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BILL POWERS



ERIC SCHMADEL/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Bill Powers of Murrysville, president and CEO of PixController Inc., a company that markets motion-activated cameras, has combined his business acumen with his lifelong love of nature to provide a window to wildlife.

WEBCAM GONE WILD

Murrysville man's nature site named one of top 25

By PAUL PATERRA

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Bill Powers may be an amateur, but he finds himself in the same league as Vatican City and Times Square.

His PixController Wildlife Webcam was touted as one of the 25 Most Interesting Webcams for 2007 by EarthCam, a Webcam network based in Hackensack, N.J. More than 5,000 Webcams were judged.

Powers has always loved wildlife.

He is also president and CEO of

PixController Inc., a company that markets motion-activated cameras.

So the Murrysville man combined the two to provide a window to wildlife for himself and others. He and his wife, Donna, placed two wireless cameras in the woods behind their home. They capture the activities of deer, raccoons, wild turkeys, foxes and whatever else may wander by. Those images are sent to www.pixcontroller.com.

"We would go out in the woods and take pictures of deer. We'd see a lot of animals, so we put a little feeder up and started getting a lot of turkey and deer," Powers said.

"One day I took a wireless camera, put it outside and kind of watched the stuff on TV."

He uses a video server to take the signal, digitize the pictures and put them onto a network. "It allows me to take a snapshot every so often and send it to the Web page," Powers said. "We said since we're getting this video stuff in here, why don't we make a Web page on our Webcam so we can share what we're seeing with the rest of the world?"

The pictures are updated every

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few seconds to give viewers a picture of wildlife activity in the woods. At night the cameras switch to infrared, to which the animals are oblivious, allowing 24 hours of wilderness viewing.

And many are watching. Powers said the site averages 1 million hits daily. It's an attentive audience, too. Powers took the camera down for five minutes one day and received e-mails from as far away as Scotland and Australia from viewers wondering what happened.

"Anytime there's any little hiccup, we get an e-mail," Powers said. "But we get a lot of nice e-mails from people all over the world saying they really enjoy watching it."

EarthCam producers searched through more than 5,000 Webcams throughout the year to select 125 semifinalists. The 25 finalists were chosen by a VIP panel of judges that included Michael Bay, director of the movie "Transformers;" Barry Josephson, producer of the movie, "Enchanted;" and 1998 Olympic silver medalist Gordy Sheer, director of marketing and sponsorship for USA Luge.

Others in the top 25 include the Vatican City Webcam, Times Square Cam, Tokyo Diner Cam and a Penguin Cam at the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga.

Justin Camerlengo, EarthCam's director of marketing, said the finalists were judged on technology, concept creativity,



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A wireless camera in the woods behind Bill Powers' house takes pictures of deer, raccoons, foxes as well as wild turkeys, and puts the images into a network. At night the cameras switch to infrared, to which the animals are oblivious, allowing 24 hours of viewing.

visual quality and design. He said the PixController Wildlife Webcam has all those qualities.

"It gives people an opportunity to go someplace they otherwise couldn't be," Camerlengo said. "That's probably what caught the fancy of the producers, using it in a unique fashion."

"It was one of those distinctions that just came out of the blue," Powers said. "We had no expectation of getting that. It was kind of good for us getting the publicity."

Powers will continue upgrad-

ing equipment and plans to monitor the den of a red fox he recently came across.

"It's just amazing how much wildlife exists, especially in these pockets of urban areas, that people don't know about. People love watching these videos," Powers said. "It gives me a chance to kind of tinker around with the stuff I enjoy doing, take pictures of wildlife and share it with people from all over."

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