



A Regional Growth Corporation

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## East Kentucky Entrepreneur Growing His Business with SKED Loan

BUSY, KY - The next time you take a thrill ride on The Beast™ at Paramount's Kings Island™ remember this: the heavy-duty bolt fasteners used to hold the seats together were designed and manufactured at a small machine shop deep in the hills of East Kentucky.

From his shop nestled in the hollows of Perry County, Ky., Edwin Bowling oversees the completion of each of his patented Ultra-Lok™ bolts before they're shipped off to suppliers and customers around U.S. and used in all types of machinery. His business model is a simple one: produce the best product for the best price and keep your suppliers happy.

This mountain entrepreneur primarily responsible for the bolt's design says there's no better place to produce them. It's where the idea was born and it's where he's happiest.

The Ultra-Lok™ is a bolt specially designed to prevent or repair fastener failure due to vibration or loosening over time. The secret is a hollow space drilled into the bolt that collects the metal shavings rather than pushing them ahead of the bolt as its being screwed. Once installed, it's the vibration resistant locking system that creates a weld-like joint.

"The fastener system achieves a metal-to-metal thread fit with no play or open space between the fastener threads and the grooves of the nut," explains Bowling. "The metal shavings collect and are contained in the slotted region on the lead end of the fastener. As the bolt bores into the nut, the metal cuttings compact and increase the locking effect."

Ultra-Lok™ is currently a supplier to Partsmaster, located in Irvine, Texas, a number of mine supply companies in East Kentucky and the local NAPPA Auto Parts in Hazard.



Perry County native and small business owner Edwin Bowling proudly one of his patented bolts.

## Perry County Small Business Owner Expanding with SKED Loan - Page 2

It was the need for additional inventory and working capital to fulfill a large and specific order with Partsmaster that led Bowling to Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) and its low-interest loan programs designed to help region's small business owners.

SKED was able to provide a loan using funds from the U.S.D.A. Rural Business Enterprise Grant program and combine resources with its sister nonprofit economic development organization, Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation (KHIC) based in London, Ky., to provide the funding.

Bowling says the loan is the money he needs at just the right time to get his business "over the hump" and producing to an even larger market. He called the services of the nonprofit lenders vital because the professionals at SKED and KHIC understand the unique needs of the small business owner much more than traditional lenders do.

"I believe you can make a business out of anything, but it all comes down to financing. It's been a real pleasure working with these guys," Bowling added.

The Perry County native has operated his business from the former Busy, Ky. country store and post office near his home since 1980. It's his love for the region and its people that have kept him in that location selling to local customers and providing jobs for people who share his love for the mountains.

Before Ultra-Lok™, he worked in the mining supply business selling fasteners and hoses to his friends and neighbors. It was on a routine sales call to a local mining company that he first discovered the bolt's original design and set out to improve upon it with a series of redesigns that resulted in the current Ultra-Lok™ product.

Bowling has turned down numerous offers to buy the patent saying he preferred to keep the business local and his current employees working. Ultra-Lok™ is just down the road from the church he pastors.

But living in a remote and historic region of the country hasn't kept him living in the past. In fact, Bowling says his connection with past ends with the antique Burroughs cash register original to the country store and still sitting in the Ultra-Lok™ office.

With interest from the auto racing industry, the U.S. military, interested in using the product in its Abrams tanks, as well as meeting the demands of his current customers, Bowling is gearing up for a busy 2010.

Bowling and his wife, Joyce, just returned from the Specialty Equipment Market Association (SEMA) in Las Vegas, Nevada where he was interviewed by Fox Sports News. The channel's coverage of SEMA and Bowling's interview are scheduled to air at 4 p.m. November 30. Bowling is now preparing to market Ultra-Lok™ at the Performance Racing show in Orlando, FL.

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At an age when many people are looking toward retirement and perhaps in the rear-view mirror wondering what might have been, the 62-year-old grandfather is focused on the future and how his small business can become a global competitor and put him on the road to success.

“I’m just now getting started,” he said with a smile. “I wanna see it go just as big as it’ll go, and it needs to be done right here (in East Kentucky).”

Ultra-Lok has earned recognition as one of *Design News* magazine’s best new products of 1995 and the *Design News’ Golden Mouse Trap Award* in 2007.

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*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. For more information about SKED, visit: [www.southeastkentucky.com](http://www.southeastkentucky.com).*