Sac State entrepreneur earns a regional honor

Sacramento State student Joseph Simpson has been honored by the Sacramento Area Regional Technical Alliance (SARTA) for his innovative product designed to deter prescription drug abuse.

SARTA, which promotes the growth of technology companies in the region, presented Simpson with the Claire Pomeroy Award for Innovation in Medical Technology for his Safer Lock cap during the organization’s recent conference. The cap affixes to prescription medicine bottles and requires a correct four-digit combination to remove. It has 10,000 possible combinations, features four dials and is easy to operate and reset. The company website offers reset instructions and a registration option that enables users to store combinations in case they forget the sequence.

Several years ago Simpson, whose younger brother Steven battled addiction to prescription drugs, devised a safety cap for plastic bottles that could prevent people from overdosing on painkillers and other medications. Simpson put his college career on hold for a year while he devised an adaptable combination lock device for prescription medicine bottles. With the aid of a friend specializing in computer design, Simpson created the safety cap.

Ralphs grocery chain, which in 2012 made the fledgling product (under a previous name) available at its prescription counters, has become a permanent customer.

“We have raised over a million dollars in funding and expanded our retail presence, and landed our first pharmaceutical deal with Zogenix,” Simpson says. He notes that the specialty pharmaceutical company has launched a program for one of its prescriptions, Zohydro, that includes a coupon for a free Safer Lock.

In November, the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence in Washington named the innovative product as one of its Top Five Technologies to Reduce Prescription Drug Abuse.

Simpson is a marketing major who has a passion for engineering and networking. On track to graduate next semester, he currently handles sales, marketing and manufacturing for Safer Lock. The device has been granted several domestic and foreign patents. “We are continuing to grow the company and are looking forward to the future,” he says.

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Alan Miller