

Wednesday, June 29, 2005 Last modified: Tuesday, June 28, 2005 2:16 PM PDT

Jadoo named Small Business of Year

By: Matthew Self, The Telegraph

It started with seven "smart people" in a chicken coop.

What Larry Bawden, Lee Arikara, and friends hatched in that converted Folsom chicken pen over three years ago has become the golden chalice growing cities dream about.

Now home to 34 employees, Folsom-based Jadoo Power Systems has been recognized as the 2005 Fifth Assembly District Small Business of the Year.

Bawden says the company, which makes hydrogen-powered batteries, thinks of itself as an energy provider for today and the future.

"Home or local power use, we see us making the difference of energy shortage some day," Bawden said. "We're honored to accept that award. It's very important position for us to take."

Assemblyman Roger Niello (R-Fair Oaks) cited the company as much for its loyalty to the areas as its innovation. The company has been courted by other states with the lure of tax incentives, Niello said, but the owners made the choice to stay close to their native home.

"We need to continue creating opportunities for these entrepreneurs by constantly working to improve California's business climate. Jadoo Power Systems is an example of the kind of entrepreneurial spirit that keeps California moving forward," Niello said.

The company's initial product was a small fuel cell battery for commercial news cameras. Bawden said as their product begins to find a larger market; they have their sights set on other applications.

Those applications include the lucrative laptop and cell phone battery market.

Bawden said Jadoo's batteries are environmentally friendly, have less weight than normal batteries, no memory loss and a longer run time.

The battery market has exploded as Americans have acquired the taste for personal electronics.



Home to 34 employees, Folsom-based Jadoo Power Systems has been recognized as the 2005 Fifth Assembly District Small Business of the Year. Employees assemble hydrogen-powered batteries for corporate giants like Boeing and a variety of government agencies. Photo by Matthew Self/The Telegraph

High-tech giant Motorola estimates by 2010, Americans will require 10 kilowatts-hours of "personal power," in stark contrast to the 10 watt-hours averaged in 1980.

Jadoo, a Hindi word meaning "magic," has begun to grow, with contracts with corporate giants like Boeing and a variety of government agencies.

The idea of fuel cells has been around since 1839, but it wasn't until NASA's space program advancement of the science that the concept as a consumer item took hold. Hydrogen fuel cells, specifically, are known for their efficiency; nearly double that of gas-powered fuel cells you find in gas/electric hybrid engines that have become the rage among car enthusiasts, cofounder Lee Arikira said.

Jadoo isn't inventing new technology, he said, as much as creating a new industry.

"We want to be an integrator. We want to be the connection between technology and customer," he said.

All of the company's 33 employees have been local hires, said Bawden, an El Dorado Hills resident.

Vice president Dan Sanders said when job candidates learn more about the company, there's typically a change in perspective.

"I've never interviewed anyone who didn't want to come here," Sanders said.

Armando Hinojosa, a senior tech from Rocklin, said he moved to Jadoo for a challenge.

"It's just a great place to be."