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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

JOHN D. CHERRY, JR.
LT. GOVERNOR

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Contact: Bridget Beckman, MEDC
(517) 335-4590
Beckmanb1@michigan.org

Granholm Announces Support to Keep Pfizer Talent and Resources in Michigan

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) President and CEO Greg Main today announced that two more Michigan companies have been selected to receive loans in the latest round of funding under the state’s Company Formation and Growth (CFG) fund, an initiative aimed at retaining Pfizer talent assets in the state.

“Creating a diversified economy depends on our ability to retain highly skilled talent in Michigan,” Granholm said. “The action taken today will enable former Pfizer employees to lend their skills and expertise to helping Michigan companies grow and create high-technology jobs.”

The Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) board on this week approved the funding that will be used by two companies to hire former Pfizer scientists. Vestaron Corporation was approved for a loan of \$150,000 and eFarms LLC for a loan in the amount of \$120,000. Including today’s awards, the CFG to date has approved more than \$7.5 million in loans to a total of 36 life-science companies in Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Livonia, Portage and Saline.

The following companies were approved today for CFG loans:

- Kalamazoo-based **Vestaron Corporation** is developing a new generation of insecticides by employing peptides sourced from spiders – insecticides that are ideally suited for the environmentally conscious, 21st century. Over 50 unique, spider-venom peptides with novel sites of action have been identified and are being exploited. Vestaron received from the MSF a 2008 business competition award of approximately \$1.8 million for its work toward testing, production and evaluation of its lead product for purposes of commercialization. Vestaron also previously received a \$50,000 award tied to hiring a former Pfizer employee. The company will use its latest \$150,000 award to hire three additional ex-Pfizer employees.
- **eFarms LLC**, located in Holland, is currently working to advance their technologies and products for on-farm ethanol and livestock feed production. The company plans to lease space at the former Pfizer R&D site (now the MSU Bioeconomy Institute) and use their \$120,000 loan to hire additional talent from the ex-Pfizer pool if possible.

(more)

“This action will help two innovative biotech start-up companies continue to grow,” Main said. “Supporting entrepreneurs is a major pillar of our strategy to diversify Michigan’s economy.”

The MSF created the \$8 million CFGF in June 2007 to accelerate company formation, growth and job creation based on employees, technologies, and high-tech equipment left behind when Pfizer closed facilities in Ann Arbor, Holland, Kalamazoo, Plymouth Township and Portage.

“Vestaron's innovative technology continues to propel the company forward to soon make a significant agriscience market impact,” said Ron Kitchens, Chief Executive Officer of Southwest Michigan First and General Partner of the SWMF Life Science Fund. “As a portfolio company of the Southwest Michigan First (SWMF) Life Science Fund, we are extremely pleased with Vestaron's commitment to embrace the Kalamazoo Region's talent in their product development.”

“We’re pleased to be working with eFarms; they’re a good fit for the BioBusiness Accelerator program,” Randy Olinger, of Lakeshore Advantage said. “Their new products, when integrated with standard farming practices, have the potential of adding significant value to existing biomass resources in an environmentally and energy conscious manner. And, this monetary award from the CGF Fund will directly support eFarms’ technology development work here in the laboratories of the Bioeconomy Institute.”

The Michigan Economic Development Corporation, a partnership between the state and local communities, promotes smart economic growth by developing strategies and providing services to create and retain good jobs and a high quality of life. For more information about the MEDC, visit www.TheMEDC.org.

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