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Judges to pick Pipeline's top innovator of year

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A Wichitan, a software- giant executive and the son of oilman T. Boone Pickens are among the judges of Pipeline's Innovator of the Year competition to be held Jan. 21 in Overland Park.

The judges are Rich Bendis, president and CEO of Innovation America in Philadelphia and former CEO of the Kansas Technology Enterprise Corp.; John Pavetto of Wichita, chief information officer of Koch Industries; Tom B. Pickens III, CEO of Astrotech in Austin, Texas; Cliff Reeves, general manager of Microsoft's emerging business team in Silicon Valley, Calif.; and Bill Sanford, CEO of Symark in Cleveland and a board director of the Kansas Bioscience Authority.

The judges will evaluate Pipeline's eight "innovators," promising technology and bioscience entrepreneurs selected to participate in the year-long entrepreneurship grooming program. They will be judged on their business plans, their business plan pitch to a mock panel of venture capitalists and a score they accumulate during the fellowship.

Judges will select one of eight innovators in the 2009 class for the award.

Gary Mason, CEO of Wichita-based iSi Environmental Services, is among the innovators.

Joni Cobb, CEO of Pipeline, said this year's group of judges reflects the "validation that Pipeline is a high profile and effective program."

"It also speaks to the priority that individuals like this are placing on supporting high-growth entrepreneurs in this economy," she said.

Pipeline and the Innovator of the Year competition are in their third year. In addition to the competition, Pipeline also will introduce its 2010 class of innovators.

Pipeline was started as a program of KTEC. Earlier this year, it became a stand-alone, nonprofit organization but continues to receive funding from KTEC.

For more information on the competition, visit www.ktecpipeline.com.

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