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Software aids scientists, researchers

By Thomas Silvers

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Twenty years ago, while performing molecular cancer research for his doctorate at Ohio State, Jeff Spitzer discovered the difficulty of organizing data in the laboratory.

Recognizing the need for a better system of information management, in 2002 Spitzer and three others co-founded Rescentris, a Columbus company dedicated to enhancing productivity and decision-making for scientists and researchers, according to the company's Web site.

The company's software product, CERF, won the prestigious "Best in Show" award in April at the 2009 Bio-IT World Conference & Expo in Boston.

CERF is a laboratory notebook and document management tool that helps organize, track and gather research data, said Rob Day, customer service and business development representative for the company, in an e-mail.

It allows researchers to "gather research data from any source, in any format, from scattered physical locations and securely store these assets in a central secure server," Day said.

Spitzer said the roots of the original software for CERF began in 1992 and a beginning business was founded in 1996 on Kinnear Road. This initial company was formed when Spitzer returned to Columbus after earning his post-doctoral degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"There are tremendous opportunities in Columbus," Spitzer said.

He said that Rescentris' product is important because most research laboratories spend millions of dollars on research, but don't get their full value without the proper organization.

"If you have a refrigerator full of test tubes, but you don't know what is in them, they are not much value to you," Spitzer said.

Spitzer said that by keeping good records with CERF, scientists and researchers are able to patent and therefore own and protect their own work.

He did not expect to win "Best in Show" at Bio-IT because of the stiff competition.

"Here we are a small company from Columbus, Ohio, competing against much larger companies," Spitzer said.

Spitzer said Rescentris is proud to be part of this "gobal meeting," and his goal upon entering was simply to get the word out and help the company grow.

According to Bio-ITworld.com, Rescentris was one of 32 companies in the competition.

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