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'Kentucky to the World' coming to Innovation Campus

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com

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Shelly Zegart

Submitted

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It's home to creative companies and organizations like the technology-heavy Eyeconic and the Metals Innovation Initiative, and yet the cutting-edge work at Western Kentucky University's Innovation Campus on Nashville Road is largely going unnoticed by locals.

That could soon be changing.

The former retail center at the busy intersection of Nashville Road and Campbell Lane, still referred to as "the old mall" by many Bowling Green natives, has a new tenant with the storytelling and video production chops needed to raise the profile of the Innovation Campus.

Kentucky to the World, a Louisville-based nonprofit organization with a mission statement that says it strives to "elevate the cultural and

intellectual reputations of our Commonwealth on the global stage,” has set up shop in the campus’s 30,000-square-foot Collaborative SmartSpace.

“Bowling Green is where it’s happening,” said KTW founder and President Shelly Zegart, pointing out that the southcentral Kentucky city is outpacing much of the rest of the state in economic and population growth. “We want to inspire talented people from beyond our borders to come to Bowling Green.”

That’s a mission that fits with the Innovation Campus, also home to the workforce participation lead position created with funding help from the city of Bowling Green and Warren Fiscal Court.

“When I first heard about Kentucky to the World’s mission, I knew it was an organization that we wanted to have involved in our Innovation Campus,” said Buddy Steen, CEO of the campus. “We believe that talent is the most essential ingredient in economic development.”

KTW has the tools to attract that talent, according to Sam Ford, executive director of the AccelerateKY nonprofit that focuses on tapping into the potential of Kentucky's innovators and entrepreneurs.

“From Paducah to Pikeville, Kentucky is filled with inspiring stories of innovation and resilience,” Ford, also a member of the KTW board of directors, said in a news release. “In our communities, we know we need to invest in economic development, workforce development and community development.

“But investing in narrative development is the vital fourth leg of the table.”

Ford, through AccelerateKY, has already worked with KTW on a storytelling series called “Kentucky: Resilience in the Face of Economic Change.”

Zegart believes KTW's presence at the Innovation Campus can lead to more collaborations.

“The Innovation Campus keeps adding tenants, so we’re going to have opportunities to collaborate with them and reach a broader audience,” Zegart said.

Already, KTW has an agreement with Bowling Green-based Vid Monster Productions to produce short videos about unique people and places in Bowling Green.

Zegart said much of the content created by KTW since its start in 2013 can be seen on Kentucky Educational Television and also on various digital platforms.

Her nonprofit is only beginning to establish itself in Bowling Green and isn’t yet located full-time at the Innovation Campus, Zegart said, but she has high hopes for a greater presence here.

“As we grow into having this location, one of our goals is to be there more,” she said. “Maybe we can be there permanently in the future.”

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