

Early Stage East conference changes to ClubPitch

Venture event will be in Phila. and include latest in technology, social media

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WILMINGTON — Venture capitalist David Freschman founded Early Stage East 13 years ago to boost the Philadelphia area's ecosystem for early-stage companies.

That's still the organization's mission, but little else about it is the same.

Early Stage East announced late last month that it is replacing its two venture conferences and launching a new signature event as part of a makeover that also includes two new top staffers and a new logo.

Early Stage East's event, which it has held in Wilmington in June since its founding, will become ClubPitch Philadelphia. It will be held Oct. 18 at the Down Town Club and feature digital, Web, social-media and mobile companies as presenters.

The organization's Bio-Life-Tech Conference, which it has held in Baltimore each autumn since 2002, will become Bio-Life-Tech ClubPitch Baltimore. It will be held Nov. 17 at the Pier 5 Hotel and feature its predecessor's mix of life-sciences and technology companies as presenters.

In addition to renaming the events, Early Stage East is changing their structures to make them less like traditional venture conferences and more like the events put on by entrepreneurial groups at which companies give short pitches about themselves and their products and services.

There still will be day-long affairs with education sessions and panel discussions, but the shorter pitches will enable more companies to present at them. Early Stage East also will set up one-on-one meetings between the presenting companies and financiers and



New director Marc C. Mathis (left) with Early Stage East founder David J. Freschman.

service providers at the events.

They "should be a lot more fun, a lot more high impact and a lot more productive," Freschman said.

Ellen Weber, who heads Robin Hood Ventures, the angel group based in Philadelphia's University City section, said the events put on by entrepreneur-

ial groups are attracting more investors, so copying their for mats makes sense.

"I think it's great that Early Stage East is catching this vibe and showing these kinds of companies framed up in a way that's interesting and relevant both for the entrepreneurs and for the investors," Weber said.

Early Stage East's signature event, which will debut next spring in Philadelphia, will be more like a traditional venture conference.

The Global Social Media Investment Summit (GLOSO) will "bring in thought leaders in social media from around the country and hopefully the world," Freschman said, as well as give area social-media companies a forum for pitching to investors.

Early Stage East is getting support on GLOSO from two other organizations that connect early-stage investors and entrepreneurs: New York-based BootStrapper Summit, which holds venture conferences, and Second Venture Corp., the Stratford, Conn., company that runs FundingPost.com.

Early Stage East also will work with New York-based ARC Angel Fund and Freschman hopes it can forge ties with other investors from outside the area as a way of getting them to look at local companies.

"We're going to reach out to the investment community from up and down the East Coast," Freschman said.

Early Stage East's new director, Marc C. Mathis, is familiar with reaching out. He's the founder of Wilmington-based Mataron Development Corp. LLC, which helps minority entrepreneurs access venture funding and other business resources.

Mathis has been working with Early Stage East for five years, as has Erik D. Seel, its new creative director. Seel is the CEO of Hockessin, Del.-based fashion design firm Uhma Ltd. Inc. and is responsible for Early Stage East's new logo and website.

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Abington Health third to sign up for IBC's new incentive plan

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Independence Blue Cross has signed up another health system for its hospital/physician incentive program, which the Philadelphia health insurer is pushing as a way to reward providers for improving the quality of care, while lowering costs for consumers.

Abington Health and IBC have reached an agreement on a new three-year provider contract that covers Abington Memorial and Lansdale hospitals, the health system's outpatient centers in Willow Grove and Warminster, and Abington Health Phy-

sicians, a network of about 200 primary-care physicians and specialists.

IBC and Abington Health disclosed the signing of the contract on Wednesday, but the deal took effect last month.

Abington Health becomes the third area health system — after Jefferson Health System and Holy Redeemer Health System — to sign up for IBC's integrated provider performance incentive plan.

The plan is designed to improve the quality of care and lower its cost by giving hospitals and physicians incentives to collaborate to reduce hospital-acquired infections and readmissions, and to ensure evidence-based guide-



Hilferty

lines are followed for surgical care and for the treatment of heart attacks, heart failure, and pneumonia.

"Our new approach to reimbursement for hospitals and physicians is really all about accountability," said Daniel J. Hilferty, IBC's president and CEO. "Ultimately, higher quality care is more cost-effective care."

Laurence M. Merlis, president and CEO of Abington Health, said hospital reimbursement is "evolving toward an approach that rewards higher quality

by giving incentives for improving health outcomes for patients. Our physicians and staff are focused on patient safety and quality every day and are strongly committed to integrating best practices to improve care."

Abington Health's facilities annually serve more than 42,000 inpatients and 131,000 emergency patients. The health system has more than 6,000 employees.

Its medical staff consists of more than 1,400 primary-care physicians and medical and surgical specialists, as well as more than 125 physicians-in-training within five residency programs. ■