

KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

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Ohio company acquires local startup CeeTox

By Jane C. Parikh

One of the first startup companies in Western Michigan University's Business Technology and Research Park—CeeTox Inc.—has been acquired by an Ohio based medical-device testing company.

The agreement was signed May 6 and the acquisition was announced Tuesday by Southwest Michigan First, the region's economic development organization.

North American Science Associations Inc., of Northwood, Ohio, has entered an agreement to acquire 51 percent of the outstanding shares of CeeTox and will acquire certain undisclosed goals are met.

Jim McKim, founding president and chief officer of CeeTox, said North American Science Associates could take ownership anytime between one and three years depending on CeeTox's performance. McKim would not disclose financial terms of the deal. He said CeeTox has about 10 shareholders.

"CeeTox is growing rapidly in a highly competitive market." McKim

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Founding president and CEO of CeeTox Inc., in a press release

said in a press release. "The acquisition by NAMSAs provides CeeTox with the tools it needs for future growth. Our products and services represent a new line of business for NAMSAs."

CeeTox determines the toxicity of drugs before they get too far down the drug development pipeline. It is a privately held company with seven employees and one intern.

Attempts Tuesday to directly contact McKim, who will retain his titles and continue to run the company, were not successful.

Southwest Michigan First spokeswoman Gretchen Johnson said

CeeTox will remain of the 15 businesses housed inside the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center at the park. McKim founded CeeTox in 2003, after Pharmacia Corp. was acquired by Pfizer Inc. and his job as head of one of the company's toxicology units was eliminated.

"This gives him (McKim) an injection of cash to shore up the company," Johnson said. "It's a young company and it's still in a fragile state."

She said the acquisition expands North American Science Associates, which has primarily been doing medical device research.

Founded in 1967, North American Science Associates employs more than 300 people. It has laboratories in Georgia, California, and France as well as sales agents around the globe.

In a press release Jeff Blair, president and chief executive officer of CeeTox, said North American Science Associates' primary focus has been safety and efficacy testing for medical device companies, with a small percentage of its business coming from the pharmaceutical industry.