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Gary Mason and Todd Gentry: KTEC generates jobs, dollars here at home

BY GARY MASON AND TODD GENTRY

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius recently vetoed the funding for the Kansas Technology Enterprise Corp.

KTEC is a private-public partnership established by the state of Kansas to promote technology-based economic development, a niche that south-central Kansas has relied on for decades. This organization, through the companies it has supported, has created 17,000 technology-related jobs (a thousand of them just last year) and helped build companies with \$2 billion in sales revenue.

In these difficult times, Kansans need to embrace this organization, because it is entrepreneurs who will lead our nation out of the recession. Laid-off employees will look for ways to reinvent their careers, some creating a business they've always dreamed about.

But becoming a successful entrepreneur is extremely difficult. General statistics show that 90 percent of us fail. KTEC provides that support we need to grow our businesses.

KTEC Pipeline, just one of many programs that KTEC offers, has gained national recognition for its revolutionary and transformative nature. One of its goals is to bring together a network of serial entrepreneurs from across the state and equip them with the tools and support they need to grow businesses.

In Wichita, iSi Environmental Services has worked closely with KTEC the past three months through the Pipeline program. Although the association has been brief, iSi has gained understanding about growing a business and has become more firmly convinced of KTEC's value, especially in this economic climate.

Inno-Labs in Winfield is a product development company. KTEC and KTEC local affiliates, including the Wichita Technology Corp., have helped Inno-Labs with everything from refining the business plan to bringing in angel funding for the business. The Pipeline program gave Inno-Labs the tools to take the business to a whole new level. In 2009, it is poised to see a 500 percent growth rate over 2008 sales.

KTEC is also funding a special research and development Inno-Labs project through a local university. When complete, it will render a product that Inno-Labs already has nearly \$1 million in orders for.

KTEC's experienced staff and comprehensive group of associates understand business and job growth. They are entrepreneurs and businesspeople themselves, and they know how to analyze a company for its potential, expose it to necessary resources and reduce the odds of failure.

KTEC plays a significant role in accelerating economic development through the state of Kansas in three significant ways:

- Researching the technology industry globally for new trends while scoping out our state's universities for industry-led research in new products and technologies.
- Analyzing early stage companies and providing a density of resources through business assistance and incubators.
- Investing in early stage technology companies or helping them acquire the capital needed at that crucial stage.

Kansas needs KTEC because KTEC generates jobs and dollars right here at home.

Gary Mason is founder and CEO of iSi Environmental Services in Wichita. Todd Gentry is founder and CEO of Inno-Labs in Winfield.

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