

Meigs woman is Innovation Award finalist

Ohio University gala celebrates regional entrepreneurs, innovators

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ATHENS, Ohio — Forty entrepreneurs and innovators in southeastern Ohio have been named finalists for the third Innovation Awards, which celebrate entrepreneurship and innovation in the region.

One of those is Meigs County's Vanessa Kaukonen, of Fur Peace Ranch and Psylo-delic Gallery. He is a finalist in the Outstanding Social Innovation category.

The winners in each of the five categories will be announced at the Innovation Awards gala 6-9 p.m. March 31 at Ohio University's Baker Center Ballroom.

"Southeastern Ohio has garnered state and national recognition for its thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Lynn Gellermann, executive director of TechGROWTH Ohio, which hosts the annual recognition event. "Our 40 finalists reflect a growing and diverse regional network of inventors and innovators."

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. TechGROWTH Ohio, administered by the Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, is part of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that includes programs that support university and regional technology commercialization and small business incubation.

An external panel of judges is reviewing the Innovation Award finalists and will select the recipient in each category.

The third Innovation Awards finalists are:

Entrepreneur of the Year: Daniel Allwine, Keplaris LLC; Chris Chmiel, Integration Acres Ltd.; Patrick Clark, Meridios; Bill Forquer, RealWeld Systems Inc.; Nate and Kathryn Blake Hayes, Athens Uncorked; Troy Lowe, Silverback Safety & Training Solutions Inc.; Ronald Palmer, Network4Rentals.com; Kent Shields, E3 Clean Technologies Inc.; Rich Sloan, FWD:Energy Inc.; Jan van der Werff, Ecolibrium Solar; Ronald Whaley, Geo-Tech Polymers LLC; and Edward Zatta, RXQ Compounding LLC.

Outstanding Faculty Innovation: John Bowditch, Jared Butcher, Jun Choi, Michelle Ferrier, Don Flournoy, Brooke Hollowell and Shawn Ostermann, all of Ohio University.

Outstanding Woman in Innovation: Michelle Ajamian, Shagbark Seed & Mill; Michelle Corrigan, Live Healthy Appalachia; Michelle Ferrier, Ohio University; Kamile Geist, Ohio University; Brooke Hollowell, Ohio University; Tanya Hire, Ohio University-Chillicothe; Sara Marrs, Business Remixed; and Stacia Moore, Davis Moore Inc.

Outstanding Social Innovation: Jeff Fite, Sojourners Care Network; Vanessa Kaukonen, Fur Peace Ranch & Psylo-delic Gallery; Ben Lachman, Athensworks; and Mark Plaskow, Modern Clinical.

Outstanding Student Innovation: Babatope Ayeni, Products Gulf; Alex Geiser, Cubic LLC; Alex Harshaw, Ohio University Entrepreneurs; John Herbert, Compact Automated Pizza Printers; Ryan Lovingood, Ohio University; Seema Mahato, Ohio University; Noah Roseblatt, Ohio University; Austin Stahl, Archer Technologies; and Taylor Van Neste, Taylor Products LLC.

Registration for the Innovation Awards is now open. Registration is \$35 per person or \$280 for a table of eight and includes dinner and a networking event. To register, visit www.gala.ohio.edu.

In addition, the Innovation Awards will feature the presentation of the 2014 Konneker Medal for Commercialization and Entrepreneurship, which is awarded to current and former Ohio University faculty members or students each year.

The program is managed by the vice president for research and creative activity.

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