



Digital Book Publisher One of Nine Venture Acceleration Funds Award Recipients

By Kurt Steinhaus, Director of the Community Programs Office at Los Alamos National Laboratory

Customizabooks, a digital publisher of children’s books, is one of nine New Mexico businesses to receive a total of \$340,000 in Venture Acceleration Fund awards from Los Alamos National Security LLC and Los Alamos County.

The Rio Rancho company plans to use its \$50,000 award to expand distribution channels for its digital book applications, which create electronic books and convert existing books into digital content that’s accessible on all major mobile platforms, according to founder Tom Anderson, who manages the company with his brother, Bill.



The money also will help the Andersons finish developing their latest product, the Blackfish Story Creator, which allows people to create and share their own digital stories.

What makes Customizabooks different than other e-books, Anderson said, is its high level of interactivity, functionality and customization — features that carry over from his 11 years as the founder and chief executive officer of Novint Technologies, the world’s leading video game company in the field of 3-D touch. “At our core, we’re a tech company, not a book company,” he said.

Customizabooks technology allows readers to interact with the characters in the books it publishes and to direct the actions of those characters. Each page incorporates touchable objects, music and sound effects. The same story can be read at different reading levels.

Anderson hopes to see the company become a leader in the rapidly expanding digital book publishing market. And that’s the type of ambition that the VAF program strives to encourage.

Helping entrepreneurs learn and grow is one of the goals of Los Alamos Connect's VAF program, which is administered by the Regional Development Corporation with assistance by LANL’s Technology Transfer Division and the Community Programs Office. Los Alamos Connect, the facilitator of the VAF program, is the principal economic development investment

by Los Alamos National Security LLC (LANS), the company that manages Los Alamos National Laboratory.

LANS plans to continue these collaborative investments to help other companies exhibiting high growth potential get started and succeed in Northern New Mexico. LANS has invested \$2.8 million in 39 New Mexico businesses since launching the fund in 2006.

The VAF program was created to commercialize technologies developed at Los Alamos National Laboratory, but it has since expanded to include all types of businesses at all development stages. Startups and early stage companies get most of the funding, and preference goes to companies based in the Northern New Mexico counties of Los Alamos, Santa Fe, Sandoval, Rio Arriba, Taos, San Miguel and Mora.

Of the money bestowed to 2013 award winners, \$315,000 originated with LANS and \$25,000 with Los Alamos County. Other winners this year are Aerolenz, Awesome Harvest, PlanitMapper and Seamless Medical Systems, all of Santa Fe; GeoEnergy Monitoring Systems and SportXast of Los Alamos; and NuAira Inc. of Rio Rancho.

For more information about VAF, visit www.losalamosconnect.net. To learn about Customizabooks, visit www.customizabooks.com.

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