

Innovation awards honor inventors, entrepreneurs

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The Innovation Awards, a regional celebration of entrepreneurship and creative innovation, honored eight individuals March 12 for their advances in business and technology.

According to a news release, TechGROWTH Ohio, a public/private partnership administered by Ohio University's Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs, presented its first annual regional awards in six categories. In addition, OU announced the first two recipients of the Konneker Medal for Commercialization and Entrepreneurship, which will be presented annually to outstanding faculty members, alumni or students.

The release said 46 individuals from across southeast Ohio were finalists for the Innovation Awards, which were judged by panels of external reviewers.

The release listed the following as award recipients:

- Francesca Hartop, co-founder of Yost Engineering, Inc. of Portsmouth, was named Entrepreneur of the Year. Yost has developed the YEI 3-Space Sensor, which allows users to know, very precisely, how something is moving and turning in 3-D space, while reducing or eliminating the usual problems of drift and error.
- Kelly McCall, an assistant professor of endocrinology in the OU Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine, received the Outstanding Woman in Innovation Award for her heavy involvement in innovative research, studying the pathways associated with the treatment of diabetes and various types of cancer, while mentoring students and teaching others about commercializing their research.
- Brad Mitchell, representing the Ohio Appalachian Collaborative, received the Social Innovation Award. Responding to the regional challenges of rural and small town education, Battelle for Kids and a collaborative of 21 Appalachian Ohio school districts – serving more than 37,000 students – joined forces to create and implement a comprehensive approach for transformational change.
- Geoff and Michelle Greenfield received the Green Innovation Award. According to the release, the Greenfields founded Third Sun Solar of Athens to accelerate the growth of clean energy systems. For more than a decade, the company has custom designed and installed more than 300 renewable energy systems for its commercial, institutional, government and residential customers across the Midwest.

- Jason Trembly, an assistant professor in OU's Russ College of Engineering and Technology, received the Outstanding Faculty Innovation Award for the invention of his Integrated Precipitative Supercritical (IPSC) Process for conversion of flowback and produced water from oil and gas operations into a reusable water product.

- Huiwen Cheng, an Ohio University doctoral student in chemistry, received the Outstanding Student Innovation Award. Cheng is developing a new group of safer, gentler NSAIDs for the treatment of pain and inflammation, which also have a potential positive effect on cancer cells, the release said.

The release also listed two individuals selected by the OU Foundation for the Konneker Medal for Commercialization and Entrepreneurship, named for distinguished alumnus and entrepreneur Wilfred Konneker.

The recipients are:

- David Scholl, an OU alumnus, is the former president and CEO of Diagnostic Hybrids, Inc. The release said Scholl is a current partner in the venture capital firm Athenian Venture Partners and a member of the OU Board of Trustees and Foundation Board.

- John Kopchick is the Goll-Ohio Eminent Scholar and Professor of Molecular Biology in OU's Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine and Edison Biotechnology Institute. The release said Kopchick and his group were the first to discover and characterize growth hormone receptor antagonists, which led to the development of an FDA-approved drug (Somavert) for patients with acromegaly.

The event was held in conjunction with the fifth anniversary of TechGROWTH Ohio, a program funded by the state Third Frontier program, OU and industry sponsors to provide investments and business expertise to startup companies in southeastern Ohio.