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Pa. will welcome back home-grown biotech executives

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STAFF WRITER

One of Pennsylvania's strategies for creating a legacy for BIO 2005 is to re-establish links with the hundreds of biotechnology company executives who got their start in this region.

That's the idea behind the state's June 20 "Welcome Home" reception being sponsored by Cephalon Inc. of Frazer.

"We were reluctant to do just another party," said Robert Grupp, Cephalon's vice president of corporate affairs. "We wanted to do something to illustrate how far the life sciences industry has come in this region. ... As much as we like talking to each other, we didn't want it to be Pennsylvania people talking to other Pennsylvania people."

Working with eight colleges — University of Pennsylvania, Temple, Drexel,

University of the Sciences, Penn State, Lehigh, Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pittsburgh — Cephalon created a list of biotechnology executives from outside the region who got their start here.

Grupp said they identified 173 people who now hold the titles of chairman, president or CEO of a life sciences company and another 1,000 graduates from the schools who hold senior management titles with companies in the industry. All were invited to the reception.

"We want to welcome them back to Pennsylvania," Grupp said. "With 18,000 biotech leaders expected in Philadelphia in June, our reception during BIO 2005 is a unique opportunity to illustrate the scope and success of the biotechnology sector here — and possibly attract some life sciences companies back to the commonwealth."

Pennsylvania also hopes to attract at-

tention through its pavilion on the exhibit hall floor.

With 51 organizations participating, Pennsylvania's pavilion is expected to be the largest of any regional group at BIO 2005.

Unlike in past year's BIO conventions, Pennsylvania's pavilion will not be a hodgepodge of companies, economic development organizations and research institutions scattered about various booths.

"This year, we're trying to pay special attention to the set-up," said Richard Overmoyer, deputy secretary of technology for the state Department of Community and Economic Development. "We're going to have everything set up around three regions in a hub-and-spokes structure — with the greenhouses being the hubs."

The greenhouses are the three biotech incubators established three years ago in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg — using \$100 million from the state's tobacco industry settlement — to help nurture existing, and attract new, early-stage life sciences companies to the state.

Because booth space in the Pennsylvania pavilion sold out so quickly, Overmoyer said, the state created a "collaborating partner" program where companies can display their literature and graphics in a common area.

Overall, the state expects to spend about \$750,000 on the event, but \$250,000 of that will be recouped through fees to companies and organizations taking space in the pavilion. In addition to the \$250,000 fee paid to host the event, other costs include travel, meetings and advertising expenses.

Fritz Bittenbender, president of the trade group Pennsylvania BIO, said ev-

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**COUNTDOWN
to BIO 2005**



Bittenbender



Overmoyer

PA BIO: Pavilion will be the largest at conference; more than 50 groups represented

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everyone involved in planning Pennsylvania's involvement in the event agreed the conference should be used as a vehicle for achieving tangible goals such as attracting more life sciences business and venture capital to the region, and strengthening partnerships between the region's academic institutions and the biotech industry.

"When we began planning for this last year, we looked at the BIO 2005 meeting as a kickoff for Pennsylvania and our region really emerging as the next great bioscience center," Bittenbender said.

P. Sherrill Neff, a founding partner of Center City-based Quaker BioVentures, was recruited to head a committee that developed events for the venture capital community — a first for a BIO conference.

The result is combination of panel dis-

cussions specifically geared toward venture capital issues, such as "Non-IPO exits for life sciences companies," and social activities, including receptions at the Barnes Foundation and World Café

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P. Sherrill Neff
co-founder,
Quaker BioVentures

Live. "There's going to be venture capital people here from all over the world," Neff said. "Our attempt is, for 24 hours, to give all of them a reason to be here and get them all in one place."

Neff said their goal will be to get the

venture capital community to realize this area is a "hotbed" for life sciences investments.

The Pennsylvania pavilion will host a reception June 21, from 4 to 6 p.m., to allow entrepreneurs to meet informally with state officials.

"Biotech Nation," a program that airs on National Public Radio, will broadcast from the pavilion during the event.

While Pennsylvania has historically avoided the trinket giveaways many states use to attract visitors to their booth, the reception will include a drawing for a Harley-Davidson motorcycle sponsored by Peco Energy Co.

Greg Byrnes, Peco's director of economic and business development, said the raffle — through the questions on the registration form people fill out to win the motorcycle — helps Peco learn about how people from outside the region

view Philadelphia. It also provides Peco with a chance to promote the region to those same people.

The promotion entices people to attend the state's reception since that is when the drawing is held, and the winner must be present to receive the prize.

At BIO 2004 in San Francisco, Byrnes estimated 700 people attended the reception. "We've been doing this [Harley-Davidson giveaway] for at least a decade," he said. "People come to the trade show looking specifically for us."

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Neff

