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Inside Track: Spine device firm a winner

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CoreSpine Technologies and founder Christine Horton have been awarded the 2008 Minnesota Cup, a financial prize designed to recognize entrepreneurs and emerging products.

The Minneapolis-based company, which was formed in 2005 and develops advanced surgical devices for the removal of cartilage in the lumbar disc space, receives a \$50,000 cash prize for the honor.

Runners-up in the competition were the funeral-planning website My Wonderful Life (www.mywonderfullife.com) and Klodas Foods: Fibre and Beyond, a natural and organic foods supplier. Principal sponsors of the cup, now in its fourth year, are the University of Minnesota and Wells Fargo.

Best performers

A survey of "Best Performing Cities" by Greenstreet Partners and the Milken Institute probably won't get a lot of promotion in Minnesota, where just two cities made the top 200 in the country -- and even those were in the back of the pack.

The ranking is based on a community's ability to create and sustain jobs. Minneapolis came in 137th, up from 151 a year ago, while Duluth ranked 167, up from 175 in 2007.

The study found that cities that have large concentrations of technology firms and export-intensive industries performed the best. Top-ranked? The Provo-Orem area in Utah.

Beyond Berra

Aflac's sponsorship of the Iron Girl Duathlon in Bloomington next week reflects the insurer's intention to market more directly to women. Aflac has a heavy presence with male-dominated sporting events, including Major League Baseball, college football and NASCAR. But half the company's business is with women.

The Bloomington competition is the ninth stop on a 10-event Iron Girl series -- all sponsored by Aflac -- and the largest, with 1,000 registered participants.

Famed New York Yankees player Yogi Berra, renowned for his tortured syntax, is featured in one of Aflac's best-known television ads.

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