

## BUILDING A HUB

### Research fuels growth of park

BY DAVID WENNER  
Of The Patriot-News

At the region's first life sciences research park, a coffee shop is a sign of progress and hope.

The shop is expected to open by summer at the Hershey Center for Applied Research in Derry Twp.

It reflects the park's growth. It might serve as a hub for networking that can enhance its success.

A bigger milestone could occur sooner: construction of a second building at the park.

The first building opened nearly a year ago and is 65 percent full. Seventy-five percent will trigger construction of the second building, said Linda Butcher, the executive director. Butcher, who said she's working with 10 prospects, predicts it will happen within three months.

"Having two buildings will be a great stamp of approval for this region — that we are a real life sciences business hub," Butcher said.

Jim Berens, president of Wexford Science & Technology, the park developer, is more tentative, saying he expects construction of the second building will begin this year.

The park is near Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

The goal is to attract businesses that will commercialize products based on research at the medical center.



CHRISTINE BAKER, The Patriot-News

**Apogee Biotechnology Corp., a small startup firm that develops drugs, is a tenant in the Hershey Center for Applied Research. Senior research scientist Yan Zhuang is developing sphingosine kinase inhibitors, an agent that could fight tumors.**

Backers hope it will lead to a strong local industry in the "life sciences," a sector expected to be a long-term source of jobs.

They also want drugs and medical devices invented at the medical center to be commercialized locally.

While some competing research parks are landlocked, Butcher said, the Derry Twp. park has 165 acres. The land is owned by Hershey Trust Co.

About 130 people work there now. Most are employed by the medical center, which moved its pharmacology department to the park. One of the reasons was so the department could work closely with entrepreneurs.

Another occupant is Apogee Biotechnology Corp., which develops drugs for diseases including cancer.

One potential tenant involves a physician at the medical center who is developing a new test for macular degeneration and hopes to form a company to manufacture it, Butcher said. Another is a Japanese firm that does clinical medical trials.

Many of the likely tenants rely on funding from venture capitalists.

Emily Mendell, a spokeswoman for the National Venture Capital Association, said a bad economy doesn't affect investment in the life sciences as much as other industries.

While some investors are focused on the short term, investors in the life sciences look a decade ahead, she said.

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