



Kentucky Artisan Heritage Trails (KAHT) Internet-based Driving Trails Direct Tourists To Craftsmen & Treasured Destinations

Name: KAHT - Kentucky Artisan Heritage Trails

Internet: www.kaht.net

Products/Services:
Tourism, Education and Small Business

Location: Richmond
Madison County

Leadership: Director,
Cheryl Moorhead Stone
Center for Economic
Development, Entrepreneurship
and Technology (CEDET), EKU

Founded: 2001

Reach: International

Innovative Insight:
"Technology must be conveyed in a understandable manner. Despite the "clash" of artistic people versus technology, there are now 300 artisans participating and it's growing daily."

Advice for Growing Companies: *"You must always reinvent your product or offerings. Above all, remember if you are nice to people, they're more apt to buy your products."*

Way Internet Has Made You More Competitive: *"It has introduced Internet sales to many Artisans. One artist tripled her quilting business since going on the Web."*

Most Important Investment in Next Five Years: *"Pending funding, possible growth into other counties, into Adventure Trails, Antique Dealers, etc."*

Richmond, Ky. — Some of the most scenic highways and byways in the Commonwealth can be found in the mountains and hills of Eastern Kentucky. In a unique marriage of the Internet and a business development project founded at Eastern Kentucky University, those meandering roads have been transformed into a marketplace for traditional Kentucky craft-makers.

The Kentucky Artisan Heritage Trails (KAHT) project features Internet-based driving trails that direct tourists to the region's treasures, showcasing some of the Bluegrass State's finest artisans.

With monikers such as the Pine Hollows Trail or the Lilly Woods Trail, the driving programs provide tourists with all the tools necessary for day trips or weekend getaways, including online trail maps, historic stops, suggested inns and restaurants and guides to a full array of arts and crafts that run the gamut from hand-woven objects, pottery and carved items to glassware and antiques. You name it, it's probably listed.

The program was developed by Eastern Kentucky University's Center for Economic Development, Entrepreneurship and Technology. It was established with funding made available from the Appalachian Regional Commission, as an adjunct project with the Kentucky Artisan Center in Berea.

"After the Artisan Center was completed, we were concerned that visitors would only make that one stop to see the works of the numerous Kentucky craftsmen and artisans," explains Chris Cathers, manager of the three-year-old KHAT project. "When talking with local artisans, we realized there was a need to bring people where the artisans are."

The use of a Web site provided a way of showing people where the artisans were located, all accessible by way of a good road network that can be traversed in about a day, depending on how much time visitors spend at each stop. The unique Web package contains route maps and detailed descriptions of literally dozens of things to do in a given area of Eastern Kentucky, as well as places to browse, dine and be entertained.

For many of the artisans, it was their first excursion into online marketing. Part of the KAHT program includes development of a "home page" for each participating artisan. To date, more than 300 artisans are involved in the program, and the numbers are increasing nearly every day.

"Ultimately, we think this one-stop shop approach to cultural heritage tourism will result in increases in customers and sales and, ultimately, create new jobs. In just three years, we have seen the effect of the Internet on the business of these artisans," Cathers says. "One quilter saw her business triple, directly as a result of her Web presence."

"Most of the businesses that do participate in the project do not currently have a Web presence. That's very important, Cathers noted, "because the future of business is linked to the Internet."

About KY120:

In the fast-paced world of technology-driven business, it should be recognized that best practices can be studied and emulated. As part of the [connectkentucky](#) initiative, the Center for Information Technology Enterprise (CITE, Inc.) is profiling businesses and initiatives in each of Kentucky's 120 counties to identify lessons learned on the path toward successful and sustainable innovation.