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Guest Columnists

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Baseball's farm system now model

By MARK D. BURDETTE

Imagine the day when West Virginia is ranked near the top of all of the key economic measurements.

The good news is we are headed in that direction. One of the major reasons is the new Entrepreneurial League System. Advantage Valley has embraced the system as an economic development strategy for the region.

It is an innovative approach to developing entrepreneurial talent, creating successful companies and building entrepreneurial communities.

Modeled after one of the most successful processes in the world for systematically developing talent -- the farm system of professional sports -- the mission is to create a supply of highly skilled entrepreneurs capable of building successful companies in sufficient numbers to transform a region's economy.

The critical determinant of a community's economic vitality is the quantity and quality of its entrepreneurs and how well they are matched to the market opportunities they pursue. Communities can and must do something to improve their supply of entrepreneurs. We methodically cultivate many other kinds of talent. Why not cultivate entrepreneurs?

The League creates a breeding ground for entrepreneurs and helps them build the skills necessary for success as they work their way up the various league levels, just as athletes do in baseball.

Current programs deal with only half of the equation for economic success; they address needs for technical and

financial assistance but do nothing to build a pipeline of highly skilled entrepreneurs capable of using that assistance to build companies.

The Entrepreneurial League System classifies entrepreneurs into different levels according to their specific skills for starting and operating a new enterprise.

Entrepreneurs are recruited by talent scouts who use a variety of methods to find or encourage individuals with the right potential and drive.

Led by a performance coach, entrepreneurs are organized into teams to develop the skills necessary to be successful and to support each other in the tasks needed to build their businesses.

With the help of their coach, entrepreneurs establish game plans that help them focus their energies. Consulting services, technical assistance, and financial assistance are customized to the entrepreneurs' level of development and their precise need. These processes facilitate progress up the ladder to the major leagues -- not in terms of size, but in terms of performance and profitability.

The League is a new approach to economic development that helps communities develop entrepreneurial talent and builds successful companies effectively, efficiently and equitably, on a large-scale, sustainable basis.

It provides entrepreneurs with a clear ladder to success and access to resources, psychological support and opportunities to develop new skills that make it less costly to start a business, more likely to succeed, less time-consuming to achieve success and more capable of generating a greater return on investment.

Entrepreneurs are currently being recruited in the Advantage Valley region. For more information, contact our offices at 760-0950.

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