

Ukiah 'Shark Tank': Man creates visual surface metal detector

By Adam Randall, udjar@ukiahdj.com, @udjadam on Twitter

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Travis Riley had a hobby with his father – searching for gold. However, being colorblind didn't work out too well, as the 31-year-old Ukiah man could only see black-and-white and not the dull yellow shimmer the product produces. So he decided to find a better way.

It was nearly a year ago when Riley thought of Metal Vision – a visual surface metal detector designed to see gold and other metallic objects.

The way it works is the user wears shades similar to sunglasses, but the lenses themselves are filtered. A light device is also strapped to the head of the user, and pulsing, strobe LED light waves reflect polarized light back from objects. As a result, shiny metals at surface level, for example, will become more visible, which wouldn't have been possible to see at first glance.

Riley noted the current product works best at dark, or near dark conditions, but said other versions are in the works for lighter hours during the day.

Even though the product was originally intended to spot gold, Riley sees his invention as having many potential uses in the mining industry, for agricultural defense, military applications and anthropology. He even said that Cannabis reflects back when the device is used.

For search and rescue operations, Riley visualizes the lights being attached to helicopters in some manner to reflect shiny objects possessed by a lost person, back to an emergency responder. Police could use it to find discarded weapons in a crime, or perhaps a forensics specialist may find the product useful in searching for shattered bullet fragments in a body, he said.

"I've been doing a lot of online marketing and found there was a big demand for it," Riley said. "There isn't anything like it."

After doing odd jobs which Riley said were going nowhere, he said he realized he wasn't doing anything and decided to commit to Metal Vision full time, undertaking the manufacturing himself while learning computer aided design and fabricating the circuitry.

As the product escalated into a reality, Riley said he rented a U-Haul pickup truck and drove to Montana this past Christmas Eve to seek the expertise of a man who could write patents. Together, the two men did research, and a patent was drafted which led to Riley obtaining a provisional for his product for one year.

Riley said an investor also supplied him with \$25,000, all of which was only decided on by a handshake.

With the goal of making \$1 million in profit by the end of the year, Riley has been doing the marketing himself, something many inventors don't do these days without the help of ABC's entrepreneur-promoting TV show "Shark Tank."

"I would love to be on 'Shark Tank,'" Riley said, "but there's a one-and-a-half to two-year waiting list."