

Big winner at Macworld

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Photo provided Visitors crowd around Other World Computing's booth at the Macworld Developers Conference last week. OWC staff member Dave Jones (far left) talks with some of the attendees.

WOODSTOCK – The annual Macworld Developers Conference has not created the same buzz since Apple decided to leave the event after 2009.

But for Woodstock-based Other World Computing, the chance to set up shop in San Francisco is about as good as it can get.

“It’s the opportunity to interact with users, with our customers,” President and Chief Executive Officer Larry O’Connor said. “We have people come to see us year after year for the last decade, and new people who get to meet us for the first time.”

O’Connor’s team had plenty to show them this year, as its Mercury Aura Pro Express solid state drive continued to wow visitors.

The drive, which uses flash memory rather than regular solid hard drives, brought home two awards for OWC. The company earned the Best of Show award from Macworld Magazine and the Best Mac Hardware honor from MacLife Magazine.

“I was kind of surprised only because Macworld in recent years has had a greater focus on iPod, iPad, and iPhone stuff,” O’Connor said. “It was pretty exciting to get some attention for SSDs.”

The conference, which was conducted last weekend, came three weeks after the higher-profile Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas that OWC also attended.

“[Macworld] is a very different show than CES,” O’Connor said. “[CES] has more reporters and industry types, and we’ll go back again, but at Macworld we get to see existing customers and new customers. There was a lot of energy at the show.”

O’Connor said that 10 percent of the company’s shipments are made to California – Apple’s headquarters are based in Cupertino, Calif. – which makes face time with distant customers a key ingredient to OWC’s success.

“It’s a substantial chunk of business,” he said. “A lot of Apple employees buy from us, so they came down, too. We had an awesome product for them, and I’m glad that somebody recognized it.”

O’Connor said the response from customers and the industry over the Mercury Aura Pro Express was overwhelmingly positive. The Woodstock company is the only major SSD manufacturer with production in the U.S., and the Aura is the only SSD on the market that works with the Macbook Air laptop computer.

“The reception has gone past our expectations,” he said. “We have sold a lot more units than we expected to, and that’s always a positive thing.”

Although the number of booths at the event were down from the past two years, O’Connor said OWC planned to attend Macworld for years to come.

“Even though the booths were about half the size of last year, I expect the number [of visitors] to come in pretty close to what came in last year,” he said. “Our own booth didn’t have enough people to handle the crowds. It was difficult to see that everyone got that interaction – because there were fewer booths for the same amount of people to visit.”