



## STARTUPS & INNOVATIONS

By Jessie Yount | [yount@ocbj.com](mailto:yount@ocbj.com)

### OFFICE SPACE

**EmeritusDx** recently built out its cancer testing laboratory—growing from 950 square feet to 4,500 square feet—at 10 Pasteur in Irvine.

The company, formed at the beginning of 2021, made the decision to expand because it is seeing cancer testing volumes return to pre-pandemic levels, after seeing industry-wide declines as much as 40% during the pandemic, according to Chief Executive **Robert Embree**.

EmeritusDx is a CLIA-certified laboratory offering anatomic pathology and fluorescence in situ hybridization services for the early detection of cancers. It is currently developing its own tests for urinary tract infections (UTI), as well as urological and gastrointestinal cancers.

It works with a variety of medical groups, surgery centers and hospitals. It also expects to generate revenue from lab services agreements with other laboratories in the future.

Embree and President **Jason Allchin** launched Emeritus based on their vision of creating a laboratory with a strong employee culture that controls costs efficiently and produces the highest level of quality.

Embree was a co-founder of Irvine-based UTI test



10 Pasteur: EmeritusDx expands Irvine lab to 4,500 SF

maker **Pathnostics** and Allchin served there as vice president of operations. Allchin left in 2018 and Embree departed in 2019 after the company's sale to **Water Street Healthcare Partners** in 2019. Both got started in the industry at US LABS, now part of **LabCorp**.

The company expects to grow from about 8 to 40 employees by year's end. Emeritus also offers a histologist training certification program for recent college graduates.

**Matregenix Inc.** has invested \$1.5 million in a new manufacturing site at the **University Lab Partners** wet lab incubator at **UCI Research Park**.

The site triples the company's nanofiber production capacity and comes at a time as it experiences "significant inbound demand" from mask makers and heating, ventilation and air conditioning companies, Chief Executive **Sherif Soliman** said.

Matregenix was founded in Boston in 2018 and relocated to Irvine in late 2019. While the company was originally focused on developing a dental barrier membrane, it pivoted to address



Matregenix uses electrospinning for the production of nanofibers

the pandemic last year, and created a nanofiber filter membrane with 99% filtration for use in masks and other medical apparel.

Since then, third-party labs have also shown the filter membrane has the ability to destroy 100% of bacteria and 99.7% of viruses upon touching the surface.

Matregenix, which hired 12 technical researchers in the past year, is currently generating revenue from manufacturers of N95 respirators as well as contract manufacturing agreements with medical device companies. It is 100% self-funded to date.

### PARTNERSHIPS

**Virtanza**, a Laguna Beach-based educational course creator, recently launched a technology sales training program at the **University of Maryland, Baltimore County Training Centers**.

The 13-week online course includes an introduction to information technology with an emphasis on the cloud, big data and cybersecurity. Students will also earn five **Salesforce.com** badges and an **Amazon Web Services** Certified Cloud Practitioner certification by the end of the program.

The offering enables "learning outcomes you can only get when you layer the premier technology training team with the proven results of our experiential sales program," Virtanza Chief Executive **Debbie Holzcamp** said.

Holzcamp launched Virtanza, registered as **Sales2Job Academy Inc.**, to fill a gap in sales education amid increasing demand for sales professionals in 2018.

Today, the company white labels its courses for 21 schools and universities, including **University of Califor-**



Virtanza grows with tech sales offering

**nia**, Irvine and, most recently, **University of California, San Diego**.

Virtanza closed a \$1.4 million seed round of financing in November. Backers include **OSEA Angel Investors**, **Tech Coast Angels**, **Arizona Tech Investors**, **Band of Angels**, **Expert Dojo** and **M&K Angels**.

### NEW HIRES

Newport Beach-based clinical-stage drugmaker **Aeon Biopharma Inc.** this month tapped **Chad Oh** as chief medical officer.

Oh was most recently vice president of clinical development at the **Weinberg Group**, a regulatory and compliance services firm. He previously held positions in clinical development at **Revance Therapeutics** and **Glenmark Pharmaceuticals**.

He brings "extensive clinical knowledge and experience that provides us great confidence in his ability to lead ABP-450 through all phases of development and the implementation of a

successful regulatory strategy," Chief Executive **Marc Forth** said in a statement.

Aeon is developing a botulinum toxin called ABP-450—the same toxin used in Newport Beach-based **Evolus'** wrinkle-smoothing aesthetic product **Jeuneau**—for therapeutic treatments. In April, Aeon dosed its first patient in a Phase 2 study for cervical dystonia, a movement disorder caused by the involuntary contraction of neck muscles.

The company raised a \$25 million investment from South Korean partner **Daewoong Pharmaceutical** last September.

### LAUNCH



African Dream Foods sauces and salts range from \$5.50 to \$15.95

**African Dream Foods** of Orange recently unveiled its collection of a dozen hot sauces, salts and seasoning products that are made and imported from South Africa.

"This line of sauces and salts is our way of bringing the incredible flavors of Africa to the U.S. and beyond," founder and Managing Director **David Schmunk** said.

"The giving back aspect of the brand is one I hope will grow over time, and there's no better way to earn the attention of an audience than through their taste buds."

Partial proceeds of the products, which retail for between \$5.50 to \$15.95 via **Amazon Prime** and **Walmart**, are donated to conservation groups such as **Paws Trails** and **Wild Shots Outreach** in Africa.

Schmunk combined his passions for travel, hot sauces and wildlife conservation to come up with the idea for African Dream Foods, and began the company's product rollout in February.



NousLogic remote patient monitoring hub

**NousLogic Healthcare Inc.** of Irvine is scaling its healthcare event management system and Medicare-reimbursable remote patient monitoring platform to enhance care in hospitals and home.

The company's hospital platform uses sensors and smart analytics to provide contract tracing and hand washing compliance. It aims to help hospitals avoid disease spread and infection-related fines and, in turn, increase return on investment, according to founder and Chief Executive **Hoang Nhu**.

Meanwhile, NousLogic's remote patient monitoring platform lets physicians measure patients' vital signs such as blood pressure, O2 saturation and other key metric from homes. In addition, the technology connects to other smart accessories such as a pillbox that tracks proper use of medication and an emergency SOS button.

The remote monitoring offerings are part of NousLogic's mission to create "wellness from home," a term that Nhu coined after the popular "work from home" phrase.

Nhu originally launched NousLogic, a developer of a range of Internet of Things technologies, in 2013. He was previously a chip lead and scientist at **Broadcom** and **Hewlett-Packard**, both for over a decade.



Chad Oh  
Chief Medical Officer  
Aeon Biopharma