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**SANTA ROSA**

# Chip startup gets \$6.6 million

## Sensor Platforms to develop devices for cars, computers, phones

By STEVE HART  
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

A Santa Rosa high-tech startup has won \$6.6 million in venture funding to develop computer chips for sensors used in cars, computers and wireless phones.

Sensor Platforms Inc., which opened its doors just 14 months ago, began selling its Universal Smart Sensor Chip in January. Computer chips enable sensors to measure heat, light, motion, sound and other conditions.

George Hsu, chief executive for Sensor Platforms, said the market for sensors is growing as electronic devices become more complex.

"Appliances are getting smarter," said Hsu. "A number of them are adding more sensors."

The global market for sensors is \$30 billion now and it's expected to reach \$50 billion by 2008. Sensors are used in automobiles, cell phones, personal computers, burglar alarms, lighting systems and many other applications.

Hsu said the company's computer chips link sensors with computers, processing the sensors' signals and providing their power. "Sensors need electronics behind them to work," he said.

Sensor Platforms' computer chip is a low-cost, low-power device that works with most kinds of sensors, Hsu said. It's also designed to interact with up to 15 different sensors at the same time.

The chip can be used in a variety of automotive applications, including sensors that monitor tire pressure, trigger air bags, control stability and run alarm systems, according to the company.

It can also be used in watches, mobile phones, personal digital assistants, personal computers, laptops, interactive toys and game devices.

The chip has industrial applications including manufacturing automation, fire control and security.

Hsu said the chip is a good choice for sensor developers who want to avoid the cost and time of developing their own custom chip systems. Sensor Platforms designs chips at its headquarters on Airport Boulevard in Santa Rosa and they are manufactured by AMI Semiconductor in Pocatello, Idaho.

Hsu said the \$6.6 million in venture funding will help Sensor Platforms market its product and develop its next-generation computer chip. The funding deal was led by ArrowPath Venture Partners, an investment group in Redwood Shores, and Newbury Ventures, an Orinda-based company.

Sensor Platforms was launched last year with \$1.3 million from members of the North Bay Angels, a group of Sonoma County investors who fund startups. Hsu said the company has five employees in Santa Rosa now and expects to employ about 20 in a year.

The privately held company doesn't release revenue figures, but Hsu said Sensor Platforms hopes to be profitable in 2007.

Sensor Platforms grew out of PNI Corp., a Santa Rosa company that Hsu founded in 1988. PNI makes magnetic sensors and high-tech compass systems.

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