

## ***The Champaign News-Gazette***

### **Champaign-based firm gets \$10,000 in Innovate Illinois contest**

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By Don Dodson

CHICAGO – Judges liked the concept of Champaign-based Kim Laboratories so much they awarded the company a \$10,000 runner-up prize in the Innovate Illinois entrepreneurial competition.

The company, which is developing testing kits for diagnosing norovirus, came in second Tuesday in the category for later-stage companies.

First place in that category went to CallPod Inc., a Chicago-based company that created audio-conferencing and content-sharing technologies for wireless electronic devices and cellular telephones. CallPod won \$40,000 for its efforts.

In the category for early-stage companies, the \$40,000 first prize went to Harrison Custom Harmonicas, a Chicago-based producer of customized, professional-quality harmonicas that use a special reed technology.

The \$10,000 runner-up prize for early-stage companies went to Clipius Technologies of Murphysboro, which makes antimicrobial coatings for spinal implants and instrumentation.

Six finalists competed in each category, with Champaign-based Autonomic Materials Inc. vying in the category for early-stage companies. Autonomic Materials develops coatings that are designed to automatically repair damage to materials.

Altogether, 130 companies applied for the competition, with the field being narrowed to 32 semifinalists before the 12 finalists were chosen. The finalists were judged on a five-minute, "fast-pitch" presentation to judges and a five-minute question-and-answer session Tuesday in Chicago.

The \$100,000 in prize money was provided by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, which administered the competition jointly with the Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center.

Kim Laboratories, founded by Myung Kim, is also developing a disinfectant effective against norovirus, the leading cause of gastroenteritis worldwide. Kim said last week that if his company won money in the competition, it would probably be used to pay patent filing expenses.

Both Kim Laboratories and Autonomic Materials are based in EnterpriseWorks, the University of Illinois' business incubator.