

Vision 2000 Rural Business Development Award

*The United States Small Business Administration
Office of Advocacy
Model of Excellence Award Winners*

Small business entrepreneurs are the ideal vehicles for change. And dozens of state and local organizations, to their credit, have adopted the entrepreneurial model to support small firms in ever more efficient ways. We recognize the importance of these service providers to the startup and growth of small firms. And we want others to emulate them, because we believe that most change happens at the small business end—in the local places where firms meet customers, sell products, and deliver services.

That's why the Office of Advocacy continues to celebrate the expanding accomplishments of these entrepreneurial state and local programs today. We hope you will share information about these programs with policymakers in your area. Help us multiply the innovative programs at work for small firms. And visit our website at <http://www.sba.gov/advo/>.

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Center for Economic Options (CEO)

The Center for Economic Options (CEO) is a nonprofit statewide organization committed to promoting equity and improving the position of West Virginians. The primary focus is to provide for equal participation of women in economic leadership, community development, and gainful employment, with special commitment to those women who have historically been excluded from these roles in society. According to its executive director, the CEO is a one-of-a-kind organization in the state, dedicated to the unique needs of its clientele, those who own small businesses and those who dream of making them happen.

Specifically, the non-profit agency headquartered in Charleston develops strategies for entrepreneurs statewide, principally in more rural areas. The objectives of the organization are to provide individuals with the necessary skills and training to enhance work force development and opportunities; to facilitate enterprise development; to promote economic self-sufficiency; to facilitate access to credit for current and potential small business owners; to provide public education and collaboration with other organizations on economic issues of importance to low-income individuals; to provide education and advocacy that promotes full realization of equal employment opportunities; to provide technical assistance in support of economic equity; and to promote equity in leadership and participation in economic policy development and initiatives.

Ms. Jayne Armstrong, district director of the U.S. Small Business Administration's West Virginia District Office in Clarksburg, West Virginia, nominated CEO.