

Business | Innovation takes to the streets at TEDx San Diego

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Downtown San Diego — From new uses for lasers to a better type of catheter, about 20 innovative local companies took their new products to the street outside Copley Symphony Hall at Saturday's annual TEDx San Diego.

"We bring analytics to the masses," said Norb Seufert, a founder of the 3-year-old company Athelytix, which uses optical lasers to track the distance, trajectory and speed of balls used in sports.

For now, there's only a prototype, but Seufert sees a day soon when his company's device is widely used in professional baseball, golf and tennis, maybe in Little League batting cages, and even in virtual games on computers.

"Analytics are fundamentally changing sports," Seufert said. "The goal is to accelerate player development."

The companies set up their outdoor booths in the 700 block of B Street, which was closed to vehicles for the event. TED stands for "technology, entertainment and design," and the examples didn't disappoint.

Technology for travelers was the focus of Samantha Urban, a software engineer and the founder of the 5-year-old Point Loma company Urban Translations. Her product was an electronic tablet offering information in any language.

"We install these on a wall or on a table," Urban said. Guests at hotels, resorts and casinos can use the tablets to control their room's television, temperature or window blinds, find nearby attractions, make reservations, order tickets.

Thousands of the tablets already are used in Las Vegas, she said, and she sees a worldwide market for them.

A functional cure for Type 1 diabetes was the goal for Josie Babin, a senior research associate for the young Torrey Pines company Viacyte.

Her company's product, now in clinical trials, is a stem cell-derived product that can be implanted beneath a patient's skin. It would eliminate the need for the multiple daily insulin shots that inconvenience the lives of Type 1 diabetes patients.

Another medical device on display was an easy-to-use urinary catheter for women, developed by Bonsall physician Camille Newton and her husband, Ray. It allows women to sleep through the night, or day, without getting up to urinate.

“Incontinence is a big problem around the world,” Ray Newton said. “We feel like we are making a big contribution to women’s health.”

Water Pigeon co-founder Sarp Sekeroglu demonstrated his invention, an electronic water meter reader. The device scans the meter and transmits the digital data over the internet. It eliminates the need to walk from meter to meter, and allows utilities to constantly monitor their connections for leaks, backflows and other problems.

His company has pilot programs underway with water districts in Valley Center, Del Mar, Oceanside and Escondido, he said.

Carlsbad company Chilldyne demonstrated its system for water-cooled computers.

Companies can put more chips in less space and save on energy costs by using his system, said Chilldyne’s chief technological officer, Steve Harrington. The vacuum-controlled system eliminates the chance of leaks, the biggest worry with other water-cooled systems.

“There’s other people doing liquid cooling, but there’s no one else doing direct-to-the-chip under negative pressure,” he said.

TED talks began in 1984, and TEDx events are independently organized spinoffs. The basic idea is to spread innovative ideas through short, powerful talks.

Saturday’s eighth-annual San Diego event featured 15 speakers and performers, including scientists, inventors, actors, artists and musicians inside Symphony Hall.

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