

NASA mag honors local company **Plant Air Purifier wins contest**

U.S. Health Equipment Co.'s Plant Air Purifier recently won the Consumer Products Category of a prestigious contest sponsored by the publishers of NASA Tech Briefs Magazine.

The annual Create the Future Design Contest has attracted more than 8,000 products and design ideas from engineers, entrepreneurs and students worldwide since 2002, according to the website www.contest.techbriefs.com.

The Plant Air Purifier (www.plantairpurifier.com) removes toxins and other contaminants from the air.

"It basically enhances the natural cleaning power of plants by 28 times," says Wayne Schaeffer, vice president of U.S. Health Equipment Co. and president of USHECO. "Everyone has volatile organic compounds in their house floating around at various levels."

Schaeffer said in a home's wood-based products is often the culprit.

"They're off-gassing all the time to a low extent," he said. "Over time, the accumulation of all these things become very unhealthy for people."

The Plant Air Purifier, which can accommodate almost any type of houseplant, features a ventilation system that cleans the air.

"The Plant Air Purifier is a new air cleaning appliance that utilizes the recently discovered air-cleaning capacity of root-associated microbes living synergistically with common houseplants to trap and consume toxins in the air," according to a description of the device at www.contest.techbriefs.com/2013/entries/consumer-products/3675.

Schaeffer said besides removing dust, dander and other allergens, NASA research shows that the unit removes toxins such as formaldehyde, benzene, trichloroethylene and even radon.

The Plant Air Purifier retails for \$229, but Schaeffer has good news for his customers.

"We're making a smaller, nicer-looking, much cheaper model," Schaeffer said.

The new unit will retail for \$99 and will be available in September.

Incorporated in 2000, U.S. Health Equipment Company was incorporated in 2000 by Schaeffer and his father, Bernarr C. Schaeffer, who also founded USHECO. The company collaborated with NASA scientist Dr. B.C. Wolverton, to bring to market the Plant Air Purifier.

Wayne Schaeffer has more than 30 years experience in design and manufacturing and holds several patents.

U.S. Health Equipment Co. and USHECO, located at 138 Maple Hill Drive in Kingston, can be reached at (845) 658-9200 or www.usheco.com.