



A Regional Growth Corporation

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Dunnington Honored for 25 Years of Consecutive Service to SKED

SOMERSET, Ky. - A Wayne County native and well-known community leader was honored for his 25 years of consecutive service to a regional nonprofit economic development organization he helped found in 1986.

Hundreds of supporters from across Southeast Kentucky gathered at The Center for Rural Development in April to celebrate Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED) and its 25 years of service to the region. Paul Dunnington was honored by Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers at the event as one of the organization's founding officers and for his longtime service to the region. Rogers presented him with the Hal Rogers Difference Maker Award.

"Paul has been a loyal leader and visionary for economic development in Southern and Eastern Kentucky," said Rogers. "New industry and thousands of jobs have been added to our rural region over the last 25 years, thanks to his dedication as a trusted advisor to SKED, along with the leadership of the board of directors."

Community and business leaders, local, state and federal funding agency representatives gathered to reflect on SKED's history and celebrate the nonprofit economic development organization's growth and accomplishments during the past two and a half decades at the event.

SKED was created by Congressman Rogers in 1986, following a series of meetings involving civic and community leaders in what was then the 27 counties in the Fifth Congressional District.

Dunnington is one of the original members of the SKED Board of Directors. He has held every office on the SKED executive committee including being elected president twice. He shared some of his memories of the organization's beginning and progress.

"Dreams don't often come true without hardships and sometimes radical changes. From the beginning, there were those who doubted the region would work together but the SKED Board of Directors continued to dream, plan and reach out to other organizations to partner with us in our endeavors," Dunnington said. "There were times that our bank account was so low we wondered if we would be able to fulfill our dreams, but thanks to our dedicated staff and the generous support of local officials, SKED now is a strong, vibrant organization with resources to ensure its success for another 25 years."

The organization began with two employees and a \$100,000 budget. Today, SKED has a staff of 11 professionals managing \$24 million of its own assets, with more than \$30 million in total assets currently under management via the SBA 504 Loan program, the Somerset Rail Park and Valley Oak Technology Complex.

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SKED's core mission of job creation and improving economic prosperity in the region has been constant since 1986, but its service area has expanded to 42 counties and the way it fulfills its mission has evolved and developed to stay in stride with the changing economic landscape of the region.

Industry recruitment, low-interest financing, marketing and technical assistance are all done with the same fervor they were 25 years ago, but the customer base, the region's resources and the transportation network that serves it have all changed for the better.

Dunnington shared words of thanks for Congressman Rogers at the event, as well.

"Our many achievements would not have happened if not for a man named Harold Rogers who has a heart for his people and made a commitment to improve the quality of life for everyone in his congressional district," Dunnington said. "I don't know what the future holds or we will be in the next 25 years, but it certainly has been a pleasure for me to have been a part of SKED for the past 25."

Entrepreneurship and community development are in Dunnington's blood. He grew up in a family business and was self-employed for 35 years in the feed, seed, fertilizer and grain business. He has done contract farming with chickens and swine, operated a construction business and cabinet shop and served as Special Projects Manager for Avian Farms in Wayne County.

He has served as president of the Monticello/Wayne Co. Industrial Foundation and Chamber of Commerce, held all executive committee offices of the SKED, has been Chairman of the Deacon Board and a 60-year member of the First Baptist Church, and was coordinator of a pilot project for the 5th Congressional District on Government Deregulation.

He is a 34-year member of the Monticello Kiwanis Club and charter member of the Monticello-Wayne County Optimist Club.

Until his retirement, Dunnington worked for Lifeline Home Health Services as facilities manager. He is currently a member of the Wayne County Board of Education. For the past 10 years, he's managed a 200-unit storage business for his son-in-law John Brainard.

Today, he spends much of his time managing the renovation of the Wayne County Museum and operating, along with his wife of more than 50 years Kathrine, an Oxford House for men seeking to overcome drug addiction and re-enter society as productive individuals.

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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. In cooperation with other economic development groups and the state of Kentucky, SKED has assisted more than 100 companies to expand or establish new operations within the region. These businesses have created more than 10,000 jobs. For more information about SKED, visit: www.southeastkentucky.com.