



Excellence in Entrepreneurship Eastern and Southern Kentucky

EKU College of Business & Technology
Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp.
The Center for Rural Development

2009 CONTRIBUTING PARTNER PROGRAM

Since its inception in 2001, the **Excellence in Entrepreneurship Awards** program continues to improve by leaps and bounds through the ongoing development of partnerships among EKU's College of Business and Technology, Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp., and The Center for Rural Development – all primary stakeholders in the future success of our 55-county region of Eastern and Southern Kentucky.

With this letter, our goal is to show you how, with the support of established organizations like yours, **we can partner** to provide a positive and proactive entrepreneurial environment and *create* our own success story for eastern and southern Kentucky. Just as the individual “small business” has a tremendous collective impact on our economy, so will your business by partnering with those of us already supporting the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Awards program. **Through our collective efforts**, we will play a defining role in shaping the future business environment of our region.

The primary purpose of the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Awards (EIEA) is to recognize and promote those individuals in the region that have **exemplified the entrepreneurial spirit** by creating and managing a successful business enterprise. As a direct result of their efforts, jobs are created and new dollars flow through neighboring businesses, strengthening the foundation and fabric of our local communities. By lifting up these success stories, we provide both encouragement and “best practice” models for our entrepreneurs-to-be to emulate. In one form or another, **all of us benefit** from these success stories.

According to the Small Business Administration, there are nearly **70,000 small businesses** in Kentucky. These “small businesses” create a big impact by accounting for more than **750,000 jobs** – nearly one-half of the non-farm, private-sector workforce of our state. These figures clearly illustrate that the collective impact of these individual businesses is formidable and plays a vital role in the shaping of our state's economy.

At past EIEA luncheons, **larger-than-expected crowds of more than 200** traveled to The Center for Rural Development headquarters in Somerset to experience the event and applaud the award recipients in four business categories. Program speakers included EKU President Doug Whitlock and Fifth District Congressman Harold “Hal” Rogers, who in his keynote address said, “Nothing pleases me more than to see so many people working to build up a region that we all dearly love.”

Building on prior successes, the EIEA committee targeted a critical area for program development: the best and brightest of our region's youth. By expanding its scope to include entrepreneurial leadership programs for both **college and high school students**, the committee has drafted a plan to capture the imagination of our young talent and educate them on: (1) the value of entrepreneurship, and (2) the positive impact they can have on our region as business leaders.

We ask that you review the attached pledge form and **consider joining us as a partner** with your financial and professional support of the Excellence in Entrepreneurship Awards program. Together, we will create our own future; but the best of plans is no better than the level of commitment and support they can generate. If you believe in the effort and endorse a proactive stance, then please join our team by becoming a contributing partner in 2009!