \$205 million market, Rifkin said. As Baby Boomers continue to age, diabetes related amputations are expected to triple by 2025. These people don’t want to run races, he stressed. They just want a natural feeling foot.

“More than 80 percent of foot amputees are diabetic and three-quarters are over 65,” Rifkin told the judges and audience at the fifth annual event. “This foot feels natural, it conforms to terrain; it is more agile and simple to adjust . . . it makes amputees happy in a way nothing else does.”

Rifkin received \$10,000 for placing first, \$2,500 for best biotechnology business plan and thousands of dollars worth of in-kind prizes. In addition to the business plan competition awards, Rifkin had earlier received a \$200,000 grant from the National Institute of Health. Initial roll-out of the product is expected in Colorado in January 2007.

Other winners include:

- Second place (\$5,000) *Apropos Magazine, Sharon Reed*: Addressing how single women can learn become socially and financially successful.
- Third place (\$2,500) Bright Light Innovations Ryan Palmer, Ajay Jha, Sachin Joshi: The development and distribution of improved cook stoves to developing countries that will produce electricity, clear the air of harmful emissions and reduce biomass consumption by 70 percent.
- Cosotec (\$1,000, plus \$2,500 nonprofit award), Craig Lieb, Ashley Housley: A nonprofit, membership-based association that promotes university-community partnerships to develop technologies for the needy.
- Rocky Mountain Forest Fuel Inc. (\$1,000) Kevin Egan, Joshua Grossman, Moon Hwan Kim: A cost-effective and environmentally-friendly heating source for homes and businesses.
- Progressive Health Center (\$1,000) Sue Goodin, William Oliva: A Colorado nonprofit corporation offering low-cost or no-cost alternative therapies to people with neurological disorders.

Alexander Bracken, executive director of the Bard Center, explained that three of the final six plans were from institutions other than UCDHSC. The winner, Rifkin, is a student at CU-Boulder; finalists for Bright Light Innovations were from Colorado State University; and the Cosotec team is from Air Force Academy.

The Bard Center at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center Business School was established in 1996 to educate, incubate and provide resources to innovative business ventures. For more information, contact Beth Polizzotto at 303-620-4050.