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2009 Newsmakers of the Year



Randal Charlton
Executive director, **TechTown**



Randal Charlton will have a hard time topping 2009.

The big news for Charlton, the executive director of Detroit's **TechTown**, the technology park and business incubator affiliated with **Wayne State University**, came in October when the **World Stem Cell Summit** announced its sixth annual meeting would be in Detroit this Oct. 4-6.

The summit brings together some 1,200 researchers, government officials and representatives from pharmaceutical companies from more than 30 countries.

In November, Charlton orchestrated the planned purchase of the **Dalgleish Cadillac** building at Cass Avenue and Amsterdam Street to become the Tech Two building. The sale, for \$1 million, is under contract. Pending an environmental review, the first tenant could move into the 130,000-square-foot building sometime in the first quarter.

The Tech One building will hit capacity with the build-out early this year of its 15,000-square-foot Stem Cell Commercialization Center — construction financed by \$4.1 million in a combination of loans and grants that TechTown was awarded in 2009 by the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**.

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"Randal is a force, thank goodness," said Gloria Hepner, WSU's associate vice president for research. "When he said he wanted to buy the Dalgleish building, well, universities are pretty conservative. Buy a building? But he made it happen. When he decides on something, he's pretty determined."

In October, Charlton was part of a WSU mission to Israel, which bore fruit in December with the news that **Taburit**, a company that does stem-cell banking, had signed a lease at TechTown to break into the Canadian and U.S. markets and hopes to hire as many as 50 employees in the next 12-18 months.

Charlton expects to land at least another six Israeli companies at TechTown in the next few months.

—
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