

# Innovative Southern Oregon

## Powered by Talented People

*A celebration of twenty-one innovative companies finding themselves at home and prospering in Southern Oregon.*



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**Southern Oregon**  
**Regional Economic Development, Inc.**  
*21st Annual Dinner - June 25, 2008*



### **Ron Fox, Executive Director**

Ron has been Executive Director since June 2006 and has a wealth of economic development experience. He spent six years with the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department as Business and Trade Development Division Manager. In addition, Ron spent 29 years with Pacific Power in various capacities ranging from District Manager to Director of Property Management. Ron and his wife Paulie reside in Medford.



### **Colleen Padilla, Business Development Manager**

Colleen is a native of Medford and knows first-hand that Southern Oregon is a great place to live and work. She joined the SOREDI team in November of 2001 serving as staff for the Regional Investment Fund Program before accepting the position of Business Development Manager in January of 2004. She holds a B.S. degree in Human Communication and is currently pursuing her Masters in Management degree. Speaking fluid Spanish, she is the bilingual member of the team. Colleen resides in Medford.



### **Reg Powell, Business Loan Specialist**

Reg oversees the Business Loan Fund and is instrumental in organizing many of SOREDI's *Jefferson Grapevine* events. Reg has been actively involved in the banking industry since 1968. In addition, Reg has been a member of the Hillah Shriners for over 30 years, serving for one year as the Treasurer and three years as the Recorder. Reg and his wife Earline reside in Central Point.



### **Charlie Mitchell, CEcD, Business Development Manager**

Charlie joined SOREDI in December of 2006 after serving for 10 years as the Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Grants Pass. Charlie holds a Masters in Management degree and B.S. degree in Communication, both from Southern Oregon University. He is also certified as an economic development professional by the International Economic Development Council. Charlie and his wife Julie live in Grants Pass with their two children.



### **Lori Mitchell, Office Manager**

Lori started as an intern from Rogue Community College. She was quickly hired as a marketing assistant and then became Executive Assistant in April 2006. Most recently, Lori was promoted to Office Manager. Native to Southern Oregon, Lori is a graduate of North Valley High School and holds an A.S. degree in Business Technology from Rogue Community College. She and her husband Tony live with their two daughters in Medford.



### **Troy Fretwell, Marketing and Research Assistant**

Troy is new to Southern Oregon, settling in Ashland in 2007. He has a strong background in direct marketing and call center operations management. He holds an A.S. degree in Business from Salt Lake Community College and is currently pursuing a B.S. degree in Business Administration from Southern Oregon University. Troy's primary responsibilities include research, marketing and follow up assistance with recruitment leads.

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Why Southern Oregon?  
Climate, four seasons, small town

## Alltrax, Wilderville

*Powering electric vehicles around the world*

Owners: Damon Crockett, Jeff Bradley

24 Employees

[www.alltraxinc.com](http://www.alltraxinc.com) (541) 476-3565

Tucked away in rural Josephine County is a growing small business playing on the global stage in a big way. Alltrax, Inc., maker of electric vehicle motor controllers, actually *sells*

products *into* China. This is achieved by making a product that is tailor-made to specific applications, products that are not "off-the-shelf" commodity items. And at a time when the world's focus is on energy prices and with fossil fuels in particular, what better business to be in than one that designs and produces a needed component that improves the performance of electric vehicles?

Company founder Damon Crockett started Alltrax 10 years ago as a moonlighting hobby while working at a "normal job." "I was frustrated too much with my day job," Crockett says.

"Something had to give." Now, through industry-leading technology and customer attentiveness, Alltrax has become a force to be reckoned with as their products have found their way into a variety of different vehicle applications from golf carts to motorcycles to boats.

The future of Alltrax's cutting-edge innovation rests in the capable minds of a five-member engineering team that has formed a sister company called Power Control Engineering, or PCE, with its focus on research and development activities. Crockett has recently moved away from the daily operations of Alltrax so that he can do what he does best – R&D. Jeff Bradley now assumes the role of president of Alltrax and has been involved in the company since 1999.

The engineering team is a special one, Crockett says. "We get together and share needs and problems; we watch out for each other. We'd probably be okay on a boat together; we wouldn't kill each other. It's a unique culture for men who really listen to each other." Crockett says "the real kudo is due to the 50 some-odd people who helped make this place special over the years."

A strong culture has developed at Alltrax, even beyond the engineering team. Alltrax provides excellent benefits to all of its employees. With that comes a real dedication to innovation and creativity as well. Crockett says his philosophy is to facilitate and express what you need, then step back and let the people create.

**"It's create or die . . . we try not to stifle observations; we pay attention to problems."**



Why Southern Oregon?  
Community, culture, quality of life

## Allyson's Kitchen, Ashland

*Dishing up more than just a great recipe*

Owners: Steve & Allyson Holt

29 Employees

[www.allysonskitchen.com](http://www.allysonskitchen.com) (541) 482-2884

Allyson's Kitchen is a classic example of what local and state economic professionals have been fashionably stating about Oregon for years; come for a day, stay forever. While the decision to call Ashland home was made only three days after a first time visit, it was five years before the gourmet cooking retailer established itself.

The innovative culinary entertainment venue is now in a rapid expansion mode with eight years in the business behind them and a recent expansion in Bend under their apron, thanks in part to a SOREDI business loan. Their five-year expansion plan includes consideration of another ten stores in Oregon, Washington, and northern California.

Allyson Holt, co-founder with husband Steve, says her favorite part of the day is still admiring the rolling hills on one side of the valley and the forested mountain terrain on the other side while passionately reflecting on how much she feels at home in Southern Oregon. Allyson adds that their location halfway between Portland and San Francisco, access to locally grown produce, and the synergy with other local businesses is unsurpassed.

With regard to the creativity and innovation that fuels their business, Allyson comments that she is continually thinking of new ways to serve the customer – a mindset that is passed down to the nearly 30 employees with growing careers in Ashland and Bend. “Innovative talent is vital to my business and creative thinking must happen daily.” Holt adds

with a smile that all her “great ideas come in the shower and I have at least five new ideas each day.” On a more serious note, she adds that effective

businesses need to rely on a

collective pool of ideas and people with a passion for what they do. Revenues and growth have been steady for the company – averaging about eight percent yearly, but sales this year are expected to approach \$4 million with the Bend addition.

Holt does not foresee that keeping her talented crew will be a problem as they already live in the region and are passionate about what they do. The cool factor for her and her employees is the combination of food and wine and the great kitchen gadgets at their fingertips.



**“Innovative talent is vital to my business and creative thinking must happen daily.”**





Why Southern Oregon?  
Quality of life, culture, natural attractions

## Cary's of Oregon, Grants Pass

*Sitrring up sweet success with a family recipe*

Owner: Cary Cound

12 Employees

[www.carysofOregon.com](http://www.carysofOregon.com) (888) 822-9300

Take a restless but gifted mechanical engineer with an entrepreneurial spirit and give him a great family candy recipe and what do you get? In Southern Oregon, it all adds up to Cary's of Oregon in Grants Pass. Founded in 2001 by Cary Cound, the toffee making company has quickly gained a reputation for unique quality, taste and

texture featured at special retail outlets across the country and by direct orders from the Cary's website. Cary's of Oregon joins a growing list of unique high-quality specialty food manufacturers that have made Southern Oregon their home.

Cound merged the two pursuits of traditional family candy-making and a professional background in manufacturing to create his new business. Cary's makes a unique English Toffee product in several varieties, but all with the unique "soft-crunch" texture that makes Cary's hand-crafted candy special. He credits the help of a lot of folks, including SOREDI, for his company's success. Expert marketing is critical to success in this line of business, and Cound is quick to recognize the talents of his business partner Wendy Just with providing critical product presentation elements needed for success. The company has enjoyed significant growth since its humble beginnings seven years ago, including expanding and moving to a larger facility in 2005. Cound expects to see a continued increase in sales in the future as well as having his products become more nationally mainstream. But it's that personal touch that tends to spark motivation for Cound. "I feel incredibly honored when neighbors or political figures purchase our products to represent our hometown to others far away," he says. "Or the young bride that wants our candy for each of her guests on her most special day." Cound can sometimes be seen in parades dressed as Willie Wonka, purple top hat and all, riding an old-time bicycle with huge wheels.

Keeping pace with an ever-changing market keeps Cound on his toes and forces him to be creative and innovative on an almost daily basis. "We continue

to question our own paradigms and then respond accordingly," he says. "Creativity is crucial to maintaining a fresh and appealing face to the product."

**"Innovation and creativity is the heartbeat of a growing business; the alternative is merely life support."**



Why Southern Oregon?

**Culture, climate, community**

## Cascade Peak Spirits, Ashland

*Distilling Oregon's first organic spirit*

Owners: Diane Paulson & David Eliassen

2 Employees

[www.cascadepeakspirits.com](http://www.cascadepeakspirits.com) (541) 482-3160

What started as a quandary over rotting potatoes in the Klamath Basin five years ago has resulted in Oregon's first organic micro-distillery to produce spirits, distilled in a small non-descript manufacturing space in Ashland. Co-founders Diane Paulson and David Eliassen, are fine

examples of the entrepreneurial spirit that is pervasive in Southern Oregon. Diane insists she was simply born an entrepreneur and loves the idea of creating something new that is also environmentally friendly. Eliassen, a native from coastal Oregon is a natural fit to a spirit that is 50% water! Paulson, though not native to Southern Oregon has called Oregon home for more than 33 years. The company helped get there start in Ashland with a SOREDI business loan.

Culture and community, great places to eat, and the weather rank high as reasons this budding company chooses to grow in Southern Oregon. Diane adds that the assertive political climate, along with the trust and respect established with numerous other local companies, associates and friends, makes Ashland their community and home. Tourism, a vibrant restaurant industry, and proximity to other natural and organic food companies and growers provide competitive advantage for their company. In five years Cascade Peak Spirits, which currently employs just two people, expects to be larger through the offering of several additional organic spirit lines, plans to employ more people, and will incorporate additional sustainable practices. Re-capturing heat from the Still's boiler, recycling the organic mash, and investing in solar panels are just a few of the efforts they plan to implement.

The continued growth of the organic industry, the penchant Oregonian's have for buying local, successful marketing of their ORGANIC NATION brand throughout the Pacific Northwest and sustained development of high quality and creative spirits will be key to their growth. Innovative employees who know how to network and engage others will create additional "strength through connections" for the company "Our employees must be passionate, self-motivated, responsible, and believe in sustainability," Diane notes. Integrity in process and people, will be foundational to their sustained growth.



**"Everybody should know as much as you do. . . great employees are engaging, and strengthen the company."**





Why Southern Oregon?  
**Supportive community, environment, talent**

## **Dream Sacks, Ashland**

*Crafting sustainable clothing and more from silk, bamboo, and soy*

Owner: Nancy Morgan

14 Employees

[www.dreamsacks.com](http://www.dreamsacks.com) (541) 482-0601

Clothing made of bamboo may not at first seem terribly appealing but surprisingly enough bamboo, according to DreamSacks founder Nancy Morgan, is breathable, strong, unbelievably soft, and perhaps the miracle plant! Bamboo

is only one of several products used by this Ashland company that is progressively moving forward in fulfilling their mission "to provide wonderfully nurturing natural products while consciously caring for people and our environment."

Morgan spent numerous years as a teacher before creating her first Dream Sack. Numerous trips afar in uncertain sleeping environments led Morgan to design a silk, easy to pack sleeping bag liner. Established in 1996, the company is not only

thriving with several product lines including clothing, bedding, and travel accessories, but is constantly thinking about their own ecological footprint. While design, marketing, and distribution are primarily handled at their Ashland facility, manufacture of their products takes place at various facilities in China. But those manufacturing facilities are not nameless, according to Morgan who visits each plant biannually to ensure the facilities are practicing in safe, employee-friendly environments. It is not much different from the favorable experience Morgan reports is true of Southern Oregon. Despite a smaller population and the challenges of transportation, Morgan say "Ashland provides a supportive community in a collaborative environment with talented people."

DreamSacks participates in nearly a dozen tradeshow yearly and experienced over 40% growth between 2006 and 2007. Morgan credits their success to a determined work approach that keeps management and staff asking questions and learning from their past. "We have great employees here and a strong cohesive team." The company consistently asks itself how the team can better relate with one another. Morgan adds that there is a certain unexpectedness in what they do and always a new opportunity on the horizon, but she loves the challenge and loves what they do. In five years, she expects the company to be growing strong with a few new products in their line-up including bamboo towels and products made from soy.

**"Keep asking and learning from your past . . . keep building employee cohesiveness."**



Why Southern Oregon?

**Climate, lifestyle, clean environment**



## **Herb Pharm, Williams**

*Cultivating the perfect herbal Disneyland home for cutting-edge success*

Owners: Sara Katz & Ed Smith

75 Employees

[www.herb-pharm.com](http://www.herb-pharm.com) (800) 348-4372

If you cannot find Williams, Oregon on a map, don't worry; it is small and remote. Sara Katz and Ed Smith, co-founders of Williams-based Herb Pharm, call it a "cul-de-sac" community – not because it has lots of suburban-type neighborhoods with their archetypical short, dead-end streets. Rather, because the community itself is pretty much at the end of the road. You don't get to Williams by accident or because you were passing through; it's a destination. And likely it is exactly this type of remoteness and pristineness that allows a company like Herb Pharm to be so successful.

After all, to be a leading company in the industry, it certainly helps to have your own 85-acre herbal farm just down the road from your manufacturing facility. "The proximity to our own farm makes us unique within our industry," says Katz. "It separates us from our competition, being in such a beautiful rural location and being so vertically integrated, having complete control of our whole process, from seed to shelf."

The company began in 1979 from very humble beginnings when Katz and Smith turned their passion of teaching and making extracts into a profitable business. Katz says there was a demand for what she and Smith were creating and they were just responding to that demand. Nearly 30 years later, Katz functions as the company's CEO, while Smith acts as the Chairman of the Board, is the 'voice of Herb Pharm' and travels the world in search of promising herbal remedies.

**"We need to be cutting-edge. Doing better demands innovation and creativity."**



One of the things that makes Herb Pharm unique, according to Katz, is the marriage of traditional medicine with modern information. "We need to be as cutting edge as we can be," she says. "We are constantly looking for ways of doing things better." Katz says Southern Oregon is a very "herbally-centered" community with a dedicated workforce and great proximity and access to larger markets, such as San Francisco and Portland.

These days, Herb Pharm is a particularly attractive place to work, given their commitment to the "green" and sustainability movement, something that has long been a part of the Herb Pharm culture. Earlier this year the American Herbal Products Association honored Herb Pharm with its Herbal Industry Leader Award. In 2006, the company won the coveted Socially Responsible Business Award at the Natural Products Expo in Baltimore.

Why Southern Oregon?

Climate, quality of life, technical talent

## ICx Technologies, Grants Pass

*Transferring sketches from the back of a napkin to a product installed in the Pentagon*

Local Managers: Richard DeFreez, Rob Beckius

7 Employees

[www.icxt.com](http://www.icxt.com) (541) 956-4031

Many may be unaware that the Southern Oregon region not only has a budding bioscience industry but also has one of the most concentrated clusters of the very specialized high-end optics and electronic sensors and particle counters industries. One small company at the center of it all in the region is ICx Technologies, a local branch of a much-larger corporation based out of Arlington, Virginia. The company has 25 field offices around the country in three major divisions – detection, surveillance and solutions.

Originally started in 1997 as MesoSystems Technology, Inc., the company was acquired by ICx in 2005 under the Biodefense business unit based out of Albuquerque. In early 2006, ICx hired a noted top expert in the field, Dr. Richard DeFreez, who happened to live in Southern Oregon and a local R&D facility was launched. Later that year, Robert Beckius relocated from Albuquerque to manage the Grants Pass operations and grow the business. While ICx is a large company, each division is managed as a small business, with an entrepreneurial culture fostered and encouraged.

The proximity to others in this highly-specialized industry and the wealth of technical talent in the region make Grants Pass an ideal location for this small, cutting-edge company, which has grown 200% in less than two years. Beckius credits the location of other similar businesses, Southern Oregon University and the Southern Oregon Bioscience Industry Consortium as key factors leading to ICx Technologies' decision to set up shop in Southern Oregon and to continue to grow and prosper here. The common denominator: creating a community of skilled local engineering and manufacturing talent.

Beckius expects the company to continue to grow and expand in the areas of chemical detection and environmental monitoring. "Innovation is driven by the problems we face every day, and creativity is fostered by our inherent desire to solve those problems with the resources at hand." Research locally has resulted in numerous security and defense products tailored to the detection of biological pathogens. The scientists and engineers of ICx are inspired by the challenge of applying cutting-edge technology to the critical needs of the day.



**"Innovation is the heart of our corporate culture . . . every employee embodies this mission."**



Why Southern Oregon?  
Family roots, great employees

## IFW Bedslide, Medford

*Taking ideas from the garage to General Motors and beyond*

Owner: Keith Carpenter

31 Employees

[www.bedslide.com](http://www.bedslide.com) (541) 842-2789

IFW Bedslide founder and President Keith Carpenter isn't shy about stating the facts when asked what makes his 8-year old company innovative. "We were simply lazy! We thought to ourselves that there must be a better way to retrieve items from the back of our trucks without crawling inside to get



"The personal involvement and buy-in from employees is critical to our success."





Why Southern Oregon?  
Four seasons, mild winters, family roots

## Microvellum, Medford

*Leading the globe in flat panel processing technology,  
empowering people to do great things*

Owners: David Peels, Taylor Grimes

32 Employees

[www.microvellum.com](http://www.microvellum.com) (541) 245-1660

A little dabbling and a manufacturing mindset resulted in the formation of a local company bent on creating its own aura.

Microvellum, currently based in Medford, is a global leader in flat panel processing technology. President David Peels was looking for better ways to engineer and draw manufacturing designs early in his career and began dabbling in AutoCad to find some solutions. After leaving southern California and meeting up with Taylor Grimes, now Vice President, the two left their former jobs and collaborated to establish Microvellum in 1999.

Microvellum now creates streamlined production management software for the secondary wood processing industry. Their software product allows manufacturers to use just one software application for flexible design and shop management. Despite the economic downturn, Microvellum is thriving. The company is forecasting 20-50% growth by 2010.

The company will soon move into its new headquarters in Central Point. Grimes states that the 32-person team enjoys an "open environment where there are no bells for breaks and everyone knows the big picture." Kids are welcome and it is not unusual to see a game of ping pong in progress in between offices. Microvellum has applied principles of lean manufacturing to its office and offers rewards to all its employees based on the company's profitability.

Peels and Grimes are passionate about the company's emphasis on education and reports they have provided over \$7.2 million in free software to educational institutions since the company was formed. Grimes expresses concern though that "nobody's graduating with any knowledge of manufacturing, engineering, running jobs, managing projects, automated processing, or shop management."

The company excels in its knowledge management and gives every employee the opportunity to sell to its existing customer base when a need is discovered. Grimes adds that to remain competitive, the company must continue to do things better. "We love empowering people to do great things . . . ideas and concepts generated here end up defining the company, the employee and even the customer." In five years, Grimes expects the company will be easily twice its size while continuing to build its presence in at least five more countries.

**"Create a work environment that is fun . . . ensure that everyone sees the bigger picture in what you do."**



Why Southern Oregon?

Quality of life, passionate workers, I-5 access

## Mycorrhizal Applications, Grants Pass

*Turning fungi into profit while helping sustain the planet*

Owners: Michael & Eileen Amaranthus

15 Employees

[www.mycorrhizae.com](http://www.mycorrhizae.com) (866) 476-7800

Mycorrhizal Applications is turning fungi into profits and helping save the planet at the same time. The company researches, produces and sells fungi that greatly accelerate plant growth and benefit plant health. Mycorrhizal (MY-core-rise-ul) fungi excrete powerful chemicals that do many amazing things aiding plant growth and soil quality. Fungi get into the small spaces of the soil, extract water and lessen the need to water plants and lawns by 30%.

Founded in 1995 by Dr. Michael Amaranthus and his wife Eileen after “Dr. Mike” spent years of academic research for universities and for the USDA, the company has enjoyed a healthy 20% annual growth rate and is poised for continued steady growth. While the company started working solely with forestry applications, Mycorrhizal Applications now provides product that has applications for 90% of all that grows, from turf to agriculture to nursery stock. Consumers can find the Pennington brand which has coated 30 million pounds of “smart seed” with “mycoadvantage” to save water for lawns at any favorite large home and garden retailer. Dr. Mike says each household that uses smart seed can annually save 3,000 gallons of water and a whopping 2.2 billion gallons of water across America.

A relatively new growth area for the business comes as the result of an increased consumer consciousness of “green” practices and global

sustainability. “There is an incredible serendipity of it all,” Dr. Mike says. For example, farms can cut traditional fertilizer use by 30-50% while maintaining or even increasing crop yield. This adds up to a lower impact on global warming, decreased water demand and reduced costs.

Creativity and innovation are essential to provide needed education to allow the company to deliver products in convenient, user-friendly ways. “Our products and efforts have now taken on a bigger, higher profile as they relate to global issues,” says Dr. Mike. “We will be moving more toward embracing solutions for environmental issues – especially the reduction of fertilizers.”

“Creativity and innovation are part of everyone’s job description,” says Eileen Amaranthus. “They are encouraged to use new ideas.” The company is “a great combination of science and business,” she says, “and we have the ability to offer living wages, jobs and benefits.”



**“If an employee asks ‘what if’, you know they’re going to be good . . . they are there to make a change.”**





Why Southern Oregon?  
**No humidity, no fire ants, lower cost of living**

## Professional Solutions, Medford

*Developing intuitive technology for small business and for Mom*

Owners: Jeffrey and Tina Blum

35 Employees

[www.procaresoftware.com](http://www.procaresoftware.com) (541) 858-3399

How does a chemical engineer by education find himself the owner of a software company and processing over one-half billion in tuition charges for childcare centers nationwide?

Simple answer, according to Jeff Blum, president of Professional Solutions: we understand the difference between software technology and the ability of the client. "We are in the business of merging available and economical technology with the needs of our clients," Jeff says confidently. "We know our market and know that our software products need to be intuitive enough for Mom to understand."

Professional Solutions was originally established in Ashland in 1992 and later expanded to Medford, becoming one of the region's first electronic commerce zone applicants, which has provided numerous tax incentives. Jeff notes that he is motivated to problem solve for the small business and he loves to stay up on technology. He says his move from Texas (during his chemical engineer days) to Southern Oregon was an easy decision. Not only was it coming home for Jeff who was raised in Springfield, but it was a purposeful choice . . . the cost of living is reasonable and both the natural and business environment are inviting. Moreover, there is no humidity and no fire ants!

The company continues to thrive and will soon expand into another adjacent building. Currently, they have tapped only 15% of the market and have lots of room to grow. However, Jeff's preference is to develop and maintain one unified campus so that their team can focus on controlled growth, develop new products, and foster a work environment that is friendly, flexible, and nimble. "Innovative talent is the basis of success for any business," Jeff comments. "What we have to offer happens faster here because our employees can see their own ideas happen immediately."

**"Our employees love living here and they stick around . . . no 3" policy and procedure manual here."**



Professional Solutions offers a full benefit package and average base salaries upwards of \$65,000 per year. The fact that employees love working for the company and living in the region may contribute to their longevity as well – some as many as 15 years. The company does not boast in a thick policy and procedure manual. Purposeful living and purposeful working seem to naturally create success and fun - something the company aims to keep nurturing here in Southern Oregon.

Why Southern Oregon?  
Quality of life, attractive place to live

## Radio Design Group, Grants Pass

*Embracing ground-breaking, challenging work that no one else does*

Owner: Jim Hendershot

22 Employees

[www.radiodesign.com](http://www.radiodesign.com) (541) 471-1100

Not everyone associates high technology with small businesses in rural Southern Oregon. Certainly there is no Intel or Hewlett Packard presence, but despite the lack of the heavy-hitters, there are more than a handful of businesses that are not only embracing high technology, but are leaders in their respective industries. One great example is Grants Pass-based Radio Design Group. Company president Jim Hendershot founded the company in 1992 in Josephine County as an evolution from his one-man consulting business. That same year he hired his first technician, and the new business took flight.

The company designs and builds high-end specialized radio frequency products for commercial and military applications and is innovative on purpose. "It's one of our core reasons for existing; our whole job is to try to find innovative solutions to problems, to find unconventional ways of doing things." Hendershot says he has diverse staff thinking outside the box that drives the business. "We would not be in business if it weren't for the creative and innovative ideas that go on around here all the time."

Radio Design Group's approach to hiring key employees is much like Southwest Airlines. Instead of ranking shareholder value and profit as the key driver, employees are at the top of the list. Hiring and caring for good, talented people comes first – the rest

(customer satisfaction and profits) takes care of itself. One of the things that make the company special is the varied work environment. Radio Design seeks out challenging work – work that others may turn away because a solution to a specific problem isn't readily apparent. "There is a lot of variability in the technologies that we use . . . there are no boring jobs here; we are not a place that turns out widgets. You walk in the door and there's always something new every day."

Radio Design Group has enjoyed exceptional business growth to date and looks to move into a brand new facility in nearby Rogue River in a few years. The move will allow the company to add up to 15 more employees, double their business volume and have at least 50% growth within five years. However, Hendershot is quick to point out that he has a good grasp on change and that it is difficult to predict the future. "Based on the past, we've learned that whatever you thought you had planned, it is subject to change."



**"We are unwilling to accept status quo and won't sacrifice employees on the altar of customers or profits."**





Why Southern Oregon?  
Relationships, cost-effective location, trust

## RHT Energy Solutions, Medford

*Guiding companies to sustainability, savings*

Owner: Buzz Thielemann

11 Employees

[www.rhtenergy.com](http://www.rhtenergy.com) (541) 770-5884

He has been endearingly named a one-man power plant by the Energy Trust of Oregon for his work in helping Oregon businesses save enough energy to power 7,500 homes. After a 27-year stint with Pacific Power, Buzz Thielemann endeavored to establish his own energy

consulting company founded on the numerous loyal relationships he had established throughout the state and RHT Energy Solutions (RHT) was established in 1998.

Now with 11 employees and annual revenues exceeding one million, RHT loves the energy and creativity being nurtured within his company and in the community. No one else is doing what RHT does with its unique focus on packaging conservation with productivity. Thielemann says it is like "having your cake and eating it, too." He should know, too, as he saves energy at his own facility with a recently added solar array.

With a "focus on the sizzle rather than the steak", RHT assists large corporations and commercial businesses in saving energy and cash – sometimes by as much as 70%.

Thielemann adds that it is an easy proposition, too, because Oregon has

significant cash and tax incentives available to help reduce energy consumption. "Oregon is way ahead," Thielemann notes, "and is the epicenter for sustainable thinking." Southern Oregon's cost-effective location with substantially less overhead is just frosting on the cake for this company that employs mechanical and electrical engineers and a biophysicist.

"We are at a pivotal point in our lives," Thielemann states. "Gas, food, vacations . . . everything will be measured by the number of BTU's consumed . . . consumption will define our standard of living and it will have a huge impact on our lives."

Thielemann says that "even with technology, success comes down to relationships and team building." In five years, Thielemann imagines nothing less than double the revenues and increased opportunities for talented workers with great attitudes and work ethic, prepared to handle an increasing appetite for renewable energy.

**"Even technology comes down to cultivating great relationships, which are easily found here."**



Why Southern Oregon?  
Pristine environment, room to roam

## Rising Sun Farms, Phoenix

*Pioneering the organic movement, one herb and one torta at a time*

Owners: Elizabeth and Richard Fugas  
30 Employees

[www.risingsunfarms.com](http://www.risingsunfarms.com) (541) 535-8331

Oregon is well-known for its organic personality so it may not come as a surprise that one of the organic movement's leading pioneers hails from Phoenix. Rising Sun Farms' owners Elizabeth and Richard Fugas put down their roots and established a farm near Mt. Ashland in 1982. Originally from Maryland, Elizabeth was a chef and was continually seeking out fresh products at the various ports visited all over the world. Soon enough she was receiving special requests from other yachts for her pesto recipes; her passion for fresh, healthy food thrived. Elizabeth and Richard, who met on a yacht, soon enough fell in love with Southern Oregon.

The region's mild climate and long growing season, coupled with culture and a community where everyone knows each other, were just a few of the ingredients in their perfect recipe which eventually led Rising Sun Farms to become one of the first vertically integrated organic farm and food processors in the nation. Their goal was clear from the start: a heart-felt responsibility to take care of the seventh generation through development, promotion, and production of organic products that would not insult the taste buds. Today, Rising Sun Farms employs 30, continues to grow about 15% yearly, and boasts over 30 national and international awards for their cheese tortas, pestos, drizzles, and more. While some operation expenses are higher here in Southern Oregon – such as transportation – Elizabeth feels blessed to be where women entrepreneurs easily thrive. Rising Sun Farms has twice been named within the top 30 woman-owned companies in Oregon. "I love what I do," Elizabeth says with exuberance. "We make great products and we love the families that this business helps support." Innovation in the company is driven by hearing every employee's voice, respecting every person, and looking for the person behind the resume. Elizabeth adds that "We are not afraid of hierarchy . . . we are one team, we all want to be treated as equals."

With a warehouse in Wisconsin the company has good distribution coverage, yet Elizabeth still tosses around the idea of an east coast facility. Regardless, one thing will remain the same; Rising Sun Farms will seize the day and guide their business by living out what they believe.



**"Innovation is driven by hearing every employee's voice . . . looking for the person behind the resume."**





Why Southern Oregon?  
Climate, quality of life, agricultural heritage

## Rogue Creamery, Central Point

*Connecting to the land, the farmer, and the customer  
through world-renown artisan cheese*

Owners: David Gremmels, Cary Bryant  
35 Employees

[www.roguecreamery.com](http://www.roguecreamery.com) (541) 665-1155

Carefully maintaining an already outstanding product is no easy task; refining and leading that product to achieve global recognition is nothing short of phenomenal. David Gremmels and Cary Bryant were not in the market to buy an artisan cheese company with a 67-year history when they stumbled across Rogue Creamery in 2002; in fact, Gremmels likes to say that the cheese found them. Yet only a few years later, the innovative duo has led the local creamery to create the world's best hand-made blue cheese – Rogue River Blue, and their unique Smokey Blue cheese, to earn numerous awards in Europe. In fact, the 35-member team has garnered more than 4 trophies and 30 medals & awards. The company is currently experiencing 20% growth annually.

Rogue Creamery is proud of their agricultural heritage and is going the distance to ensure the creamery is tied to the factory, to the valley and to the land. The local business climate makes that easy to do, the company reports, with substantial support from numerous jurisdictions and agencies including SOREDI and its business development loan fund. Rogue Creamery is particularly proud of its connections and movement to a simpler time when food was made by hand with an emphasis on quality. According to the company, consumers are no longer content to simply buy the product; they want to “know the farmer that grows their produce or the dairyman who provides their milk.”

While innovative talent is undoubtedly critical to their recipe for success, Rogue Creamery is looking out for the success of the numerous other artisans and small businesses in Central Point, as well. Lillie Belle Farms recently collaborated with the

company to create the Smokey Blue truffle and expanded into a facility which is literally across the parking lot. Rogue Creamery has in mind to create an Exit 33 tourist destination of artisan companies including a bakery, brewery, and specialty meat connoisseur to name just a few. According to Katy Coba, Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture “The owners of Rogue Creamery created the artisan movement in Oregon . . . they are the real reason why Oregon’s artisan cheese makers are so successful.” With that said, there is no doubt that the innovative duo’s Exit 33 Artisan Corridor project will be as successful.

**“The happiness of a man . . .  
consists in the mastery of his  
passions.”** *Alfred Lord Tennyson*



Why Southern Oregon?

Lower operating costs, supportive community

## Rogue Valley Microdevices, Medford

*Carving a niche as the region's first microelectronics manufacturer*

Owners: Jessica Gomez and Patrick Kayatta

8 Employees

[www.roguevalleymicro.com](http://www.roguevalleymicro.com) (541) 774-1900

Face time with local agencies (on a Saturday, no less) and a pervasive west coast entrepreneurial spirit, combined with lower operating costs, proved to be just the recipe for this high tech silicon wafer foundry. Established in 2003, founders Jessica Gomez and Patrick Kayatta brought with them a diverse background of similar business experience from the east coast and southern California. The company of eight is currently experiencing a 25% growth rate.

Although being near family and finding a central location between Portland and the Silicon Valley were important factors in their decision to start-up in Medford, the absence of adversarial business relationships was an eye-opener for both. "We were well-received by people of influence here who were willing to listen and learn," Jessica notes emphatically, "it made all the difference". In addition, Jessica adds that Southern Oregon offers substantially lower operating costs – particularly lower workers' compensation rates and less costly regulations - that make it a sustainable place to do business and raise a family.

Rogue Valley Microdevices is especially keen on the opportunity they have in Southern Oregon to create a positive environment they can be proud of. The company is big on giving back and being supportive of creativity and growth, which it says is critical to maintaining their innovative edge. "Culture in the company must start from the top, be defined, and enforced," Jessica states. Sharing the same goals and vision makes it much easier to manage the day-to-day tasks, which the company insists will lead them forward during their current expansion project and into the future. Their current facility includes a 1,000 sq. ft. class 100 clean room, a rarity in the region.

Expectations for the next five years include additional facility build-out to the point of owning their own full fabrication operation and own intellectual property, and securing substantial new investment which will aid them in reaching \$5 million in revenue by 2010. Rogue Valley Microdevices will continue to seek out creative employees that can multi-task, focus, and treat everything as important – team players that are willing to take responsibility for their part in the success of the company.



**"Great employees take responsibility for their part in the company's success."**





Why Southern Oregon?  
**Community, culture, quality of life**

## Sky Research, Ashland

*Merging gold standard technology with intentional lifestyle*

Owners: Sky and Anne Sky

34-40 Employees

[www.skyresearch.com](http://www.skyresearch.com) (541) 552-5100

If you expect to find discipline at Sky Research, you will find it. But not because it is something you acquire there as an employee; it is something you bring with you instead. In fact, Sky Research builds its performance by

cultivating what it calls a "culture of discipline".

The company was founded in Cave Junction and with a SOREDI business loan of \$150,000 in 1997 Sky Research relocated to Ashland. Today, with annual revenues of \$12 million the company is headquartered at the Ashland airport and has satellite offices in Denver, Vancouver, BC, and Boston. Sky Research was one of the first in Oregon to operate its own Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) sensors which produces incredibly accurate models of the earth's bare terrain, even under vegetation. The use of LiDAR and other advanced technologies has enabled Sky Research to become the technology leader in the assessment and detection of unexploded ordnance (UXO).

Establishing itself in southern Oregon was a personal move toward an intentional lifestyle woven with clean air, culture, and diversity in political and philosophical values. Sky notes in particular the number of self-

motivated people in the region, adding that "we are limited only by our own limitations." The company's business culture is simply to do good; to take their beliefs and create an environment that will influence millions. Sky Research aims to become a champion by choice in a work setting that is fun, enjoyable, challenging, and integrated with personal philosophy. The 82 members of the Sky Research team comprised of leading scientists and professionals, is testimony to the success of their approach.

While Sky is passionate about being the best, Anne adds that the company wants to be different and stay on the leading edge. Both agree that it is time to change it up a bit as he and Anne plan to be less active in day-to-day management. Yet in their world of constant change and development, Southern Oregon remains home for themselves and their company.

**"We are offering the opportunity to create your life here. We do not tell you how."**



Why Southern Oregon?  
Lifestyle, the river, climate

## SOTAR, Merlin

*Building top-notch whitewater rafts and accessories with a "can-do" spirit*

Owner: Glenn Lewman, Jr.  
25 Employees  
[www.sotar.com](http://www.sotar.com) (800) 467-6827



Many small businesses get started when the owner or founder has a need and cannot find a resolution within the current market – so he or she invents a better product or service than what's currently available. And just like that, a new business is formed. Such is the case with SOTAR, maker of world-class river rafts, located in the small unincorporated community of Merlin, north of Grants Pass. While location is important to retailers, sometimes it's also important for manufacturers. If the business is building top-notch whitewater rafts and accessories, it makes good sense to be next to one of the best rafting rivers in North America.

SOTAR (legend says it's an acronym for State Of The Art Rafts), also known as Whitewater Manufacturing, began life in 1980 when owner/ founder Glenn Lewman couldn't find a good enough river raft out on the market, so he began designing his own. Lewman started as a river rafter and guide, making rafting accessories out of a log cabin he built in the Southern Oregon wilderness. One of Lewman's first innovations was the concept of a self-bailing raft design, and the first production model was sold in 1984.

Lewman credits SOTAR with leading the rafting industry with every major breakthrough. Besides self-bailing, another key SOTAR innovation is radio-frequency or thermo welded seams and special fabric. After all, making a raft that is as durable and puncture-resistant is key to a good time on the river. Every major

innovation in the industry was invented by SOTAR, making the company one of the true industry-leading innovative companies founded in and continuing to operate in Southern Oregon. Innovation and

creativity don't just come by accident at SOTAR; they are deeply imbedded philosophies within the company's culture. "Good ideas can come from anywhere," says Lewman. "You need to have the willingness to try something new, something crazy and don't be afraid to make mistakes. Most of our breakthroughs came on the third or fourth attempt, not the first. We have the attitude that we can do anything. Everyone has a free hand to try something new." Lewmann adds that there is a unique "can-do" spirit in Southern Oregon that provides a great labor pool with good work ethics.

**"If someone has a good idea, it will get adopted . . . we have the attitude that we can do anything."**





Why Southern Oregon?

Natural beauty, recreation, progressive locale

## Sunday Afternoons, Talent

*Crafting sustainable, protective sunwear to complement recreational passions*

Owners: Angeline and Robbin Lacy

14 Employees

[www.sundayafternoons.com](http://www.sundayafternoons.com) (888) 874-2642

What began as a family affair creating hand-crafted picnic blankets at home is still a family affair coupled with the mission

to create the highest quality, most innovative sun protective wear available. Formed as a company in 1990, Angeline and Robbin Lacy moved from craft fairs to worldwide presence through the likes of REI. Their creative and colorful array of sun hats and protective clothing lines, all crafted with built-in sun protection, has been well-received as a viable solution to protecting the skin while still enjoying recreational pursuits. The company is growing a healthy 25% each year.

While Angeline is the creative force behind the company, with three more hats with pending patents on the horizon, Robbin is orchestrating the next trade show and pursuing entry into new worldwide markets. Robbin states there was a “magnetic pull toward Southern Oregon with its natural beauty and peaceful – yet progressive - rural setting. Sunday Afternoons is growing and thriving in its renovated company headquarters located in Talent’s old fire station. While some manufacturing remains in the region, most of the company’s product is sewn in Vietnam.

Robbin notes that Southern Oregon nurtures an encouraging environment for entrepreneurs and is receptive to new concepts. “We have freedom to experiment here, while we engage in the things we love . . . it is essential that we can just go biking whenever we want . . . it makes what we do fun.” He says the

company is always looking for better ways to do things and must keep thinking outside the box.

According to Robbin, Sunday Afternoons’ employees are exemplary when it comes to generating new ideas. Allowing

those ideas to flow freely is, and will be, instrumental to the company’s continued success.

Immediate expansion plans include locating additional warehouse space to accommodate their increased market demand. Strong growth is expected in the surfing industry, along with increased interest from optometrists and dermatologists. In the long term, Sunday Afternoons will refine its international marketing and growth while mentoring their children to manage the “lifestyle company” well into the future.

**“It is essential that we provide a fun environment that allows for ideas to flow freely . . . then we go biking.”**



Why Southern Oregon?

Recreation, geographical diversity, good people

## United Bicycle Institute, Ashland

*Riding confidently as only one of two bike mechanic schools in the nation*

Owners: Ron and Denise Sutphin

8 Employees

[www.bikeschool.com](http://www.bikeschool.com) (541) 488-1121

Sometimes one good idea leads to another and you find yourself managing a company that is bursting at its seams, adding names to a waiting list, and developing relationships with students from forty different countries. One of only two bike schools in the nation, United Bicycle Institute is thriving while offering over 50 classes yearly.

The idea originated in the 1970's with an Ashland entrepreneur, Wayne Martin, who is also credited with helping to establish United Bicycle Parts and United Bicycle Tool. In 1986, current owner Ron Sutphin bought the bike school and combined his sheet metal fabrication, mechanical, and marketing skills to grow the company from 58 students in 1985 to 600 students in 2007. Growing between 10 and 15 percent yearly, the company expects to gross one million in 2008 and Sutphin estimates that the additional local economic impact equals as much if not more. "The community is highly supportive of the school," Sutphin notes, "and the students are consistently amazed by how receptive the region is to bicyclists."

Southern Oregon is a mountain-biking mecca, according to Sutphin, and it provides a great

backdrop for his students to learn and play. While one-third to one-half of the students are already bike industry professionals, at least one third are simply bicycling enthusiasts. Sutphin says that Oregon's progressive attitude toward bicycling and the environment provides a great experience for his students; many return to visit and set up permanent residence.

Plans for an expanded facility in Ashland, a satellite facility in Portland, or maybe both, are underway now. Sutphin has also made trips to Germany and Korea to teach bike mechanics; he expects these opportunities to increase. While only employing eight people, Sutphin states he is "floored by the caliber of resumes he has received." He currently has on staff instructors who previously worked for industry-respected Giant and Shimano. "Customer service skills and knowledge, without arrogance," says Sutphin, are key ingredients for maintaining their strong reputation. Sutphin, along with his wife Denise, love what they do and state "we do it because it's a needed service. . . and because it is an industry that gives back more than it takes."



**"Our employees exude a quiet confidence . . . they are passionate about what they do and they live it."**





Why Southern Oregon?  
Quality of life, environment, people

## Visp.net, Grants Pass

*Serving innovation, doing everything better than the competition*

Owner: Todd Grannis

10 Employees

[www.visp.net](http://www.visp.net) (541) 955-6900

The Visp.net website boldly proclaims, "Visp.net was the first to offer private label wholesale ISP services..." Turns out VISP is actually an acronym for Virtual Internet Service Provider – a

business name, a term, a technology and business model that truly was invented by Visp.net founder Todd Grannis in Grants Pass in 1996. The concept allows Internet Providers to cut their costs while improving the services they offer to subscribers. Visp.net's partnered ISPs are then better able to compete with national providers without the massive investment in equipment, circuits and staff.

Visp.net is a well-managed business that has longevity, innovation, creativity and sustainability embedded in its core. "Over half of our people are directly involved in research and development," says Grannis. "We build and reinforce a culture of a lean, high performance company, by constantly eliminating waste and automating everything possible."

Grannis takes the concepts of lean business seriously, joining the Southern Oregon High Performance Enterprise Consortium (SOHPEC) and serving in a leadership capacity there. Visp.net has won many awards and accolades, including RCC/SBDC Business of the Year and twice being named by the Portland Business Journal as one of the 100 fastest-growing businesses in Oregon. Grannis says the business has grown 13 of its 14 years in business. He says 2008 is on track to be the biggest year of growth in the company's history.

Grannis hopes to grow his company to \$10 million in gross revenue in the next five years. And by maintaining a very high revenue per employee ratio, he hopes to have some of the highest paid people in the Rogue

Valley. It's not all about profit and wages however. "I want our staff to have a high quality of life at work," he says. "Most of our team invests more time at work than with their own families. So it's important that Visp.net is a place our people enjoy." A happy team translates to near zero turnover and an attitude with customers that generates a steady stream of positive customer feedback. Listening to customers and constantly seeking ways to serve them better while cutting costs is a good formula for a successful business.

**"People want to make a dent in the universe, be a part of something larger."**



## **SOREDI Board of Directors**

*Leading economic development with integrity and collaborative partnerships*

### **Lowell Gibson, President**

Lowell is currently the president of Recognition Specialties of Grants Pass and has extensive experience in the hospitality industry. He is a native of Grants Pass and also spent 14 years in Japan. He is past President of the Grants Pass /Josephine County Chamber of Commerce Board and President of the Southern Oregon High Performance Enterprise Consortium.



### **Mark VonHolle, Vice Chair**

Mark currently serves as the Vice President of S&B James Construction Management. He has held this position since January 2006, has 27 years of in-depth construction management experience and an extensive history of volunteerism. Mark is also coordinating the development of a Southern Oregon DVD for use in SOREDI's marketing and recruitment efforts.

### **Dean Wendle, Secretary/Treasurer**

Dean has been a member of the SOREDI board since in originated and has served as both President and Secretary/Treasurer. He has also served on the Rogue Community College Board of Directors for 18 years. He is a graduate of the Pacific Coast Banking School at the University of Washington and has been involved in commercial banking in California, Idaho and Oregon. He is a retired Navy captain.

### **Dr. Peter Angstadt**

Dr. Angstadt is the current president of Rogue Community College and also served as the president of Colorado Northwestern Community College. He holds a B.S. degree in Zoology, an M.Ed and an MBA. He earned his doctorate in educational policy and management from University of Oregon. He is the former mayor of Pocatello, Idaho.

### **Al Densmore**

Al is a member of the Medford City Council and owns Densmore Financial Services with his wife Sally. He has nearly thirty years experience in insurance and investment planning. He has also served as a teacher and was an Oregon State Representative and mayor for the City of Medford.

### **Dwight Ellis**

Dwight is currently a Josephine County Commissioner. He served as the Grants Pass/Josephine County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director from 1990 to 2005 and was named Oregon Chamber Executive of the Year in 2003. He was born in Medford and graduated from Medford High School in 1964. He graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1970, is a Vietnam veteran and holds as Masters Degree in Management.

## SOREDl Board of Directors, cont.

### **Jim Ford**

Jim is currently the president of PremierWest Bancorp and its subsidiary PremierWest Bank. He also served as executive vice president of planning and development for Bank of the West's Regional Banking Group, and was executive vice president and chief operating officer for Union Safe Deposit Bank.

### **Terry Goodell**

Terry is currently the general manager of the Holiday Inn Express in Grants Pass and has been serving in the Southern Oregon hospitality industry for more than 20 years. She was recently honored as Woman of the Year by the Grants Pass/Josephine County Chamber of Commerce.

### **Dr. Dave Harris**

Dave is dean of Southern Oregon University's School of Business. Prior to joining SOU, he was Professor of Management at the University of Central Oklahoma College of Business Administration where he also served as dean for five years. Dave has extensive experience in international business and lived in Japan for over sixteen years.

### **Kate Jackson**

Kate has served on the SOREDl Board of Directors for four years. She also serves on the Ashland City Council and is involved in many regional efforts, including the Regional (Land Use) Problem Solving Committee. She holds a degree in Conservation and Natural Resources and Soil Sciences from the University of California, Berkley and UC Davis.

### **Jim Lewis**

Jim is a retired Navy captain and Vietnam veteran. He has been a member of the City of Jacksonville's City Council since 1986 and has been mayor of Jacksonville since 1995. He is involved in numerous regional, state and national councils, boards and associations. He also has a law degree from College of William & Mary, Virginia.

### **Michael Lynch**

Mike is currently a managing partner of the Medford branch of Moss Adams and been with the firm since moving to Southern Oregon in 2002. In addition, he has been actively involved with SOREDl, regularly attending our monthly marketing meetings. Mike brings almost 31 years of experience in accounting to Southern Oregon. In his spare time he likes to travel, exercise and fly fish.



### **Monte Mendenhall**

Monte has over 27 years experience with PacifiCorp and is currently the Regional Community Manager for Southern Oregon. He holds a degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Monte is a past president of SOREDl and is also a member of several other boards and committees including the Medford Chamber of Commerce, Grants Pass Urban Renewal and Communities for Healthy Forests.

## SORED I Board of Directors, cont.

### Alex Pawlowski

Alex is SOREDI's outgoing president, has been involved with the financial services industry for 33 years and has an extensive background in the field of economic development. His past civic activities in the Eugene area resulted in being named West Lane Man of the Year in 1990 and Lane County Citizen of the Year in 1992.



### John Schwendener

John is the Natural Gas Operations Manager for Avista Utilities and has 31 years experience in the utilities business. He is a past president of the SOREDI board, and has been a member of the board for 8 years. He and his wife Patty live in Medford.

### CW Smith

C.W. currently serves as a Jackson County Commissioner and is perhaps best known as a former Jackson County Sheriff from 1983 to 1995 where he was involved in many new and innovative programs related to drug abuse prevention. He was voted Sheriff of the Year for 1989/1990. He has also been a radio talk show host, a private business owner and the manager of a large farming operation. He is a native of Southern Oregon and is a Vietnam veteran.

### DonnaJean Wendle

DonnaJean currently serves on the Grants Pass City Council and is very active in the community. She is the former president of the Josephine County Council of PTA and has also been on the Board of Education and chairperson for Grants Pass School District 7. She is Chairperson for the Oregon Judicial Department Citizens Review Committee, a reading buddy at Parkside Elementary, and a member of the Christian Women's Club.

It is the mission of **SORED I** to be the leader in developing and nurturing economic partnerships among private, community, and public entities to: collectively build employment opportunities; diversify the economy; and promote the creation of jobs with wages and benefits higher than the regional average, compatible with community values.



# Innovative Southern Oregon

## Powered by Talented People



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