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### **Kalamazoo Companies Emerge as Big Winners in MTTC Funding Awards**

Kalamazoo, MI: Four Kalamazoo-based proposals – including three from tenants of the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center (SMIC) – received part of the Michigan Technology Tri-Corridor funding awarded by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm yesterday.

Of the \$27.3 million awarded to 24 award winners, nearly \$5.6 million will come to Kalamazoo. Those SMIC tenants receiving funding are: NephRx Corporation, \$665,110, for the Advancement of AMG-18 for treatment of Mucositis; ProNAi Therapeutics, Inc., \$1,735,520, for the development of DNAi, a new cancer therapeutic technology; and, zuSyn, Inc., \$403,330, for the development of new therapeutic leads through Chemoselective Sugar Ligation to correct vision problems.

Western Michigan University's Center for Excellence for Simulation Research was awarded \$2.79 million. They are one of only two recipients granted individual awards of more than \$2.5 million. The award will enable the WMU center to focus on medical simulation based on a model of new science used successfully in the airline industry. New hardware and software for the medical simulation industry are expected to be created based on research conducted there.

Southwest Michigan First board chair, William D. Johnston, president of Greenleaf Companies, said the announcement validates the success of the community-wide effort to launch life sciences start-ups and to build a regional cluster of companies that can compete on a global scale.

"Individually, these awards speak to the caliber of scientific talent that is based in our community," Johnston said. "Collectively, they demonstrate Kalamazoo's capacity for cutting edge scientific discovery on a global scale. "

Since April of 2003, through a community-wide Stick Around campaign spearheaded by Southwest Michigan First, Kalamazoo has launched more than two dozen life sciences companies, helping to make Michigan's the fastest growing life sciences cluster in the nation. In a press release issued by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), the administrators of the MTTC program, the Governor's office said that the state has seen the formation of more than 100 life sciences companies over the past five years state-wide.

The Governor's awards announcement followed a meeting of the Tri-Corridor Steering Committee, which based the awards on recommendations from the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences. A total of 111 qualifying applications were submitted and narrowed to a field of 51 proposals by the AAAS, the world's largest association of scientist and engineers. Locally, four of five proposals that reached the interview phase of the process received funding. Last year, nine Kalamazoo-based proposals generated interviews by the MTTC committee and five received funding.

The Southwest Michigan Innovation Center is a 58,000 square-foot incubator/accelerator designed to provide wet-lab space, access to venture funding and business services to emerging companies in biosciences and high technology. Construction of the facility, located at the Western Michigan University Business Technology Research Park in Kalamazoo – a state-designated SmartZone – was completed in the spring of 2003. For more information, visit [www.kazoosmic.com](http://www.kazoosmic.com).

Southwest Michigan First is an economic development organization providing business development, retention and attraction programs throughout the Kalamazoo region. A privately funded 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation, SMF was formed by leaders in business and higher education to promote economic development. SMF provides entrepreneurs and established companies with a wide range of corporate business development services and support. For more information, visit [www.southwestmichiganfirst.com](http://www.southwestmichiganfirst.com), or contact the SMF offices at 877.553.9588.