

This series has been established with the intent of increasing awareness of the many causes and efforts taken on by our nonprofit brethren. If your nonprofit has a particular event taking place during the course of a week, an anniversary for example, please make this known and we will do all possible to accommodate a spotlight that coincides. On behalf of our membership, we wish to say “thank you” for taking a few moments from your busy schedule to learn a bit more about our community of nonprofits.

Helping high school students prosper and become contributing members of society is the driving force behind Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas. YEK was introduced to the Wichita area in 1991 at Wichita High School North. Since then the program has been established in 19 Kansas high schools and has graduated 6,500 students. YEK seeks to teach at-risk high school students the essentials for entering the business world, including completion of a viable business plan.

Since its inception in 1991, Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas has added many facets to the program. An Ambassadors Association has been established, which is a club for graduates of the YEK program that promotes continued learning opportunities, as well as community service projects. Area businesses partner with YEK to provide additional opportunities to graduates during intensive summer learning programs. YEK also encourages business professionals to volunteer as mentors to the students working on business plans, as judges of the business plan competitions, and as guest speakers in the classroom.

As Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas meets their mission and their graduates become prosperous and contributing members of society, they have recognized a need for continued support of those graduates. Recently YEK PROS (Professional Representatives of Success) was formed and is specifically geared toward YEK graduates who are 21 years of age and older.

Aside from the outstanding learning opportunities YEK provides to its students and graduates, they also offer scholarships for post-secondary education and Venture Capital for business start-up costs. In 2004, \$29,000 in scholarships and \$12,300 in Venture Capital were awarded.

An entrepreneur herself, Shelly Chenoweth, Executive Director of YEK has been at the helm of this growing organization for the last seven years. Recently, Pat Jones, Executive Director of Dress for Success Wichita and Kiwanis Club President was quoted in the East Wichita News as saying that she believed Shelly was “one of our up and coming leaders in the community.” It’s good to know that the at-risk youth in our community have such outstanding leaders working on their behalf.

For more information about Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas, please call 316-978-7935 or visit their website at www.yeks.org.