

A new league - 07/15/04

Encouraging entrepreneurs just makes good economic sense

It is a well documented fact that most new jobs are created by new and existing businesses in a community, not by successfully recruiting a new businesses or industry from outside. Thus, it only makes sense that encouraging entrepreneurs may well be more successful in creating new jobs than luring an outside employer.

That's the idea behind the "Entrepreneurial League System" being created in Advantage Valley, an eight-county business partnership stretching from Ashland to Charleston and including parts of southern Ohio. Organizers of the program - led by Citynet founder Mike Burdette - hope to attract 48 entrepreneurs who will meet regularly to share ideas and discuss the challenges and opportunities involved in being an entrepreneur.

Each participant will be assigned a mentor, who will coach them through the process of starting and operating a business. Much like in baseball, participants in the Entrepreneurial League System will be divided into rookie, minor and major league levels.

To qualify for the ELS, entrepreneurs must have already been involved in starting a new company, be operating a startup venture within an existing company or be attempting to reinvent an entire business.

Burdette defines entrepreneurs as the visionaries of the business community - individuals with creative ideas and the courage and wherewithal to turn those ideas into reality. He's convinced bringing them together will inspire even greater ideas.

"Entrepreneurs tend to isolate themselves," said Burdette, who calls himself an entrepreneur. "This is a good way for them to have a place to go and learn from each other."

Although the program is just now getting organized, Burdette has high hopes for the success of Advantage Valley ELS, convinced that it will become a model for other regions of the country.

"This area could become a Mecca," Burdette said.

Spoken like a true visionary. The idea behind ELS is a sound one. Here's hoping Burdette's high expectations for it are fully realized.

One only has to look at the life of Paul G. Blazer to realize how an entrepreneur with a vision can change the life of a community. After all, Blazer took a small oil company in Eastern Kentucky and turned it into a multinational corporation.