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EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

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Tour of Del. bio institute part of event

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While most of the events at BIO 2005 will be taking place in Philadelphia, attendees arriving early will get a chance to tour the four-year-old [Delaware Biotechnology Institute](#) in Newark.

The visit is part of a program called BioParks, a pre-event conference taking place June 17 and 18 that will focus on the trends and issues affecting biotechnology research parks -- and help Delaware raise its profile to BIO visitors.

"It's really a coup," said Dale Ervin, director of the New Castle County Economic Development Council. "It's not only a chance to show off the institute, it's a chance to show off the entire region."

The \$45 million Delaware Biotechnology Institute serves as an incubator for early-stage biotechnology companies. It was created through a joint venture involving the state; its academic research institutions, led by the [University of Delaware](#); and industry partners, including AstraZeneca and DuPont.

Ervin said representatives of Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey want to use BIO 2005 to show visitors the variety of resources the tri-state region has to offer life sciences companies.

"California is often referred to as the number-one biotech state, but if you took their footprint, it would go from New Jersey to North Carolina," she said. "We want people coming here to Philadelphia for BIO to realize this region has the critical mass that is at least equal to, if not greater than, California. The BioParks tour (which also includes Philadelphia's Science Center) will really emphasize that."

Delaware's pavilion at the event will feature 17 companies and organizations including [Fraunhofer USA](#) and its center for molecular biotechnology.

"Part of my job will be not only to get the word out that Delaware is a good location for life sciences companies but also to talk about the unique resources we already have like Fraunhofer," Ervin said.

Fraunhofer USA, a wholly owned subsidiary of Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft of Germany, is a nonprofit research organization that develops new technologies and products under government and private industry contracts.

"Our focus is developing plant-based technologies for making therapeutic proteins and therapeutic vaccines," said Vidadi Yusibov, executive director of Fraunhofer's molecular biotechnology center.

Yusibov said when Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft was looking for a facility site in the United States about five years ago, they picked Delaware after the state committed \$3.6 million over four years for the project.

"That was absolutely vital for our growth and success," Yusibov said.

Since opening in 2001, the organization has grown from two to 27 employees. It has an annual operating

budget of \$4.5 million and has attracted more than \$16 million in grants, contracts and licensing fees -- including support from the National Institutes of Health and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Yusibov said Fraunhofer USA has spun off two Delaware companies, Athena Bio and Studio Biotech, from the technology it helped develop. Among its current projects are developing new vaccine products with Integrated BioPharma Inc., which has operations in Hillside, N.J., and Kennett Square, Pa.

"BIO 2005 is a place where we expect to make new contacts and learn about other technologies that may complement our own," Yusibov said. "People have already called us and we have five meetings set up (at the conference)."

Ervin said Delaware will also have its presence felt the last day of the event, June 22, when a gathering for students and teachers participating in BIO 2005's high school bioscience competition will be held on the Kalmar Nyckle.

The Kalmar Nyckle, Ervin said, is a replica of the Swedish ship that first landed in Delaware in 1630 and established the first European settlement in the Delaware Valley. The tall ship docked along the Wilmington riverfront will sail up to Penn's Landing for the reception.

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