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## Del. touts image at biotech conference

### Economic office's entire budget staked on event

By STEVEN CHURCH / The News Journal  
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PHILADELPHIA -- This is not your ordinary convention booth.

Delaware's exhibit at the convention center in Philadelphia is two stories tall, features a 10-foot-diameter rotating sign, and has thousands of wildflower seeds and Colorado blue spruce saplings that will be given away to people attending the 2005 Biotechnology Industry Organization convention.

This year's show, which started Sunday, is expected to draw thousands of business executives, scientists and entrepreneurs from around the world. The annual convention is dedicated to a fast-growing industry that uses genetic material to build everything from bug-repelling corn to stem cells for drug research to pigs that can be milked for a rare human protein.

Government officials from Delaware and more than 30 other regions in the United States have set up exhibits at the convention center in hopes of catching the attention of some of the 18,000 people expected at BIO 2005 through Wednesday. The area booths are competing with those of 30 other countries, including Germany, which has a large, one-story booth across the aisle from Delaware's exhibit.

Economic development officials in Delaware are hoping to plant a business-friendly image in the minds of biotech executives, especially those from overseas companies looking for office space in the United States.

"The international companies are looking for a foothold in the United States,"

said Judy McKinney-Cherry, director of the Delaware Economic Development Office. "You want them to think about Delaware."

So far, the economic development office has spent its entire annual marketing budget -- \$300,000 -- on the convention. And that doesn't include hotel rooms and salaries for Delaware's 10-person contingent.

Gov. Ruth Ann Minner arrived at the convention Sunday afternoon to do her part. She will hold at least 15 meetings during her two-day visit.

"We're well-known," said Minner, who has been named Governor of the Year twice by the Biotechnology Industry Organization. "We just want to continue to reinforce that."

Delaware's biotech industry is small compared with those of Massachusetts and California, where billions of dollars in research funds are expected to be spent in the coming decades. But the state has two related companies that give it instant credibility at the convention: drug giant AstraZeneca and the DuPont Co.



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To promote Delaware's business-friendly environment, workers create an impressive display Sunday at the convention.

This is the second time that Delaware has invested heavily in the convention to lure a biotech firm to the state. One year after the 2003 convention in Washington, ANP Technologies, which develops devices for the U.S. Department of Defense, moved to Newark from Aberdeen, Md. Since then, the company has grown from 10 employees to 17.

Most drug and biotech firms in Delaware employ a few dozen people or fewer, although a handful of companies in the state have a significant number of workers. Animal health firm Intervet employs 380 people, while drug developer Incyte has about 190. Drug manufacturer Noramco has 163 employees, and Quest Pharmaceuticals has 140.

Much of the research done at smaller companies is supported by the Delaware Biotechnology Institute, a nonprofit unit of the University of Delaware that helps professors and new businesses doing cutting-edge research in the life sciences develop products and create spinoff companies. The institute has about 25 state-of-the-art laboratories.

Since its creation, the institute and the adjacent Delaware Technology Park have been credited with bringing thousands of jobs here, along with more than a dozen businesses.

Most of the biotech convention programs start today, when the exhibit floor where Delaware has its booth will have its official opening.

Nonetheless, on Sunday, there were a few thousand attendees floating in and out of the workshops.

"This is where new ideas are brought out into the open and where the newest technologies surface," said Thomas G. West, global director of biotech affairs for DuPont and vice president of the company's seed-making subsidiary, Pioneer.

About 6,000 of the conventioners were from overseas, according to convention organizers. Many are government regulators and scientists who, like officials in Delaware, are eager to lure companies to their countries.

"It's a chance to see multiple countries in one place," West said. "By and large, the right people are here."

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