

# Job creation heating up at Exergen

*Local company used new loan program to create 100 jobs, new space*

**By Dan Atkinson**  
STAFF WRITER

A Watertown company will get \$2 million to double its employees in order to produce more of its prize product — a thermometer that doesn't double as a body cavity search.

The Exergen Corporation recently received a \$2 million loan from Citizens Bank to hire 50 new manufacturing employees and purchase a new facility at 400 Pleasant St. The employees and extra space will help the company manufacture the TemporalScanner thermometer, which uses infrared technology to measure temperature through a patient's forehead.

Gov. Mitt Romney demonstrated the TemporalScanner at a press conference Monday, letting Exergen founder and president Francesco Pompei sweep the thermometer across his forehead to obtain a slightly cool reading of 98.3 degrees. The state is partnering with the bank to finance local businesses that want to grow while remaining in Massachusetts.

The loans are at 3.5 percent, more than two percentage points below the prime rate, and require one job created for every \$40,000 loaned. Besides Exergen, Legal Seafoods, Expressway Motors and Metropolitan Cabinets are the first participants in the program.

Because the forehead's temporal artery maintains a constant blood flow, it is ideal for measuring the body's temperature, according to Pompei. A user can just swipe the thermometer, which measures the artery's temperature every 1/1,000th of a second, across a patient's forehead to get a reading. A computer inside the thermometer readjusts the

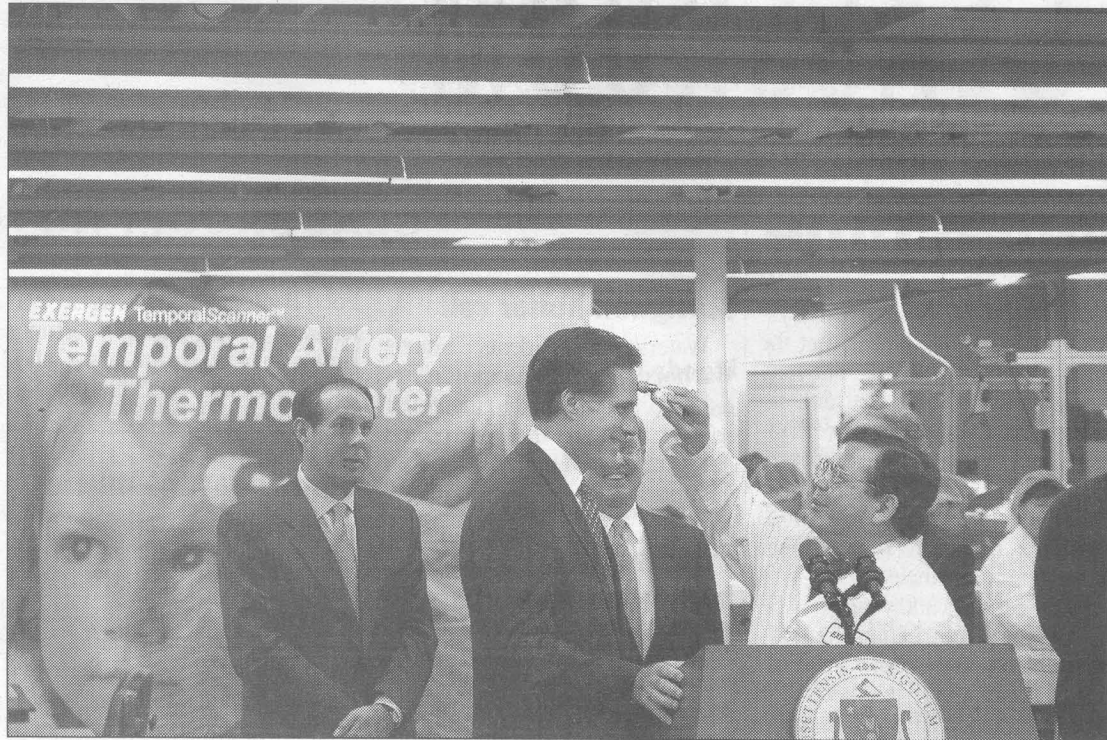


PHOTO BY ZARA TZANEV

**Gov. Mitt Romney gets his temperature taken by Dr. Frank Pompei of Exergen Corp. in Watertown during a press conference to promote a Citizens Bank low-interest loan to create jobs. Exergen has created 50 jobs through the program.**

reading based on room temperature.

The procedure is more accurate than ear thermometers, and just as accurate as rectal thermometers, according to Marybeth Pompei, Francesco's wife and the company's chief clinical scientist and senior vice president. And having accurate information about temperature change is an important step in determining illnesses from a cold to AIDS.

"The first indication that something is wrong with the human body is a fever," she said.

Exergen has worked on the thermometers for 10 years, and the technology has applications for their other divisions. Besides medical thermometers, the company also manufactures sensitive thermometers to measure optimal

paint-drying temperatures for products from car tires to stealth bombers, and building thermometers for places such as the Harvard University library, which houses many old and delicate materials.

"High temperatures cause not only us to age, but books to age as well," Pompei said.

TemporalScanner thermometers are catching on at the doctor's office and in hospitals, Pompei said, and they were used exclusively by Chinese doctors during the SARS epidemic of 2003. Exergen is marketing a simpler version for household use, and needed to expand its facility and employment to increase the amount of thermometers it manufactures, so it applied for the first Citizens Bank grants,

Francesco Pompei said.

Exergen's new home will have a better, more spacious layout all on one floor, Pompei said, with more parking space for employees, who will number more than 100 at the end of the Citizens Bank loan. The company plans to move in July, a slow season for people trying to check fevers.

Even though his company is doubling in size, Pompei said he wanted to remain in the comfortable area of Watertown.

"We've been in Watertown 10 years, and the environment is conducive to business," he said. "We were in Newton, but Newton was not quite as conducive. Watertown welcomes this kind of business."

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