



By Gary Haber

Three of the men who helped build Delaware's biotechnology industry were honored at the Delaware BioScience Association's second annual awards gala on April 29.

A crowd of almost 300 guests, from more than 120 organizations, filled the ballroom at the DuPont Country Club for the event. The evening also featured a keynote address by Gov. Jack Markell and a tribute to AstraZeneca, which 10 years ago selected Wilmington as the home for its North American headquarters.

Dr. Barry L. Marris, founder, chairman and chief scientific officer of Athena Biotechnologies in Newark, received Delaware Bio's 2009 Innovation Award.

Dr. David S. Weir, director of the Office of Economic Innovation and Partnerships at the University of Delaware, was awarded the 2009 Service Award.

U.S. Sen. Thomas R. Carper was recognized with the 2009 Government Official Award.

"Your collective efforts have worked to set the course of growth for Delaware's biotech industry for years to come," Bob Dayton, Delaware Bio's president, told the honorees.

All three have been instrumental in making Delaware's biotech community into a research powerhouse and economic engine that employs 12,000 people with an economic impact of \$4.5 billion a year.

Marris, who was the first executive director of the Fraunhofer Center for Molecular Biotechnology, has launched several startup biotech companies, including Athena Biotechnologies, whose scientists are working to develop more

efficient ways of using bacteria to turn cellulose into ethanol.

Weir, the founding director of the Delaware Biotechnology Institute at UD, helped attract top-flight faculty and millions in research dollars, while forging strong ties with the state's other universities, hospitals and life sciences companies. He was also part of the state of Delaware's team that helped attract AstraZeneca in 1999.

Carper, Delaware's senior senator and a two-term governor, was recognized for his leadership in helping assemble the package of economic incentives that convinced AstraZeneca to choose Delaware over Pennsylvania as the home for its North American headquarters.

The decision by the British-Swedish drug giant has meant thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in revenue for Delaware.

Gov. Markell, in his remarks, spoke about the crucial role of the life sciences in Delaware's economy.

What Markell called "an amazing industry at a very important time for our state" can create the high-wage, highly skilled jobs the state needs at a time when Delaware's unemployment rate stands at 7.7 percent and the state faces a \$780 million budget shortfall, he said.

In declaring April 29 "AstraZeneca Day," Markell said it was Delaware's nimbleness and responsiveness that helped the state land the pharmaceutical giant, which has grown into one of Delaware's largest employers and "a model company for all of us to look up to."

Speaking on behalf of AstraZeneca, David P. Nicoli, vice president of corporate affairs, said the company chose Delaware because of the state's "commitment to innovation."

"We are honored to be your partner and your neighbor for the past 10 years," Nicoli said. "We are proud to call Delaware home."

The award-winners were equally proud of their many accomplishments including the companies they have built, the research breakthroughs they have made and the jobs they have brought to Delaware.

"It's wonderful to get an award but to get an award for innovation means a lot to me," said Marrs, Athena Biotechnologies' chairman.

For both Weir and Carper, who were instrumental in attracting AstraZeneca to

Delaware a decade ago, the company's sprawling campus at Routes 141 and 202 is a constant reminder of its importance to Delaware.

"Every time I pass 141 and 202, I marvel at how it has grown," Weir said.

Carper, a man noted for his optimism and determination, said teamwork helped lure AstraZeneca here.

"For one bright shining moment, a lot of people came together and pulled off a small miracle," he said.

In other news at the April 29 gala, Christopher Yochim was announced as the new chairman of the Delaware BioScience Association's board of directors.

Yochim, director of external relations, corporate business development, for AstraZeneca and a Delaware Bio board member, takes over from outgoing chair Jennifer Kmiec, vice president of business development for iBioPharma Inc.

Kmiec and her family are relocating to West Virginia where she will be the associate vice president for economic development at Marshall University and her husband Eric is director of the Marshall Institute for Interdisciplinary Research.