For the past seven years, the interdisciplinary ExCEED Program has fostered regional collaboration to reinvigorate local economies through developing leaders, creating an entrepreneurial culture and retaining local wealth.

- The Mississippi River Hills Region offered a spring conference for business training, five businesses adding a new product line or service, five new businesses developed and 10 businesses expanding.

- The Ozark Heritage Region brought nearly 1,500 students from 20 area high schools and three colleges to the nationally recognized Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour for an introduction to the opportunities that are available through entrepreneurship. More than 90 percent of the participants indicated that they would start a business at some point in their career.

- The Old Trails Region, comprising nine counties in the Missouri River Valley east of Kansas City, is developing the regional economy and creating business based on cultural and historic tourism, agriculture and food. Wineries, vineyards and specialty crop production are increasing in the area and featured in new marketing materials.

Cumulatively, ExCEED has leveraged more than $2.53 million in community endowments and grants, $273 million in new business investments and 14,885 hours of volunteer work valued at $258,991. These communities have experienced 283 business start-ups (51 youth-owned), 1,735 new jobs, 395 jobs retained, 32 business expansions and new network development.

An in-depth study found that other substantial changes have occurred: adults and youth really believe in the future of their community and region, and they now value the university and MU Extension for “thinking outside the box” and bringing new ideas and engagement to their communities.

For more information on any of the programs listed above, please contact your local extension office, Mary Simon Leuci (leucim@missouri.edu, 573-882-2937), or visit the University of Missouri Extension website at http://extension.missouri.edu/.

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