



Northland Foundation's Business Loan Program Benefits Two Area Businesses with Financing of \$175,000

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Two area organizations have recently received loans through the Northland Foundation's Business Finance Program. **Financing totaling \$175,000 was made to Harbor Centers, Inc. and Tissue Engineering Consultants, Inc.**

The Business Finance Program offers flexible financing to new or existing businesses in the seven-county Arrowhead Region to help retain or create high-quality jobs and sustain the economic vitality of northeastern Minnesota. Since 1988, the Northland Foundation has provided more than \$40 million in financing and helped businesses generate or save nearly 6,000 jobs.

Harbor Centers, Inc. – Duluth

The Northland Foundation recently provided a direct business loan to Harbor Centers, Inc. (HCI) to help finance HCI's purchase of *The Senior REPORTER* and *Senior & Caregiver Services Directories* (published for Itasca County, Northern St. Louis County, Duluth, Carlton County, and Douglas County).

HCI is a non-profit organization that provides programs and services to adults age 50 and older to encourage health and wellness, education, recreation, and social connections. HCI manages two adult community centers in Duluth—one in the Rainbow Center and the other in the Lincoln Park Center—as well as coordinates a volunteer-based chore and transportation service for residents of the centers and the surrounding community.

HCI's acquisition of the publications is considered a social enterprise—an income-generating venture run by a nonprofit to support its social mission. Revenues from the *REPORTER* and *Services Directories* will assist HCI in replacing financial support recently cut by St. Louis County as well as help to underwrite expansion of Harbor Centers' programs.

Tissue Engineering Consultants, Inc. – Duluth

The Northland Foundation has provided "bridge" financing in the form of a short-term promissory note issued to Tissue Engineering Consultants, Inc. (TECI). These resources will be used in support of TECI's private placement offering, now in circulation, as well as advancement of its new hydrogel material and associated production instruments.

TECI's principal, Dr. John H. Brekke, is a pioneer in the fields of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine. The firm has developed a unique, biomimetic hydrogel intended as a three-dimensional environment for study of stem cells and their therapeutic applications. Early research indicates the material can be used to advantage in many other cell biology investigations. It is now viewed as a basic research tool for cell and molecular biologists studying a wide variety of cell types and behaviors, and its first marketing efforts will be directed to these research fields. The hydrogel is also under investigation as a means of treating intervertebral disc disease, a primary cause of low back pain.

Northland Foundation support will also advance a related project being developed by Dr. Brekke in collaboration with Sam A. Firoozi of the University of Minnesota Duluth's Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI). This effort focuses on design and fabrication of a proprietary tool for commercial-scale production of TECI's hydrogel material. While the instrument is being designed to meet specific performance requirements demanded by production of the hydrogel, it is clear that it has a wide variety of applications in unrelated fields such as the pharmaceutical industry, food processing, and high-efficiency fuel combustion.

Dr. Brekke holds numerous patents in the fields of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine and has published on these subjects in peer-reviewed journals and textbooks. He is currently an Adjunct Professor in UMD's Department of Chemical Engineering, developing an interdisciplinary Tissue Engineering curriculum.



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