Community and technical college partners with women’s business center to help laid off workers and entrepreneurs wishing to ‘retool’ their businesses

BECKLEY, W.Va. — July 2, 2009 — The INNOVA Commercialization Group has announced its partnership with New River Community and Technical College (New River) to provide key business education programs in southeastern West Virginia. New River will deliver FastTrac® business and entrepreneurial education programs to displaced workers through the Women’s Business & Training Center in Beckley from July 13 through August 31.

INNOVA, an initiative of the Fairmont-based West Virginia High Technology Consortium (WVHTC) Foundation and the administrating body of Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation of Kansas City FastTrac programs in West Virginia, indicated earlier this year that it would offer FastTrac LaunchPad programs. These Kauffman Foundation programs are designed for displaced workers throughout West Virginia who have found themselves unemployed due to current economic conditions nationally and globally, or who have been adversely affected by the economic downturn and want to retool their businesses.

“Southeastern West Virginia has been hit pretty hard by this tough economy,” said Bill Loope, Director of Institutional Advancement and Workforce Education at New River Community and Technical College. “I have seen first-hand what the FastTrac program can do for businesses and people, and when INNOVA announced that the Kauffman Foundation had developed a FastTrac program for displaced workers and entrepreneurs struggling in this economy, I knew it would be a good fit for us.”

“We want to help every displaced worker and entrepreneur possible in West Virginia who has been adversely affected by this economic downturn,” said Patrick Gregg, FastTrac Statewide Administrator and INNOVA Outreach Manager. “New River Community and Technical College and the Women’s Business & Training Center are deeply committed to making sure that those who need this FastTrac LaunchPad program get it. We are all dedicated in our belief that these programs will give business people the tools to positively and dramatically change their lives.”

INNOVA has also collaborated with the West Virginia Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which operates under the state Department of Commerce, to provide various FastTrac programs to the entrepreneurial and business communities throughout West Virginia.

New River, in partnership with the Women’s Business & Training Center, will offer FastTrac NewVenture LaunchPad each Monday evening from July 13 through August 31. Classes will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the Women’s Business & Training Center located at the Workforce West Virginia Career Center, located at 200 Value City Center, Suite 601, in Beckley.
In addition to serving as the administrating body for FastTrac programs in West Virginia, INNOVA has provided professional and technical assistance to more than 300 companies, completed 10 investments and expended nearly $1 million in seed and early stage capital to West Virginia companies. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation is a national partner of FastTrac and a supporter of FastTrac programs throughout West Virginia.

FastTrac programs in West Virginia are also supported by Chesapeake Energy Corporation, AXA Advisors and The Cornerstone Group. For further information on FastTrac programs, visit www.fasttrac.org. To register for this FastTrac LaunchPad program, call the Women’s Business & Training Center toll-free at 800-766-4556 or visit www.westvirginiawbc.org.

New River Community and Technical College serves nine counties in southern and south central West Virginia from four campuses: Bluefield/Mercer County, Nicholas County (Summersville), Beckley/Raleigh County and Greenbrier Valley (Lewisburg). Administrative offices are located in Beckley.

The INNOVA Commercialization Group, an initiative of the WVHTC Foundation, is a statewide commercialization effort designed to advance economic growth by increasing the number of new products introduced into the marketplace by West Virginia innovators. INNOVA drives this economic advancement by delivering high quality entrepreneurial education programs, professional technical assistance and seed investment capital to regional businesses.

The WVHTC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Fairmont, W.Va., functioning as an engine of economic change for growing a statewide and regional high-tech business sector. The Foundation has established a multi-faceted approach to maximize economic growth, including emphasis on business infrastructure, research and development, and commercialization and workforce development.

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