

**ROC BUSINESS**

**Pace is picking up for Energy Harvesters' Walking Charger**



Larry Grumer of Energy Harvesters with prototypes of the Walking Charger. PHOTOS BY KATE MELTON

**By Jinelle Shengulette**

**B**attery life is a common issue among smartphone users.

But Lawrence Grumer and John Fortier hope that charging mobile electronics devices will soon be as easy as putting one foot in front of the other.

The Energy Harvesters LLC colleagues have created a prototype of the Walking Charger, a mechanism that would be embedded into footwear and would charge devices simply by walking.

"We achieved a critical milestone in being able to charge a smartphone battery in as little as one hour's worth of everyday walking. What we now require is outside funding in order to produce footwear-integrated demonstrators. ... The component parts of our Walking Charger product would be size-reduced so it can be suitably embedded within footwear," said Grumer, co-founder, president and CEO of Energy Harvesters.

We connected with Grumer, an Ironde-



quoit resident, to discuss the appeal of the product, getting it to market and more.

**The Walking Charger:** Converts the energy created from walking to recharge cell-phones or power other mobile electronic devices, consumers will be able to lower their own carbon footprint. Consumers will not need to purchase extra backup batteries.

**We had key milestones accomplished with limited capital:** Before we could even think about approaching investors. We knew from the beginning that we needed a working prototype to prove that our technology works well, that there would be customer validation from the branded footwear companies and that their customers, the end

users — including the military — want our innovation and are willing to pay for it.

**We have met with many:** Leading footwear brands at the senior management level. We have also proposed a number of projects to organizations including the Army Soldier and Electronics Command, Army Research Laboratory, Office of Naval Research and Air Force Special Operations Command. We've met directly with a Navy admiral and an Army general in response.

**Footwear brands:** Are excited about our innovation. They want to see a footwear-integrated demonstration prototype in order for them to establish development and supply contracts with us. The military has expressed their serious need for a solution for soldier power and the battery weight overburden carried by soldiers.

**Globally there are 5 billion:** Mobile phone subscribers in developing nations, but according to the "Green Power for Mobile" report by the GSMA Development Fund, "nearly 500 million people worldwide do not have a means of charging a mobile phone at home."

**We hope to:** Offer the Walking Charger to consumers in developing countries. For these consumers, having a personal power-charging platform embedded in their footwear could be a truly life-changing improvement.

**The to-do list is inexhaustible:** Priorities shift constantly between team building and management, product development, customer validation and development, financial and business impact as well as fundraising, planning, business processes, corporate governance, intellectual property, and more.

**Our biggest success has been:** Attracting an outstanding management team, including a local manufacturing partner in Dyco Electronics Inc. and global sourcing partner in Sumpraxis LLC to work with us on initially an unfunded basis. Their sweat equity and in-kind services support has given us a prototype and a filed patent citing 20 claims and trade secrets in the design, fabrication and integration of our technology.

Their commitment to stay the course in working with us to our accomplishments speaks well of the business opportunity we have ahead of us.

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