



PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

Welcome, David Kaahaaina
[Account](#) | [Email Alerts](#) | [Sign Out](#)



HOME ▾ | ONLINE EDITION ▾ | PRINT EDITION ▾ | SUBSCRIBE ▾ | MARKETPLACE ▾ | BUSINESS RESOURCES

Search [Search Archive](#)

[News by C](#)

EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

Honolulu > [Print Edition](#)

BUSINESS PULSE SURVEY: [What effect will the election have on Hawaii business?](#)

Firm will sell 'indoor sunshine' to local businesses

Pacific Business News (Honolulu) - November 3, 2006 by [Eric Phillips](#) Pacific Business News

[Print this Article](#) [Email this Article](#) [Reprints](#) [RSS Feeds](#) [★ Most Viewed](#) [★ Most Emailed](#)

A Tennessee company that claims it can cut daylight energy costs by 70 percent is opening a branch in Hawaii and will start selling its "indoor sunshine" by February 2007.

Sunlight Direct is opening an office on the campus of the Big Island's **Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority** but will make the product available throughout the state. Company officials say they're targeting businesses and government offices first, but eventually will offer the product to residential homes.



The initial idea for the system came from engineers at the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratories in Tennessee about 10 years ago. In 2004, two of those engineers, including the product's inventor, Jeff Muhs, who will lead the Hawaii operation, left the government and formed Sunlight Direct to commercialize the concept.

Collecting sunshine

Their system, which costs about \$15,000, starts with a five-foot-high solar "bowl" that looks like a satellite dish mounted on a roof. The dish points directly into the sun, automatically following its path during the day by using a GPS system.

The inside of the dish is lined with a highly sensitive material that traps the sunlight, then transfers it into 127 plastic fiber-optic lines that are routed directly into offices. Instead of light bulbs, the lines, which are three millimeters thick and can be 45 feet long, are simply cut open so

BUSINE

Entrepre
 Sponsor
Taking
 training
 created
 million r

Sales P
 Sponsor
Selling
 to make
 on.

Franchi
 Powered
 Browse
 director,
 growing
 opportu

bizwor
Baby si
 importe
 market.

Biz Fin:
 Sponsor
Differer
 knowlec
 blessing

EMAIL /
 Get the
 news de
[Sign up](#)

the sunlight "sprays" out.

One dish emits enough light to illuminate 1,000 square feet. The fiber optic lines are mounted alongside original lighting fixtures so that nothing major is aesthetically replaced or added. At nighttime or during cloud cover, the original electric-powered lighting automatically adjusts so that the room's lighting remains the same as when the sun was out.

Duncan Earl, the company's chief technology officer, says tests in San Diego have saved customers 70 percent on daytime energy costs but he thinks that percentage will be higher in Hawaii.

"We chose Hawaii because it has some of the highest electricity rates in the country," he said. "It should pay for itself in about 10 years."

The technology is considered solar lighting by the state and federal governments, meaning buyers will qualify for 30 percent federal and 35 percent state tax credits. Earl said he envisions the NELHA location as his company's primary research and development center because of the sunny weather and Hawaii's technology investment tax credits such as Act 221/215.

He says he's looking for local investors.

The company initially will target retail stores, such as jewelry boutiques, that typically use high-energy incandescent lights intended to duplicate natural lighting so their products look more appealing. Sunlight Direct is also marketing to government offices and architects who design "green" buildings.

Earl says the technology won't be available to residential homes until his company makes the system completely "bullet proof." He said there are still some problems with the fiber-optic lines heating up and melting.

ephillips@bizjournals.com | 955-8001

- Contact the Editor
- Need Assistance?
- More Latest News →


[Subscribe or renew online](#)

EXTRA

Jewels of the Sunbelt

[We rank the most attractive Sunbelt metros](#)

- [10 comfiest cities](#)



- RELATED COMPANY STORIES**
- [Cyanotech restarts operations \[Honolulu\]](#)
 - [NELHA tenants see savings with foreign trade zone status \[Honolulu\]](#)
 - [FTZ benefits will accrue rapidly \[Honolulu\]](#)
- TODAY'S LATEST NEWS STORIES**
- [Lingle, Akaka re-elected; Hirono beats Hogue](#)
 - [Mesa reports go! flew 63% full](#)
 - [Pleasant and United in Hawaii deal](#)
 - [Fairmont adds second 'Kings' show](#)

HONOLULU JOBS powered by [onTargetjobs](#)

- [Enterprise Information Strategy and Architectures Manager](#)
- [Enterprise Information Strategy and Architectures Senior Manager](#)
- [RECEPTIONIST - Hawaii](#)
- [Hematologist/Oncologist](#)

[Search Jobs](#) | [Post Resume](#) | [View More](#)

Employers - [Post a Job Today](#)

FEATURED SERVICE 

- ENTRE
- [Master Busin](#)
See w
- Master**
- [Re](#)
 - [Ma](#)
 - [Exp](#)
 - [De](#)
-
- BIZJ**
- Find
- [C](#)
 - [N](#)
 - [I](#)
 - [H](#)

- [Survey updates what Japanese visitors think](#)
- [Most Viewed Stories](#)
- [Most Emailed Stories](#)
- [People in the News](#)

Hire Medical Device! Searching for a qualified employee to fill your empty Medical Device position? BioSpace.com can help you find top Medical Device candidates in your area. Discover local Medical Device talent now! [Post Job Here.](#)

- [F](#)
- [C](#)
- [Mor](#)

IT
In to
Se

SPONSOR
credit c
Pacific
Site M

» [Sign up for breaking news alerts.](#) Brought to you by [Cingular](#)



Use of, registration on, this site constitutes acceptance of our User Agreement. Please read our Privacy Policy

- ONLINE:** [Home](#) | [News](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Marketplace](#) | [Business Resources](#) | [About Us](#) | [Search](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [Site FAQ](#) | [Cont](#)
- PRINT EDITION:** [Subscribe to Print Edition](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Book of Lists](#) | [Download Electronic Version](#) | [Article Reprints Rights](#)
- BIZJOURNALS:** [bizjournals](#) | [BizSpace.com](#) | [Jobs](#) | [bizwomen.com](#)

Search Engine Optimization by **USWeb**

© 2006 American City Business Journals, Inc. and its licensors. All rights reserved. The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of bizjournals.