



STARTUPS & INNOVATIONS

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INCUBATORS & ACCELERATORS

The **National Institutes of Health** has extended its partnership with Irvine wet lab incubator **University Lab Partners** through the end of the year.

As the NIH, which received about \$500 million in the first federal stimulus round for its **RADx** initiative, started to screen companies developing COVID-19 testing technologies, it realized nearly half of applications were coming from the state of California.

Yet the organization had no affiliation with contractors on the West Coast, ULP founder **Ken Beall** told the Business Journal.

"Knowing we had a focus on incubation and medical device innovation, the NIH asked if we could help pull some resources to complement that effort," said



Ken Beall
Founder
University Lab Partners

Beall.

ULP and its board of advisors enlisted UCI biomedical graduate students and industry talent with experience in diagnostic testing from companies such as **Beckman Coulter** to perform due diligence on companies that applied for funds.

Just as Orange County has built a strong foundation in medical device, ophthalmology and cardiology, Beall said he is hopeful OC will become a "center of excellence" for diagnostic technologies.

A number of local companies have launched COVID-19 tests such as **Ambry Genetics** and **Pathnostics** (see page, 18), meanwhile Irvine-based **Fluxergy** is rapidly scaling to meet its stated goal of delivering 1 million COVID tests per month by the end of 2020.

Aliso Viejo-based business accelerator **Octane** wrapped its digital conference series for the year with the **MedTech Innovation Forum**, which was held Oct. 27 to 30.

"To say this year has been different is an understatement. It has tested the resolve of every individual and organization," Chief Executive **Bill Carpou** told the audience in his opening remarks.

"Octane has been no different."

Octane transitioned its conferences and Ignite Series to a digital format, both of which have received an overwhelmingly positive response and helped the organization expand its presence beyond the Southern California region, according to Carpou.

While the conference highlighted innovation in healthcare as it has done in the past, it also covered timely topics



Bill Carpou
Chief Executive
Octane

related to the pandemic.

MTIF featured two keynote speeches with **Joe Kiani**, chief executive of Irvine's **Masimo**, who discussed the medical device maker's push into home health monitoring technologies, as well as and **Geoff Martha**, the new chief executive of **Medtronic plc**, who spoke on how the organization plans to replicate the speed at which it operated during the pandemic through a massive reorganization plan.

Octane speakers noted emerging areas of interest in telehealth, medical diagnostics and artificial intelligence and discussed how medical device commercialization and clinical trials

might change moving forward.

MTIF panelists also explored ways to support diversity, women leaders and impactful change locally.

PRODUCTS

Irvine-based startup accelerator **Cie** announced the launch of plant-based protein ingredient maker **Longève Brands** last week.

Longève's first product is pea-based protein crumbles that contain 40 grams of protein per serving and cook in five minutes.

Longève is currently available at longevebrands.com, Amazon and some retailers.

Cie partnered with **Douglas Kantner**, the president of "plant and dairy ingredient supplier **AME Nutrition**, who will serve as chief executive of Longève, to create a brand that "is addressing the growing trend by consumers demanding more plant-based products in their diet," said **Andree Berengian**, chief executive of Cie.

Longève is bringing an assortment of shelf-stable products to market, while many meat replacement packaged goods are pre-made, refrigerated or frozen, the company said.

Cie launched a number of companies this year including care-



Protein crumbles priced at \$9.99



Andree Berengian
Chief Executive
Cie

giver app **CareBirds** and safety training software firm **Perfor-maLabs**.



Dr. Zenovia Gabriel
Founder
Zenovia Skincare and
ZENA Medical

Dr. Zenovia Skincare's assortment of cleansers, creams and other facial products recently hit **Sephora** stores.

"I am so thrilled to bring a new frontier in skincare to Sephora customers as the first dermatologist-developed brand on the market to address the visible signs of hormonal imbalances happening within the body," **Zenovia Gabriel**, founder of Zenovia Skincare, told the Business Journal via email.

Dr. Zenovia is a noted dermatologist who runs her own practice, **ZENA Medical**, in Newport Beach.

In her fifteen years of practice, Dr. Zenovia said she noticed that patients' skin issues could often be linked to hormone imbalances at various life stages such as puberty, pregnancy and menopause.

Dr. Zenovia is a portfolio company of New York-based cosmetics maker **Topix Pharmaceuticals** and has 12 products across two lines.

The Essentials Collection targets key signs of hormonally imbalanced skin such as dehydration and loss of elasticity, while the Clear Complexion Collection uses moisturizing properties and anti-inflammatory agents to resolve acne.

FINANCING

Software maker **ThinkIQ** of Aliso Viejo recently closed a \$11.6 million Series A round.

ThinkIQ uses data gathered from various sensors in manufacturing facilities, and runs algorithms to determine how materials flow through the supply chain and processes that can be optimized.

"We originated the business on wanting to make a product safer, in a way that drives real value for our customers," Chief Executive **Doug Lawson** told the Business Journal.

"One of the side effects of that is we can make our customers much more energy efficient and more sustainable. That part of the business is resonating with the financial community."

Backers **Ecosystem Integrity Fund** and **ArcTern Ventures** both make investments in sustainable businesses. **Hitachi Ventures** also participated.

ThinkIQ's clients include six Fortune 100 companies in the food and beverage industry that have used the software to solve challenges such as how to make oats that are truly gluten-free by preventing field and processing contaminants.

The company is well-positioned to expand to pharmaceutical, automotive and aerospace companies, which need better technologies to look up their supply chains, said Lawson.

"Our system is designed to look across enterprises by definition and allow many players across the supply chain to interact. Solving the continuum of the supply chain is critical to us."

ThinkIQ has about 25 employees and expects to double or triple in size by 2022.



Doug Lawson
Chief Executive
ThinkIQ



Hyaleon product generates functional cartilage cells

Irvine-based **Cartilage Inc.** recently won a Phase I Small Business Innovation Research grant from the **National Institutes of Health**.

Funds will support safety studies of the company's tissue-engineered cartilage implant, which could be used to heal a number of cartilage defects.

Cartilage—a connective tissue that sits between various joints and bones—doesn't heal and patients with cartilage damage often have to get an invasive total joint replacement at some point in their lives.

The company aims to help prevent the most common form of arthritis, osteoarthritis, a condition that results from worn down cartilage and impacts over 30 million Americans, it said.

Cartilage's main product, the Hyaleon, was invented by a group of researchers from the **University of California-Irvine**. The company is also part of the UCI Beall Applied Innovation **Wayfinder** incubator.



Peptide + Ceramide Repairing Moisturizer; products retail for \$25 to \$79