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Perpetua's invention wins powerful honor

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'Puck' device gathers energy from environment

By CANDICE RUUD

GAZETTE-TIMES REPORTER

Corvallis' own Perpetua Power Source Technologies recently has been recognized by R&D Magazine as a winner of the R&D 100 Award for its Perpetua Power Puck.

The device was engineered by Perpetua and the Pacific Northwest National Lab, operated by Battelle, to work on wireless sensors on pumps and motors in the manufacturing industry, said Perpetua president Jon Hofmeister. It replaces the need for batteries with its capability for extremely long life, which can match the life of the wireless sensor. The product collects, stores and delivers energy for these sensors by gathering renewable energy from the environment around it, including taking energy from the waste heat that comes off of the sensor.

"The key to these systems is a very long life that renewable energy provides," Hofmeister said Tuesday. "Instead of being a short-term solution, it's long term and can last for over the 10-year lifetime of the whole system."

The product preserves both energy and resources, as it eliminates the need for maintenance people to regularly change batteries, unless something goes wrong. In that case, if the sensor isn't acting appropriately or is outside of proper levels, a warning will be sent to the main system so that it can be fixed on a maintenance level instead of needing to be replaced immediately.

The Power Puck was three years in the making when it was released in early 2009. Future plans for Perpetua's Flexible Thermoelectric Film technology line include using the product within wireless sensor monitor systems and packaging the renewable power source with the sensors, along with a data management software application, and deploying that technology in Oregon at manufacturing facilities.

"We want to work with other local manufacturers who have pumps and motors and other equipment that they would like to have monitored," Hofmeister said.

Underneath all of the high-tech jargon and technical terms, Perpetua's underlying goal is this: to solve the battery replacement problem for wireless sensors.

"(The Power Puck) has been very successful. The R&D 100 Award was a pleasant surprise, so that was kind of a nice recognition of a good product," Hofmeister said. "We are really pleased; it's a nice honor."

Recipients of the R&D 100 Award will be honored at a banquet in Orlando, Fla., on Nov. 12.

The award, which is in its 47th year, serves as an annual measure for the year's most significant technological advancements and products. It has become a prestigious competition that serves as a rite of passage for companies hoping to increase awareness and sale of their new products in the field of technology. Past winners include the flashcube, the automated teller machine, the Nicoderm anti-smoking patch, the fax machine, the printer, Taxol anti-cancer drug, the liquid crystal display and HDTV.

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