

Lots of neat toys given to biotech girls and boys

BIO 2005

Philadelphia Hosts Biotech's Biggest Show

ONLINE EXTRA

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At one end of the BIO 2005 biotechnology conference, everyone was talking enterprise development and synergistic intellectual property. But a few yards away, it was all about the blackjack table, Belgian chocolate and, oh yes, Ebola-virus toys.

With more than 1,500 exhibitors from 30 countries and 28 states crowding the exhibit hall, a free flickering neon pen just would not do to court the business of biotech. Australia opened the wine

bottles before sunset. New York offered an oxygen bar. A business-card raffle could win an iPod, a plasma TV, two free airline tickets, or a Sony PlayStation.

And then, there was the state of Maryland.

Maryland paid Olde City Taxi to hand out receipts that say, "Maryland: Where Bioscience Is Contagious." It hired people to walk around the conference in biohazard suits, and gave away eyeball-goopy stress balls and plush toys in the shapes of many viruses: See **STATES** on C6

BIO 2005 Notes

Big backing from law firms

In the pantheon of corporate backers of BIO 2005, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius L.L.P. is right up there in the "major-sponsors" category, along with Pfizer Inc. and the State of Iowa.

The firm has made "a low-six-figure commitment" to the event, "when you add up the

various things we do," said Stephen Paul Mahinka, head of its life-sciences practice. That includes giving out thousands of sleek, gray backpacks bearing its name and holding a party Monday evening at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

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Where pens won't do as giveaways

STATES from C1

flu, Ebola, and the black plague. "If you come by at 5, we're having a giveaway where you could win \$250 worth of Maryland blue crabs," said Lawrence C. Mahan, who works for the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development.

"Free crabs? Oh, I'm sold!" said Anne Thompson, from the SATAI Network, a biotech company in Texas.

Maryland's officials, who have been coming to the annual BIO conference for at least five years, said they decided to focus this year's displays and giveaways on biohazard research, hoping to reach out to companies that might want to partner with universities or government agencies. "People know Johns Hopkins, they know NIH, but if you ask them, they think they're in Washington," Mahan said.

The conference, which started in 1993 and expanded in 1997, at first attracted mostly vendors from industrialized countries and from states looking to attract

businesses, said Raymond Briscuso Jr., BIO's executive director. It costs \$3,800 for a basic booth, but large exhibits such as Wisconsin's cost more than \$100,000, representatives from the booths said.

While the exhibits were once staffed by representatives of a state's chamber of commerce, now the biotech companies housed in the states serve as the best sales force, Briscuso said. "The companies are the ones who can say: 'This is how we work with the university; this is how the state helps us,'" he said.

Between the schmoozing to see who could develop the next big drug or pay for the next great research project, attendees walked through with (free) bags full of (free) toys, using their (free) pedometers to see how far they walked to get the goodies. For the record, Pennsylvania gave away a Slinky, and New Jersey handed out a mini cardboard doctor's bag full of Maalox, Excedrin and ChapStick. "We just give away the drugs!" said

Michelle Ruess from the New Jersey Commission on Science and Technology. Almost all of the 2,000 boxes were gone, she said.

Debbie Sarlo, an advertising executive from New York, had a Quintiles bag full of Frisbees, Russian dolls, and a sleek tool set. Some giveaways — like Medarex Inc.'s boxing mice and the polar bear toys from Manitoba province — were gone by the second day.

Sarlo's favorite so far: the sticky lungs from Dyax, a Massachusetts company working on a drug for cystic fibrosis. The lungs were not as popular as the heart the company offered last year, said Guy Van Meter, associate director of corporate development. Dyax gave away 3,000 hearts in six days. "We could only get them made in green or purple, which isn't so good for lungs," Van Meter said. "But people remember it, and know it. They say: 'Oh yeah, Dyax, the sticky-lungs company.'"

Not all the giveaways were for everyone. Jeffrey Loeb, who

works for Glytag, a biotech company in Michigan, toted an MP3 player from a certain pharmaceutical company he refused to name. "We're talking about doing business with them, and they said: 'Here, you can have the VIP giveaway,'" Loeb said. "I'm hoping that means something good."

A few aisles over, at Integrated Project Services, a Lafayette Hill company that designs and builds laboratories, people stood around a blackjack table. The dealer was a company partner. The game was for a satellite radio and a year's subscription, and the price was a business card with contact information.

It was the first year IPS had tried the game, and it was clearly a success. "Yesterday the winner got a Hummer limo ride to Atlantic City and had dinner," said Shannah Schodle, a spokeswoman. She declined to say how much all the prizes cost.

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