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ATHENS, Ohio (April 1, 2015) - Five regional entrepreneurs and inventors have been named recipients of the 2014 Innovation Awards, which celebrate creativity and innovation in southeastern Ohio.

The awards were announced March 31 at Ohio University's Baker Center Ballroom. [TechGROWTH Ohio](#), a public/private partnership administered by the university's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, hosted the third annual event to recognize outstanding advances in business and technology in the region.

Forty individuals were finalists for the Innovation Awards, which were judged by panels of external reviewers. The recipients are:

Brooke Hallowell was recognized for Outstanding Faculty Innovation. Hallowell, an Ohio University professor of communication sciences and disorders, has developed an eye tracking system to better assess comprehension in patients with neurological disorders or injuries.

Noah Rosenblatt won the award for Outstanding Student Innovation. Rosenblatt, an Ohio University Honors Tutorial College student studying business administration, is leading a team working to develop a sustainable system for fighting malaria in Guyana. The system relies on eucalyptus trees to repel mosquitos and carbon nanoparticles to decontaminate water sources.

The award for Outstanding Social Innovation went to Jeff Fite with Sojourners Care Network for their work in helping young people receive their GED or high school diplomas while receiving hands-on job training. The YouthBuild program serves Appalachian Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Michelle Ajamian of Shagbark Seed & Mill was recognized with the Outstanding Woman in Innovation award. Ajamian's commitment to sustainable farming techniques and responsible business practices has helped grow Shagbark throughout Ohio.

Jan van der Werff, CEO of Ecolibrium Solar, was named Entrepreneur of the Year. Ecolibrium Solar has become an industry leader with its unique solar installation racking line of products, including EcoFoot and EcoX, which offer quick and efficient installations of solar panels for both residential and industrial customers.

In addition, Ohio University awarded the 2014 Konneker Medal for Commercialization and Entrepreneurship to **Rick Hawkins and Hua-Thye Chua**. The Ohio University alumni were recognized for their achievements in biotechnology commercialization and computer chip technology innovation, respectively.

TechGROWTH Ohio is a program funded by the state Third Frontier program, Ohio University and industry sponsors to provide investments and business expertise to startup companies in southeastern Ohio. It is part of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes programs that support university and regional technology commercialization and small business incubation.

The event was sponsored by the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, Bricker & Eckler Attorneys at Law, EquiBrand Consulting, Smart Business Network, GBQ Partners, Quidel, NuGrowth Solutions, the Russ College of Engineering and Technology and the Scripps College of Communication.

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