

Wireless tech firm wins kudos, contracts

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By DAVID A. SOMMERS | The Saginaw News
Jim Pilgrim of Pilgrim Technology of Midland shows off one of the secure wireless devices his company develops for the military.

Pilgrim Technology is a pioneer in the Tri-Cities in the field of wireless communications.

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm and other state economic boosters recently recognized the nine-person Midland company for its homeland security and defense contributions.

The Michigan Diversification Celebration Awards in Lansing went to those who made a significant contribution to diversifying the state's economy during the past year.

"Awards are nice and we appreciate the recognition, but I'd rather see the state spend its money on something that could help small business," chief technology officer Jim Pilgrim reacted. "The present business tax is extremely difficult for companies like Pilgrim."

Pilgrim points to the state's recent tax fiasco - lawmakers repealed a service tax hours after it kicked in Dec. 1, weeks after it generated a large amount of criticism from the business community.

For now, Pilgrim and his wife, Jill, who is the company's CEO, are focused on landing government contracts for products including wireless radio equipment for the U.S. Department of Defense.

The company, founded in 2002, also is developing rocket alignment equipment for the Marines.

Its armed forces work accounts for about 90 percent of its annual sales, which the couple declined to reveal.

Other services the company provides are wireless Internet hot spots for small businesses and others. It recently completed a wireless installation at MBS International Airport in Freeland.

"It really is a perfect place for wireless Internet, and it's going well out there," Jill Pilgrim said. "We've worked really hard."

Last year, the company received \$1 million to work on mobile secure wireless sensors that allow mechanics to monitor vehicles for the Army.

In coming years - perhaps months - Pilgrim plans to devote almost all of its energies to seeking government contracts, Jim Pilgrim said.

Still, the growing demand for Wi-Fi hot spots will drive that segment of their operation. So far, installation projects have ranged from \$400 to \$4,000.

"It's in downtown Midland, MBS and the Midland Community Center," Jim Pilgrim said. "Almost any place where people gather, I can see them wanting this."

Jim Pilgrim has more than 20 years of experience in telecommunications, including systems and field engineering, product development and management and secured communications.

He has appeared as an industry expert source on CNBC and MSNBC.

Last year, Jill Pilgrim won Saginaw Township-based 1st State Bank's Ruby Award, which honors professionals younger than 40.

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