



Two Midland companies scoop up awards

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A Midland company that hopes to make better batteries and another that wants to test a device for using the ocean's energy have received a total of four awards in a statewide competition for business entrepreneurs.

The two Midland companies are Advanced Battery Concepts and Kinetic Wave Power. They scooped up four out of six cash awards at the recent Great Lakes Entrepreneur's Quest, or GLEQ, competition. GLEQ is a non-profit organization, supported with grants, that has hosted twice-yearly competitions of this type for nine years, said its executive director, former Midlander Diane Durance.

Advanced Battery won for best New Business Idea, the NextEnergy Alternative Energy Innovation Award and the Manufacturing Innovation Award sponsored by Automation Alley. The three awards totaled \$27,500 in prize money.

Kinetic Wave Power won the Emerging Company Award and its \$25,000 prize. Company General Manager Lynn Blackmore said she hopes the award will give the small company exposure so it can have its device, called a PowerGin, tested at an ocean wave simulation tank at the University of Michigan. After that, the device could be tested in an ocean. The company needs investors to make the testing possible.

Although the prototype hasn't yet been built, Blackmore said she hopes to have it tested in the simulation tank this summer.

"The nice thing about this design is, a lot of the parts are just off the shelf, a very simple design," she said. "That's what makes it more cost-effective than others that are out there."

Advanced Battery develops technology to increase the performance of lead acid batteries without increasing their cost, said company CEO Ed Shaffer. Lead acid batteries are used to start cars, power electric wheelchairs, in railroad trucks and in many other applications. Shaffer said the company's technology promises to double the energy in these batteries and increase the power tenfold. Power is what gives cars the kick to start quickly while energy keeps a car

operating for long periods of time.

The company, in the startup phase, has working prototypes and a signed joint development agreement with Concorde Battery Corp., a California battery manufacturer, Shaffer said. He believes the companies' work will enable new technology that could, for example, be used in "plug-in hybrid electric vehicles."

Some 175 businesses were paired with volunteer "coaches" for the competition, but not all of them wrote business plans, which are required for awards judging, Durance said. Besides cash prizes, there are honorary awards, and one of them went to **Midlander Lee Walko as business "Coach of the Year." Walko was paired with Kinetic Wave Power.**

Although Durance's Midland roots had nothing to do with judges' selection of the winners, she said she's happy Midlanders won in a state where much of the "cool" technology comes from Ann Arbor. Business plans are read and critiqued by venture capitalists from around the state, and networking opportunities with these potential investors is a big plus, Durance said.

"What we're working on is getting much bigger prizes ... so that we would really have an exciting competition for the winners," Durance said. But for now, the contest and the work of the Entrepreneur's Quest gives young businesses good support, and that's also important, she said.