

BioSpace 1

The future continues to call Shreveport home, as BioSpace1, the first life science incubator funded by Louisiana's Biotechnology Initiative, made its debut. A self-guided tour of the new facility during its Oct. 5 dedication ceremony featured such long-time supporters of the project as Vernon Chance, Biomedical Research Foundation of Northwest Louisiana (BRF) chairman of the board, and Shreveport Mayor Keith Hightower.

This 60,000-square-foot life sciences business center, located in the Biomedical Research Foundation's 800-acre urban InterTech Science Park and adjacent to LSU Health Sciences Center-Shreveport (LSUHSC), is designed to provide Louisiana's emerging life science industry the infrastructure and resources it needs to thrive in Northwest Louisiana.

BioSpace1 has sixteen 1,000 square foot, fully equipped wet lab suites, 19,000 square feet of build-to-suit space, a shared research core lab facility, office space and conference rooms. In addition to these physical assets, tenants have the opportunity to pursue collaborations with LSUHSC's faculty and business services through a BioSpace1 business management team.

"Collaboration and partnering are somewhat of our middle name," says John F. "Jack" Sharp, president of BRF. "This is for businesses looking for commercialization. We really are about economic development and bringing people together to keep the whole process here locally."

BRF began as a think tank in 1986, following the oil industry crash. Its first physical space was built in 1994.

"Louisiana has always had a great abundance of natural resources: oil and gas, agriculture, seafood, forestry. But, historically, it's extracted resources and not given back," says Sharp. "There are now strong growth areas in the knowledge economy here. We're helping to create a diversified economy with R&D at its core."

Red River Pharma, a research and development and drug manufacturing company that currently employs 36 people in two InterTech Science Park facilities, will eventually occupy 10,000 square feet of the 19,000 square feet available on the first floor of BioSpace1. The first 5,000 square feet is currently being built out for immediate occupancy for the development division of the company, reserving the remainder of the space for future expansion.

The company's first product launched in August 2004, a "solid dosage medical food" that helps lower the risk of cardiovascular disease by reducing the levels of homocystien (similar to cholesterol) in the body through enhanced absorption of medications. This is manufactured in a separate building within walking distance of BioSpace1.

"BioSpace1 gives us more lab

space and the ability to develop more products," says Dale Scotten, director of quality compliance and development at Red River Pharma. "Our goal is to keep getting bigger and to outgrow this space ... With more products, bigger manufacturing, we'll eventually move out and build our own facility. That's our longer-range plan."

While a primary objective for most organizations is to retain their clients as long as possible, BioSpace1 will measure its success, at least in part, as its tenants move out of the facility into the Northwest Louisiana marketplace. Its mission includes providing the infrastructure and resources to assist

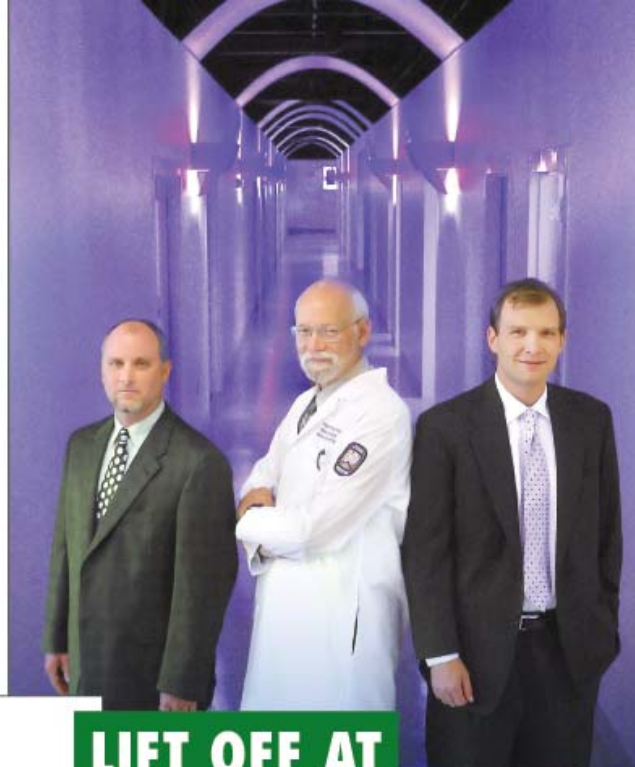
companies to commercialize, thus creating long-term wealth and increased employment opportunities in the local community.

At Red River Pharma, "Products are moving real well, and we're growing more quickly than we expected," continues Scotten. "We're already picking up second and third shifts and will need to add jobs like product packaging, manufacturing and analytical, such as chemistry or laboratory, jobs."

This build-to-suit space provides an opportunity to recruit a broad range of technology-based companies in other areas, including information, communications, advanced manufacturing, environmental and energy technologies to Shreveport.

Louisiana Ventures LP is a venture capital fund that invests in a diversified portfolio of companies, including those seeking growth capital and early stage companies.

"We lease space for our clients," says Ross P. Barrett, managing partner of Louisiana Ventures. "BioSpace1 is a great place for them to be. First of all, the facilities are state of the art. You have an environment which is very entrepreneurial with like-minded com-



On the cover: Dale Scotten, director of Quality Compliance at Red River Pharma, Nicholas Goeders, founder & chief scientific advisor at Embera, and Ross Barrett, managing partner of Louisiana Ventures

(photo by Scott Griffin)

The \$12.2 million expended for construction and equipment for BioSpace1 came from the Louisiana Biotechnology Initiative (\$10.5 million), the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (\$1.25 million), and the Louisiana Department of Economic Development (\$447,000). Today, 40 states are targeting the biosciences for development, and all 50 states have technology-based economic development initiatives that are available to bioscience companies.

"People are starting to realize through a variety of state initiatives that this is a great area to do business in," says Barrett. The technical infrastructure is already built with BioSpace1, the labor force is smart and well trained, plus the work ethic is great. And its location is ideal.

"LSUHSC is a sleeping giant of opportu-

nity," continues Barrett. "It's an economic engine for this area, and a lot of people don't realize it. To be so close to the clinical resources is great, but the research expertise that's going on there is really invaluable. BioSpace1 couldn't exist without being so close to a major medical school."

BioSpace1 is the first of three life science incubators funded by Louisiana's Biotechnology Initiative to open. It expects to reach full occupancy within three years, creating 120 to 150 higher-salary jobs.

"We don't just build buildings," says Jay Myers, director of development at BRF. "We create all the pieces that we think are necessary for success based on information gathered around the nation that has led to success in other regions. You also need the investors and a committed and understanding educational support system that works together with us."

LIFT OFF AT



ECONOMIC ENGINE OF THE FUTURE

story by kara king bohannon
photos by don echols

panies and cross-fertilization. It provides a great forum for them to swap ideas and war stories, things like that."

Its first portfolio company to occupy the new facility is Embera Neurotherapeutics Inc., a combinational pharmacotherapy development company targeting a variety of addictions and other central nervous system disorders. The company's core technology was developed at and licensed from LSUHSC-Shreveport and is pending patent.

"Embera's technology is commercializable," says Barrett. "And now we have a company with assets, at least with intellectual property assets. We put up the capital to make that happen."

The next steps are to raise capital for Embera to conduct Phase 2 and Phase 3 clinical trials and, based on those findings, hopefully, FDA approval. From there, it is

launched onto the market, the company grows and is eventually sold, or it's taken public.

"BioSpace1 provides the infrastructure to allow us to do things we cannot do otherwise," says Nicholas E. Goeders, founder and chief scientific advisor at Embera and professor and head of the department of pharmacology, toxicology and neuroscience at LSUHSC. "We can get the business – and it is a business – off the ground here. This is something that will attract other biotech companies to this area."

The potential of the life sciences to improve the quality of life and generate economic development has gained greater recognition over the last 10 years. Federal and state governments are dedicating more funds to creating an environment in which this industry can flourish.

