



A Regional Growth Corporation

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SouthEast Telephone Bringing Broadband Service to Letcher County

PIKEVILLE, KY - Darrell Maynard's ancestors settled in Pike County in 1790. His roots are there, and it's where he's built his business. You might say **SouthEast Telephone** SouthEast Telephone Company's foundation is his

love for the region and its people. Maynard calls it progress. Progress in a place where it's needed most.

The Pikeville native has been working to provide much-needed telecommunications services in the region for years. He established SouthEast Telephone Company (SouthEast) in 1996 with the goal of making it the premier hometown telephone company for all East Kentuckians. His nearly 20 years of experience in telecommunications services and equipment led him to believe it was a natural progression of the business to offer complete services to customers who previously had only national corporate entities to serve the local consumer market. Potential customers were aplenty in the mountains of East Kentucky.

SouthEast provides local telephone service, long distance, Internet and paging products for residential and business customers in a 50-county service area. It's the ability to provide professional and reliable service with a hometown touch and having your neighbors do the work that has made SouthEast the successful business it is, Maynard explains. Customers can call the Southeast office and have a "live" person answer to help them, rather than an automated system.

Maynard put his dream to work and has hired hundreds of his neighbors to get the job done.

"I saw the need for high tech jobs in East Kentucky," Maynard said. "And I've worked to develop and educate our labor force here so that they would be able to work in technology."

Today, SouthEast employs more than 200 people. Jobs range from software programming to inside and outside sales and call center operators. Its customers number some 36,000 throughout East and Central Kentucky.

But there's more work to be done. His most recent project will ensure that more than 800 previously underserved households in Letcher County have access to Internet broadband service.

To meet this demand, Maynard, and his management team, determined the need to purchase new

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equipment and hire three to six new employees to facilitate the company's growth. They called on the SouthEast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) to help fund the Letcher County project. SKED's direct loan funds and technical assistance services are available to businesses in East Kentucky and the surrounding region. Together with Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation (KHIC), SKED staff worked to create a financing package that would provide the financing SouthEast needed to expand its services.

Maynard says he chose to work with SKED and KHIC over traditional banking resources because the two non-profit, economic development groups share his mission of job creation and improving economic development in East Kentucky and because their staff has firsthand knowledge of the region's economic hurdles.

"They understand the needs of a small rural company that's trying to get started and grow and serve the needs of its communities," Maynard said. "Ours is a more challenging business model, and SKED and KHIC have a good understanding of what we're trying to do and why we're doing it here."

SKED provided equipment financing for the project using funds from its Community Development Financial Institution loan funds provide by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

"SKED is pleased to play a small role in SouthEast Telephone Company's most recent expansion," said Greg Jones, SKED executive director. "East Kentucky is filled with individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit. We feel like Darrell Maynard and his business are a good example of that and are encouraged by his persistence in the region and the success of his business."

As SouthEast grows, so does the region and people it serves. The business and its community leaders have developed a unique partnership that is often found only in the mountains. It's a partnership that includes: community service, genuine hometown support and the mind-set of neighbor-helping-neighbor pull each other up one step at a time.

Future growth at SouthEast will remain in East and Central Kentucky, Maynard said, and include providing services in even more previously underserved regions. "We understand East Kentucky and Central Kentucky and believe in investing in the people and places where we live," Maynard said.

For more information about SouthEast, go to www.SouthEastTelephone.com. For more information about SKED and its direct loan programs, visit www.southeastkentucky.com.

SKED is a nonprofit economic development organization formed by Congressman Hal Rogers in 1986 to create jobs in a 42-county service area in Southern and Eastern Kentucky. It accomplishes this mission by recruiting new businesses, making direct loans, offering small business technical assistance and providing community/economic development services to local communities.