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Innovation and Commercialization Center to host entrepreneurial summit

By ANDREW CRITCHELOW THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

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The Central Region Innovation and Commercialization Center, which is headquartered in Bowling Green and includes an Elizabethtown office, is set to host a free entrepreneurial summit next month at the Western Kentucky University Small Business Accelerator in Bowling Green.

Set from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST Nov. 10, the Summit of the South will include a day of entrepreneurial training, motivation, inspiration, mentoring and networking. The event will be held in correlation with Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Lisa Williams, director of the Innovation and Commercialization Center, said the summit will be beneficial to budding and established entrepreneurs alike.

“It’s just going to be a wealth of information,” she said.

The event will kick off with a light breakfast and remarks from guest speaker Jim Fugitte, a local entrepreneur, Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year and a founder of Lincoln Trail Venture Group. Attendees then can take part in several breakout sessions conducted by regional entrepreneurial experts.

Some topics covered in the breakouts will include Kentucky small business tax incentives, agricultural opportunities in Kentucky, retaining intellectual property in Kentucky and how to appeal to venture capitalists and angel investors.

“I’ve worked with all of these people over the years and I know what they can do to help people,” Williams said of those conducting breakout sessions. “This is a chance to have one-on-one time with them at no cost. So, this is a great value.”

During lunchtime, keynote speaker Mary Propes-Reynolds of Bowling Green will offer remarks, followed by a venture capital panel made up of five regional experts.

The summit is set to conclude with an Elevator Pitch Competition for attendees. Although confidential information should not be conveyed during the pitches, the competition can lead to real investment opportunities, Williams said.

The event also will include hourly tours of the WKU Small Business Accelerator, including areas such as the Collaborative Smart Space, Remote Working Space, Student Accelerator and the Company Launch Space. Located at 2413 Nashville Road in Bowling Green, the facility serves as the headquarters for the Central Region Innovation and Commercialization Center.

The WKU Small Business Accelerator is home to more than 30 startups and growth stage businesses. The Central Region Innovation and Commercialization Center currently is working on establishing a small business accelerator and a remote working space at the former Coca-Cola Bottling Company plant on Peterson Drive in Elizabethtown, Williams said.

“I think if folks go down there and see what we have in Bowling Green, they’ll really be excited to think we can get something like that here,” she said.

Registration for the Southern Summit is required for those looking to attend. Registration can be completed by going to bit.ly/3oxywF0 or by scanning the QR code from your smartphone.

“It’s for startups all the way to established companies,” Williams said. “They will benefit, I think, in one way or another.”

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