Businesses That Innovate Avoid Extinction

by Corey Albert

THE DINOSAURS TAUGHT HUMANKIND
an important lesson — those who fail to change and adapt will ultimately face extinction.

It’s a lesson two local Eugene businesses have taken to heart as they draw inspiration from the legacy of the dinosaurs to introduce new and innovative products into today’s high-tech, global marketplace.

As the amount of petroleum left over from the remains of dinosaurs and other ancient life forms grows ever scarcer, SeQuential Biofuels is helping to fill the gap by producing biodiesel from such substances as used cooking oil and canola. Additionally, the company operates a modular manufacturing plant that enables it to almost effortlessly expand or scale back based on its production needs.

These cutting-edge advances have enabled SeQuential to expand from two to 35 employees in the span of four years. They also resulted in the company winning the innovation category at the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce’s 2006 Emerald Awards.

“It’s really bolstered morale,” says SeQuential co-founder Ian Hill. “We still feel a little bit like we’re a startup company.”

Another nominee in the innovation award category was Kaibridge, Inc. Kaibridge has developed software called DinoMorph that builds highly accurate 3-D skeletal models of animals, and animates those models so they react to real-time forces.

The company — which was formed in 2004 and employs five full-time people and many independent contractors — has already marketed its DinoMorph software to the film and gaming industries, museums and researchers.

Kaibridge President Dan Mayhew believes that top-notch employees are naturally attracted to the most innovative of companies.

“If our company didn’t innovate, we wouldn’t have the kind of talent we have,” Mayhew says.

Hill, meanwhile, believes that innovation is one of the most vital of all components in any successful business model.

“The free market really thrives on and nurtures innovation,” Hill says. ✦