

EP.78 - Nikki Hastings Amy Adams and John Newby FINAL

Narrator: You're listening to *BioTalk* with Rich Bendis, the only podcast focused on the BioHealth Capital Region. Each episode, we'll talk to leaders in the industry to break down the biggest topics happening today in BioHealth.

Rich Bendis: Hi, this is Rich Bendis, your host for *BioTalk*. And we're early in 2021. Thank God we have a new year and a year to look forward to. And I couldn't think of a better way to start off 2021 than doing something different that we haven't done on *BioTalk* before, and that's having multiple guests simultaneously. And we have a good reason to do that today because our friends from the south in the BioHealth Capital Region in Virginia, who are going to get much more engaged in the BioHealth Capital Region in 2021, have announced a new program, which we're going to talk about on *BioTalk* today. And it's really called Virginia Bio-Connect.

0:01:01 And we have three experts to tell us about what this new initiative's going to be. And with us on *BioTalk* today, we have John Newby, who's the CEO of Virginia Bio. John, welcome.

John Newby: Hi.

Rich Bendis: Hi. We also have Amy Adams, who's the Executive Director of the Institute for Biohealth Innovation at George Mason University, and I love the name of your institute, Amy.

Amy Adams: Thank you.

Rich Bendis: And then, we also have Nikki Hastings, who's the Executive Director of the Charlottesville BioHub. Nikki, welcome.

Nikki Hastings: Great to be here. Thank you.

Rich Bendis: Great. So, we don't know how this is going to work, but we're going to have interplay between all four of us today. But I guess, once we get beyond this welcome, we're going to talk about the purpose of this one, which I had mentioned Virginia Bio-Connect, which is a statewide initiative to strengthen the competitiveness of Virginia's life science ecosystem. And all three of you are participants in this Virginia Bio-Connect.

0:02:01 But before we start talking about the program, I think it would be good for the listeners to get introduced to each of you personally, talk a little bit about your backgrounds, and then also talk a little bit about your organizations and what their missions are. So, we'll start with John. So, he's the big kahuna in Virginia with Virginia Bio. John, let's introduce the listeners to you.

John Newby: Thanks, Rich. I'm just one of many important people in our ecosystem, of course. I'm John Newby, I'm the CEO of Virginia Bio. I've been here since August of 2019. Virginia Bio is the state non-profit for the bioscience ecosystem and life sciences trade group. We advocate on behalf of our members, we try to provide education and resources for our members, and we really, really try to connect our members to capital. So, all the things that the BioHealth Capital Region is interested in, we do in Virginia and in partnership with Rich and the team, we do in partnership with our friends in Maryland and DC as well.

0:03:02 My background, I'm a patent lawyer by trade. Don't throw a rock at me. But I took a little bit of a break from that to do what I think is a very important mission, which is support our life sciences industry.

Rich Bendis: Great, thank you very much. You're very modest, John. I know you have a lot more on your résumé than what you just told us, but we'll learn more about that as we go. And then, we have Amy.

Amy Adams: My name is Amy Adams. I'm the Executive Director of the Institute for Biohealth Innovation at George Mason University. I'm really excited to be part of this team for VA Bio-Connect. My background is in biomedical research, so I spent several years doing cancer research in Proteomics Laboratories. And now, I direct, again, that Institute for Biohealth Innovation, and my goal is to bring new partnerships for our faculty, staff, and students who are conducting really innovative research. The Institute really connects our entire BioHealth portfolio, helping to foster those partnerships that can advance research and development.

0:04:03 So, connecting with companies and other institutions is really an important piece of what we do.

Rich Bendis: Last but not least, we have Nikki Hastings, Executive Director of Charlottesville BioHub. Nikki, a brief intro?

John Newby:

Yes, thank you so much. I'm the Executive Director of Cville BioHub in Charlottesville, Virginia. We're a private non-profit supporting the regional biotech industry cluster development here. It's about a 25-mile radius outside the city. The organization started with a bunch of industry leaders locally saying we needed to focus on building our regional efforts and connecting locally with other companies and people who are here in our community. So, in 2016, we founded the Cville BioHub, and we did that through starting a website that brought all the companies onto that website. And we started hosting events. People showed up, and they were really engaged in conversations and great networking, and people were starting to see the value in that.

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And we've received, since then, two GO Virginia grants that have really elevated what the organization is about and what we are doing, which is to serve the companies and the growth of our regional industry cluster. There are over 75 companies in our region, 2,000 employees, and over \$300-million invested in local companies here. We're seeing a lot of innovation happening in recent times, especially in 2020, due to the pandemic. And in our last Go Virginia grant, we really have focused, and we've developed and initiated programs supporting entrepreneurs. We have a new entrepreneur-in-residence program, and in 2020, served 15 companies there. And we hosted our first internship cohort with 17 interns interested in industry positions in 11 different companies. So, by way of background, I have my PhD in biomedical engineering.

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And I'm not new to the area, I've been in Charlottesville since 2004, and was here at UVA, and then was part of the cofounding team at HemoShear Therapeutics, and then have since been part of the ecosystem, supporting early stage companies in everything from med devices at Contraline to instrumentation at Cerillo, and supporting many other early stage companies spinning out. So, it's an honor to be here and to now see the program expanding beyond Charlottesville and becoming a statewide initiative, which really began out of a conversation that Amy and I were having when we received our second GO Virginia grant.

Rich Bendis:

I'm sure we're going to learn more about what that conversation was between you and Amy, but also, I think for the listeners in the BioHealth Capital Region, we haven't had that much interaction as we get south of Northern Virginia. And it's great to have you explain that there's a lot

going on throughout the whole state. It's not just Virginia bordering on Washington DC.

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And I like the name, Bio-Connect. It's going to enable people to connect more with you throughout the region and throughout the country, once they understand all the capabilities you have down there. So, I'm assuming that's what one of the missions is. But right now, I think, let's go back to John, and let's talk a little bit about this new initiative: how it evolved, how long it took to get together, how it's funded, who all the partners are, and just a brief introduction to Virginia Bio-Connect.

John Newby:

There are three main parts of Virginia Bio-Connect. The first is the connection piece, Rich, that you alluded to. And also, there's a piece to help our young companies, our young entrepreneurs that Nikki will speak to, and then also a piece to help workforce, which Amy will speak to. But first, the connection piece. Virginia is a large state, has a great bioscience economy. It's an \$8-billion economy and growing in Virginia. But it needs to be connected more completely. The state is currently not networked, quite frankly.

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It has great regional bioscience hubs, but they're not connected. So, that's the goal of this grant. So, what we really did was, we took a hard look at the successes that Nikki has experienced in Charlottesville at the regional level. The Charlottesville BioHub has done a fantastic job, and continues to do so, with all the things Nikki just mentioned. I won't repeat what she said because she gave a great outline of the great things that are happening there. We want to take all of that great knowledge and help the rest of the state's other regions that are doing similar things, but are not necessarily as connected within their own region. So, on the connection piece, we want to do two things. One, we want to help each region where they are to grow their bioscience ecosystem, and two, connect all of that together so that everyone can benefit from the best practices, the job opportunities, the partnership opportunities, the resources for entrepreneurs, connect all that together, and accordingly, strengthen our ecosystem. Nikki, would you like to talk about the entrepreneurs?

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Nikki Hastings: Yeah, for sure. So, we have intentions to build an entrepreneur program for entrepreneurs to come in with industry experience to help companies across the state. And these are the early stage companies. Pre-seed stage companies are developing new medical technologies, devices, therapeutics, and we recognize that this is a significant need in all of our ecosystems here, where there's great science being developed at our universities, and we need the experienced business entrepreneurs to help lift them across the university line into the community and become sustainable, growing, successful companies.

Rich Bendis: And then, John, you wanted Amy to talk a little bit about workforce, I think.

John Newby: I think that's right. Amy?

Amy Adams: So, the companies across Virginia, we know that one of the challenges that they face is connecting with workforce, and not only workforce, but a diverse workforce. And we have incredible student talent graduating from our universities in Virginia.

0:10:02 What we're recognizing from conversations is they're leaving Virginia because they don't recognize the incredible life science ecosystem we have. As John mentioned, it's very regional-located, geographically dispersed. So, that was the value of bringing this Virginia Bio-Connect to realization. Through this program, we'll be able to connect our students with industry through a few different initiatives. One will be building a statewide internship program. This way, students all across the state, regardless of their institution, will be able to connect with companies in their hometowns or other regions that they're interested in to complete internships and really gain those engaging development experiences and connect with their student community, as well. We'll also host job fairs across the state, and we'll be building young professionals networks, so that students in each of our regions can connect with the industry professionals and really build that network.

0:11:02 Really hoping to create that traction and interest, and really share best practices, embark on new journeys.

Rich Bendis: I think the challenge that you talk about is the challenge that we have throughout the whole region. Everybody doesn't recognize the opportunities exist in their backyard. They're always looking for the

greener pastures. But sometimes, they're right down the road. And I think this initiative can help connect them to some of those pastures to keep them in our BioHealth Capital Region. So, John, you were going to...

John Newby:

Yes. So, Richard, you asked the source of bonds and how this came together. As Nikki had mentioned, this was an idea that started at the beginning of last year, 2020, with a smaller conversation between herself and Amy, and then I was brought on board from where I sit, and many, many other partners across the state ultimately were brought together. We have a team from five regions in Virginia that were brought together, Northern Virginia, Charlottesville, and Richmond, and the Roanoke area, and Virginia Beach area.

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Basically, covering the entire state. All focuses or loci of bioscience activity. And over the course of several months, we applied to the Commonwealth of Virginia for what Nikki mentioned earlier, a GO Virginia grant. We were awarded that grant this past December, to the tune of \$3.2 million, which is, thus far, the Commonwealth of Virginia's single largest investment into our ecosystem in one shot in the arm. And we're going to use that money in the ways that we just described to connect our ecosystem and make it much stronger.

Rich Bendis:

Well, congratulations. We all know how hard it is to get money out of state government. And to get it on your first attempt is amazing to all three of you, so congratulations. And, John, you mentioned these other areas within the state. In the press release, they're mentioned. And I'll just mention them. Other than the three of you, you have Coastal Virginia with City of Virginia Beach Economic Development and Eastern Virginia Medical School. You also have Northern Virginia with Prince William County Department of Economic Development.

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And, of course, George Mason. Then, you have Richmond, which is Activation Capital and VCU Innovation Gateway. And then, Roanoke, Blacksburg, Lynchburg with the Virginia Tech Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and Carilion Clinic. So, it sounds like there's a lot of resources in Virginia that you may have known about each other, but maybe there hasn't been that much collaboration amongst all of these partners in the past, and I'm sure that's probably one of the initiatives as well, John.

John Newby: That's definitely part of the genesis of this. All those, and many more that aren't mentioned in that press release, are part of our ecosystem. We all know each other. Some of us have more tight connection to each other than other partnerships. But opportunities abound. And step one is to connect everyone, let everyone know what's happening, and partnerships and good things will flow.

Rich Bendis: And is this going to be more programmatic? Or are you actually going to create any type of an entity with an advisory board, or partner, or stakeholder board to work together?

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John Newby: So, this is programmatic support to support the entire state. We will have the entrepreneur-in-residence program that Nikki mentioned, we will have internships that we will stand up, and we will have, at the core, my organization, Virginia Bio, here in Richmond, will provide the electronic backbone and infrastructure for the Connection. So, it's programmatically driven to support the entire state, and that's the method that we're intending to use.

Rich Bendis: And when you and Nikki and Amy had some of these early conversations, had you seen this work in some areas in the country or in our region that you wanted to model this from? Or was this basically a clean sheet of paper where you just came up with the idea?

John Newby: I'll let Nikki speak to this, but I've got to pay much more credit to Nikki and what she's done in her region. So, it came from two sources. One was Nikki's success at the regional level. We wanted to spread that success statewide. But we also had some input and ideas from other states.

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Maryland was an example, Michigan, other states that have done a lot of activity to build their ecosystem. So, Nikki, I don't know if you want to speak to that.

Nikki Hastings: Yeah, I can speak specifically the entrepreneur-in-residence program that Cville BioHub launched last year was modeled after one mentor-in-residence program done across the state in Michigan. And they have a 50% effort in each region in Michigan of an entrepreneur-in-residence that connects with the companies, and I found that to be a really

inspiring and enlightening model that we could utilize here in Virginia. And so, we've been successful with it in Charlottesville. As I mentioned, we connected with 15 companies in 2020. I think we're definitely moving the needle in helping those companies get funding, get access to talent, get internship connections that are helping them move beyond the universities and into established companies. So, those models have been critical for our success in Charlottesville, but we've got opportunity to scale it across the Commonwealth, and this program will help us to see if we can accomplish that. I think we can.

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Rich Bendis: And we all know how difficult it is to get everybody on the same page when you're talking to multiple partners. So, how much of a challenge was that, and how much selling had to occur? And what was the final culmination that everybody bought into that they believed that this is something worth going for?

John Newby: I'll speak to that very briefly, Rich. Of course, when you have a potentially large sum of money that you're trying to get, \$3-plus million, the first question every entity, every organization in each region asks is, "How much of that is for us? How much is it for me?" We actually got past that question very quickly. I think everyone who I just mentioned, including the two ladies who are here on the call with us, realized that this is bigger than one region. This is about the state. This is about providing resources for everyone, to bring everyone together, provide a baseline of support to support everyone's ecosystems, and each region will accordingly grow.

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So, it wasn't a hard sell. I've got to admit, it was fairly easy. Most of the folks that you mentioned, the regions that you mentioned, and all the entities, they're already doing this work within their own region. The only conversation then that had to be had was reminding them of how important it is to link everyone, and everyone is better for it. So, from my perspective, it was relatively easy thankfully. Everyone was there. I think the time was right. It was absolutely the right time to make this happen.

Rich Bendis: And what's interesting, in all of my decades of experience in economic development, there's three Cs that I really evaluate to determine whether something's going to be successful. And that's, who gets the cash, who's in control, and who gets the credit? So, in the one that you

took care of there, it sounds like you dealt with the cash first. From a control standpoint, it's a partnership, but you're going to do the back office administration, and from a credit standpoint, everybody should get the credit.

John Newby: Exactly right. Can't say it much better than that.

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Rich Bendis: Great. Well, congratulations on addressing the three Cs. We'll come back a year from now and see if those three Cs are as strong 12 months from now as they were when everybody's singing Kumbaya around the campfire, and everybody's happy right now. So, the key is, when you talk about these, and you get this \$3.2 million appropriation from Virginia, they're going to ask for accountability and for you to report back what the outcomes are. And would the three of you like to talk about what the expected outcomes are that you have promised to the state legislature and the governor that you're going to deliver?

Rich Bendis: Sure, and I'll address that very quickly. So, the GO Virginia Program is primarily a program that the Commonwealth has established with a certain pot of money to support efforts like this, primarily to support companies and to support workforce. So, those are really the main objectives for the GO Virginia program. So, we have to report back to the Commonwealth through the GO Virginia Program of what we've done.

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What do they expect? Well, here's what we intend to do. First and foremost, just as the BioHealth Capital Region's goal is, we want to bring attention to our ecosystem and the assets that are here. We want to let folks know, both in the United States and outside the United States, what Virginia has to offer specifically and the BioHealth Capital Region vis-a-vis Virginia, what all is happening here. So, one is attention from the state, from the national leaders, and international opportunities. The other thing we want to provide in outcomes that will be judged and measures are workforce items. So, for instance, the internship program. We want to keep all this great talent in Virginia, and quite frankly, in the region, in this region and in our state of Virginia. Provide that pipeline for young talent to get their degrees here, do an internship at a great Virginia company, or if not Virginia, somewhere else in the region, and for them to stay at that company and in the region. So, that is an output that will

be measured. And finally, we want to increase the number and strength of our young bioscience companies.

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By supporting them with these entrepreneurs-in-residence and other resources, we want to help them jump and leap over those high hurdles of capital raising, dealing with regulatory hurdles, and make them stronger and hopefully more numerous in Virginia. And there are metrics against which we have to measure ourselves for that success as well. So, that's what we want to provide by this program.

Rich Bendis:

Thank you. And basically, with all of these collaborative efforts, you have to have government, academia, industry, and non-government organizations. Academia sometimes has their own challenges for engagement and involvement. So, Amy, why don't you talk a little bit about George Mason, and what you see from a university, the benefits and what your expectations are related to this program?

Amy Adams:

Yes. This is going to be an excellent opportunity, not just for George Mason, but for our institutions across the state. We know that there's not one piece of science that we do alone, but doing things in partnership really will deliver the new products and new findings that will advance science and health for everyone.

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Some of the challenges we face and that we think that this will really talk to is, for example, we have great innovations being developed at our institutions, but connecting those innovations with entrepreneurs, who can pick those up and develop new companies in our state will be a remarkable new opportunity through Virginia Bio-Connect. Also, being able to connect our talent. Again, we've mentioned the students often don't think of Virginia and sometimes the BioHealth Capital Region as a great destination. So, we want to make sure that our students have access to high-paying jobs and really recognize the diversity of jobs in the life science ecosystem.

Rich Bendis:

Thank you, Amy. I think the other thing that's critical is a lot of these initiatives don't engage with industry to the level that they should. And you have some really good companies in Virginia that some people don't know about, like Vibrant Health, and Flow, HemoShear, as you mentioned, and BRAINBox, and I'll just mention that Donna Edmonds from BRAINBox has been offered a board seat on BioHealth Innovation.

0:22:15 We have a board meeting next week, and hopefully she'll be approved. But that'll be another close tie that we can bring within the region to bridge that gap between Virginia and what's going on in the rest of the region. But talk a little bit about what the role of industry is, and these industry partners, and the successful ones as well as the ones you're trying to groom for the future. And I'll throw that out for any of the three of you.

John Newby: Nikki, would you like to take some examples from the Charlottesville region?

Nikki Hastings: Yeah, sure. So, we've had a lot of growth in the region over the past five years, more and more companies being started and spun out from UVA. Examples include Contraline, which I was with, was one of the first to get some outside-Virginia venture capital funding.

0:23:00 Cavion had a very successful exit in 2019. ZielBio is one that raised a very large series A. So, we're seeing momentum for these companies to be able to attract the capital needed to launch and grow the companies here locally, and that's been a really exciting shift in the environment. And the next step is closing those gaps between being able to attract that talent for those companies to be able to do the work, and that's part of the objectives, as Amy mentioned, to close the gap between university talent in our own backyard to the companies that are here. And that's part of the role that Cville BioHub is certainly playing to make those matches. There are more and more companies and industries playing a significant role, and they're the ones we're serving. We're here on behalf of those companies. So, we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the great innovation, but we're also here to connect and make it a smaller hurdle for them to get to the places they're going.

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Rich Bendis: And then, one of the big hurdles we have is capital, and that exists throughout the country, but what's a capital challenge in our region, I look at it as, really, you mentioned some of the success stories, Nikki, but this pre-seed and early seed stage of a half-million, maybe up to \$2 million, gets people ready for their series A. So, how do you see the evolution of the need to grow our capital within Virginia area as well as BioHealth Capital Region? And, John, I see you shaking your head. Nikki

said, "Yeah, I think I can handle that." Both of you can expound on that a little bit.

John Newby:

Sure. Just very briefly from the state perspective, and this is no different from Maryland or anywhere else in the region, when you have a company that wants to grow, the first question I'm often asked is, "Where's the capital in Virginia? And then if not in Virginia, where's the capital in the region, then nationwide, etc.?"

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Virginia is really, really growing, and Nikki can really speak to this for the Charlottesville region, as far as opportunities for capital in the state. But it is growing. But part of Virginia Bio-Connect, what we're planning to do, is to provide a connection to that capital. Indeed, we've already spoken to many sources of capital that are physically located in Virginia to start connecting the dots. There's great activity in Charlottesville, which Nikki will speak to in a second. There's some activity in Northern Virginia when it comes to capital in Virginia for the life science industry. And more is coming. But Virginia Bio-Connect intends to bring even more just through exposure and letting these companies get some face time, quite frankly, in front of not just Virginia opportunities, but statewide. And, Nikki, do you want to speak to what's happening there in Charlottesville with capital?

Nikki Hastings:

Yeah. I think we've seen a shift for sure in the capital opportunity environment. So, a lot of the angels in our region have organized through different channels. So, we have the Charlottesville Angel Network, Cav Angels, which is a university alumni-supported non-profit syndicate.

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I sit on the board there and have seen, one, all of the new concepts getting through there, but also the interest in funding those companies has increased. And actually, half of those at Cav Angels all have a life science or biotech angle or slant. So, we're seeing a lot of health innovation concepts coming through. There's a UVA seed fund, which is led by Bob Creeden, who's also part of this great initiative here. He's got a \$10-million evergreen seed fund that is also supporting many life sciences companies that are coming through UVA. So, in our hyper local system, we're seeing that happening. But we're also, then, seeing it in the other regions that are part of this collective. So, VTC fund out in Roanoke area led by James Ramey, Riverflow is a healthcare innovations fund in Richmond, MEDA Angels is one in the Northern Virginia area. So, this is a

great time to be coming up with new concepts, not just because of the pandemic, but also because I think the environment is more aligned with what can support the companies.

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Rich Bendis:

You just mentioned a bunch of financial resources and organizations that I was not aware of, Nikki. So, we need to make other people aware of those as well. And I'm sure that people in other parts of Virginia are saying, "Share the wealth with us, Nikki." And that's what Virginia Bio-Connect will do. So, one of my missions, as you all know, in working with all of you, is to expand the reach, the recognition, the rankings of the BioHealth Capital Region. There's no question that I would imagine that this initiative is going to be able to do that for the whole region as well as the state of Virginia. But why don't you talk a little bit about the potential leverage and linkages that you see that will benefit the whole region in addition to Virginia through the creation of this initiative?

Amy Adams:

Rich, I can start with that. And we certainly share your vision and excitement to try to bring our region, the BioHealth Capital Region, to number three by 2023.

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And we recognized, as we were putting this together, just the incredible assets located not only in Virginia, but really, the amazing things that are also happening in Maryland and DC with JLABS opening up this year, the new Children's National Research and Innovation campus. Some of the five biggest government awards in COVID-19 going to our companies like Flow in Virginia, and huge awards going to Astra-Zeneca and Emergent in Maryland. So, we really do see there's really big opportunities to foster partnerships and also create awareness of assets. It's interesting that you mentioned that you weren't aware of some of the financial opportunities that Nikki mentioned, and that's what we want to do. So, through this grant, we want to create an asset tool, so that not only Virginia-based companies and institutions but those across our region, and really, nationally and globally, can recognize what different assets they can reach out to, connect with for funding, for collaborations, and really more.

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And through this program, we'll have lots of initiatives, lots of events where we will really love attendance and engagement by the BioHealth

Capital Region community. We also see this as a way to showcase all of the space that we have, the wet labs space. It's so challenging for companies to reach. Creating that platform of awareness of what we have in Virginia combined with what we have in DC in Maryland, so that when any one company connects with any one of us in the BioHealth Capital Region, if we don't have something, we know what else is available and can connect them with someone else. Because I think the most important thing is that we capture them in the BioHealth Capital Region instead of letting them go to somewhere like Boston or Silicon Valley.

Rich Bendis:

They're migrating out of Silicon Valley because it's too expensive, and that's happening in Boston. And we have some very good cost of living, and great lifestyle, and work-life balance down in the BioHealth Capital Region we can offer.

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So, I'm sure that this new recognition with this new initiative is going to educate people national and globally about how strong Virginia is as part of the BioHealth Capital Region. So, is there anything that we have not talked about related to this new initiative, John, around the Virginia Bio-Connect that you'd like to let our listeners know about right now?

John Newby:

I don't think so. I think the number one point to take away is, this is all about not just connections within Virginia, but within the region to make the region stronger. Opportunities are abounding right now. Partnerships are being spurred by the pandemic and other kinds of positive and negative pressures. But opportunities nonetheless. So, Virginia Bio-Connect is really positioning Virginia to be ready, not just for the current opportunities, but what's in the future by connecting ourselves, making us stronger, and allowing us to be better able to provide life-saving solutions.

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Rich Bendis:

Thank you. Before we close this edition of *BioTalk*, I'd like each of the three of you to be able to have whatever closing comments you'd like to make, and that way, I can also recognize the three that have been on this podcast. So, we'll start with Nikki Hastings, Executive Director of Charlottesville BioHub. Thank you for being on *BioTalk* today. What would you like to leave with our listeners, Nikki?

Nikki Hastings: Thank you so much, Rich. It's such a pleasure. I think this is the right time to bring our communities together. The Commonwealth of Virginia is disparate by geography. We're being brought together through the virtual world. We've been incredibly efficient in building this program and bringing together all of the stakeholders across the state, and we are poised to really be able to wave the flag for biotech in Virginia. And it's been a long time coming, and we're really excited about the opportunity. And we're excited to partner with Maryland and the BioHealth Capital Region as well.

Rich Bendis: Thank you, Nikki. And that was Nikki Hastings, Executive Director of Charlottesville BioHub.

0:32:02 And you go by Cville BioHub, right?

Nikki Hastings: Yeah, in Charlottesville, it's the shortening. It's a common way to shorten that mouthful. But yeah, Cville is the shortened version. But Charlottesville is the designation.

Rich Bendis: Great. Another one of our guests today has been Amy Adams, Executive Director of the Institute for Biohealth Innovation at George Mason University. Amy, closing comments?

Amy Adams: Sure. So, one of the mottos that we had throughout this process was, "Go big, or go home." We knew that this was a big opportunity, not just for Virginia, but for the BioHealth Capital Region. And it was such an incredibly collaborative team. I'm really excited to deliver these new opportunities.

Rich Bendis: Thank you, Amy. And last but not least, John Newby, the CEO of Virginia Bio. Closing comments, as well as let the listeners know, John, how to get in touch with you or this program if they would like to.

John Newby: My closing thought is this. Opportunities abound. And opportunities can only spring forth from more information and partnership, not just within Virginia, but within the region.

0:33:05 That's what we're aiming to do. This is a great infusion of cash from the Commonwealth of Virginia to spur our ecosystem, which will in turn, support the entire ecosystem in this region. So, Rich, we thank you for the opportunity to bring this to the listeners. If the listeners need

someone to speak to about more information about Virginia Bio-Connect, feel free to reach out to me. I'm at John.Newby@VABio.org. Feel free to reach out to me, and I'll try my best to field your questions, or at least get your question to a person who can.

Rich Bendis: Well, John, Amy, and Nikki, thank you very much for being on *BioTalk*. I think it's going to be much easier to get Virginia engagement in the BioHealth Capital Region forum and the Biohealth Capital Investment Conference in 2021, whenever we have them, wherever we have 'em, virtually, most likely, because of your Virginia Bio-Connect.

0:34:01 And I think we can have greater engagement from the Virginia participants in both of those initiatives. And we look forward to that in the future. So, thank you very much for appearing. Good luck with your Virginia Bio-Connect. If there's any money left over, send it north, please.

Narrator: Thanks for listening to *BioTalk* with Rich Bendis.

End of recording