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Celeste Volz Ford, founder and CEO of Stellar Solutions Inc. in Palo Alto, has been involved in aerospace engineering since she graduated from college in 1978.

She started Stellar Solutions in 1995, and she says her goal was "to have a high impact, one that is totally focused on what is important, solving critical needs and to have the kind of environment where employees have their dream job while solving critical customer needs."

According to Ms. Ford, Stellar Solutions does end-to-end integration of projects, as well as some program management.

The company that she started with herself and one employee now has 100 staffers in California, Colorado and Washington, D.C. Revenues are approaching \$20 million.

Stellar Solutions has spun off two companies.

Stellar Solutions Aerospace, Ltd., in London, performs the same services as the parent company for international clients.

Quake Finder, the second firm, uses

new technologies in space and on the ground to try to locate earthquakes before they happen. It built its own satellite and has the largest ground network of ultra low frequency sensors in the world.

"Right before an earthquake happens there are low frequency emissions. Perhaps that is what animals react to," Ms. Ford says. She believes that as technology improves, we may one day be able to predict earthquakes.

About half of Stellar Solutions work involves defense applications for the government, for which they have received numerous awards and honors.

Ms. Ford and her company have also received recognition in the private sector.

In 2004, she won the Leadership Award from Women in Aerospace.

"That also came with congressional recognition," Ms. Ford says.

The City of Palo Alto has recognized Stellar Solutions as one of their fastest growing companies and the company is continually on the Top 100 and Top 50 lists of numerous business publications.

"My biggest rewards have been the customer feedback and the awards from the government and large contractors

we work with," Ms. Ford says.

She believes in sharing her company's success with the community. When the company got positive cash flow it created the Stellar Solutions Foundation, which allows employees to earmark money for their favorite non-profits.

In addition to giving employees time off to do community outreach, the company gives them financial incentives to become involved on their own time.

Ms. Ford is also involved in industry specific nonprofits.

Stellar Solutions is a sponsoring company of the U.S. Space Foundation and is a corporate member of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

She serves on the board of the California Space Authority, a consortium of public and private companies.

Ms. Ford is active in her church and both she and her husband, Kevin, who have three children, have coached organized sports. Their oldest daughter was on the Notre Dame National Championship soccer team.

"I like to think that I had something to do with that," Ms. Ford says.

She enjoys hiking, tennis and acting in community theater.

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CELESTE VOLZ FORD
CEO, Stellar Solutions Inc.