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## **Bradley Retires From a Career of Service to Southeast KY**

*East Kentucky Native Begins More Personal  
Journey with a New Mission of Her Own*

SOMERSET, Ky. - Pat Bradley has been a loud voice for a number of important issues over the course of her 45-year career.

From improving East Kentucky's economic image to extolling the value of the arts in education, encouraging successful entrepreneurship and teaching physical fitness, the petite Whitesburg, Ky. native has spent her career developing a passion for each of these issues, promoting them to everyone in her wake and working to help others develop their own aspirations. She's done it all with love, grace and success.

She ends her career this month, announcing her retirement from Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation (SKED). As she says farewell to her storied career of service, she leaves in her path hundreds of success stories and dreams realized. She's the first to tell you, she's had a fulfilling and fun journey.

As SKED's Small Business Training Specialist, Bradley spent the last three years developing, promoting and teaching Entrepreneurial SMARTS: Simple Methods And Reality-based Training for Success. The unique training program is based on a nationally recognized small business training program called Core Four® Business Planning Course. Thanks to Bradley's knowledge of funding available for such programs, this \$250 course has been offered at a mere \$25 to entrepreneurs and small business owners across Southeast Kentucky.

In short, she created the most successful and prolific entrepreneurial training program in Southeast Kentucky. Since 2012, 368 people from across SKED's 45-county service area have enrolled in





the course and received their certificates of completion at some 30 sessions – spanning from Pikeville to Liberty and Whitley City to Ashland. The course boasts a 93% completion rate and has shored up nearly 50 small businesses across the region.

SKED Executive Director Brett Traver says Bradley’s talents and dedication to SKED will forever be imbedded in the fabric of the organization’s staff and clients.

“In my short time working with Pat, here at SKED, it is clear that she puts the needs of our region first,” he said. “Pat leaves a long legacy of service and friendship here at SKED.”

Bradley says her work at SKED has been rewarding on several levels.

“I have no doubt benefited from my experiences with the SMARTS training as much as or even more than these nearly 400 individuals I’ve been so blessed to meet and work with,” she said. “I was only a small part of this program’s success, though. Greg Jones (SKED’s former executive director) showed incredible faith in me and allowed me to take the program and make it my own. And the entire SKED staff and Southeast Kentucky leaders gave me support. Because of this outreach and expanded support base, I know that the success of the SMARTS training program will continue and will have an ongoing impact for years to come and provide a strong economic development base throughout our region.”

### **Applause from Southeast Kentucky’s Leaders**

State and federal leaders from across the Commonwealth and Appalachian region are more than ready to give Bradley the recognition she deserves for the entrepreneurial thinking she’s inspired.

“Pat has brought incredible energy and creativity in helping to shape Southeast Kentucky’s entrepreneurial community,” said Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Co-Chair Earl Gohl. “She has helped a lot of folks understand that they can succeed and prosper. We all can learn from Pat’s example.”

Fifth District Congressman Hal Rogers has had a front row seat to Bradley’s work in Southeast Kentucky for more than a decade.

“Pat has dedicated her career to helping others succeed in small business, as well as arts and culture in eastern Kentucky. Dozens of entrepreneurs are now thriving thanks to her guidance and expertise,” said Congressman Rogers.

Longtime SKED Executive Director Greg Jones knew Bradley was the right person for the small business training specialist job before she did. He hired her to lead the pilot program in 2011.

"Dozens of would-be entrepreneurs, small businesses, local officials, and even college professors have benefited from the Entrepreneurial SMARTS program," Jones said. "Pat's extensive entrepreneurial knowledge, combined with her passion, has helped many fulfill their dreams of starting and expanding their own business. The economic impact of her efforts will be felt for many years to come."

### **Region's Entrepreneurs Give Thanks**

But perhaps it's the entrepreneurs themselves who tell Bradley's story best. In her role as small business training specialist, she spent hundreds of hours providing one-on-one small business technical assistance to SKED's micro loan borrowers over the past three years. Her time and commitment have made a monumental difference in the success of many.

Kelli Johnson attended an Entrepreneurial SMARTS class in Somerset. She wanted to start her own cross fit center in the area, and realized she needed some help developing the right business skills to not only establish her business but see it expand.

"I had a business idea, and I knew I needed help. Thankfully, I found the Entrepreneurial SMARTS training. Pat was extremely knowledgeable about small business, so I knew I was in the right place," Johnson said. "As I progressed through the process of turning my dream into a reality, Pat was always there for support and to give honest advice - advice that proved invaluable. I give a lot of credit to Pat for the successful startup of my business and could never thank her enough for her kindness and patience, as I found my way through it all. I wish her many blessings as she starts this new chapter in her life."

East Kentucky entrepreneur Bill Plutnick wanted to put his engineering degree to work in his own small business in 2013 but had no idea how to get it started. At the time, the closest SMARTS class being offered was in Somerset. In October 2013, he traveled 200 miles to Somerset from Owingsville four times in one month to attend the SMARTS classes and received his certificate of completion. Once the business was up and running, Bradley provided one-on-one counseling with Plutnick, as well. He will tell you it paid off for his business.

"There are three things about Pat that made her a great business mentor," Plutnick said. "One, she prescribed a balanced philosophy of manageable risk and financial responsibility. Two, she would work at finding you an answer no matter how long it took. And three, she always counseled taking the ethical "high road" when business interests created ethical dilemmas. The last one was not always easy to do, because it costs you real money. I also believe that it is the only correct path to long term success."



### **A Servant's Heart for the Arts**

Bradley's service to the region has spanned a number of different arenas over the past 45 years. She served as associate vice president and director of arts and culture outreach at the Center for Rural Development in Somerset. She's also worked as an independent consultant assisting nonprofit organizations and small businesses in areas such as business management, strategic planning, fundraising, workshops, training seminars, and event creation and implementation. She has also served as an advisor for the Kentucky Arts Council Kentucky Peer Advisory Network – KPAN.

She's been a huge supporter of the arts community, as a whole, over the years having served as executive director of two nonprofit organizations, including AFIM (an international trade association for independent music companies) and the Mountain Arts Center (a performing arts venue in Prestonsburg, Ky.). She has served as a director, or officer, on the following boards: Somerset's Watershed Arts Alliance, the Appalachian Artisan Center in Hindman, Ky., Kentucky Humanities Council, University of Kentucky Appalachian Center, Arts Kentucky, Floyd County Chamber of Commerce, Appalshop and many more.

But it's Bradley's experience in the business world that she pulled from most when working with aspiring business owners in her position with SKED. Beginning work at the age of 15 making and selling potholders in the mountains of East Kentucky, she has much experience and trial and error in that area. She established her own music production business earlier in her career - a small independent record label where she produced and distributed recordings of folk and bluegrass music. As a result, she was featured in such national publications as *Rolling Stone* and *Billboard* magazine.

"Now more than ever our region needs the economic stimulation that small businesses provide. I've always recognized the fact that these small businesses are the backbone of economic development," Bradley has said.

Bradley made Pulaski County her home in 2003. She is the mother of two children: a son, the late Arnold Martin, Jr. and a daughter, Crystal Martin of Whitesburg. She is a member of the Simpson Memorial United Methodist Church in Bronston, Ky.

### **A New Mission and Voice on the Journey**

Even in retirement, Southeast Kentucky has not heard the last of Bradley's voice of encouragement and endurance. She has been given a new "mission" at the age of 60, a passion to provide education, outreach and hope for a disease that few know about and even fewer have survived.

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On Nov. 3, 2014, Bradley was diagnosed with Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as "Lou Gehrig's Disease." ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Motor neurons reach from the brain to the spinal cord and from the spinal cord to the muscles throughout the body. It's a disease for which there is no known cure.

This was a stunning blow to the physically fit, fireball of a woman who has spent the past five years teaching yoga, strength training and developing her inner core. It was the loss of strength in her core that caused her to seek medical attention in the first place.

"I just couldn't hold the poses I used to," she said. "I knew then something was wrong, and I had to find out what it was."

In true Pat Bradley style, she began researching the disease to learn how she could fight it and overcome the obstacles before her. And fight it she has. In between visits to the University of Kentucky ALS Research Clinic, Bradley has spent hours learning about the disease and how best to combat it. She admits there have been many moments of weakness over the past few months but says her strength is in the Lord and His will for life on this journey.

"Going from being "disgustingly healthy" - as my doctors have phrased it - in the past year to barely being able to climb stairs and unable to lift anything of substance has been quite a blow for me," Bradley said. "Thus is the face of ALS. However, I am very thankful for my incredible support structure of friends and family all over the country serving as my "prayer warriors." I am very blessed in the knowledge that God and my faith will see me through whatever the future holds and very thankful that I'm still able to walk, talk, breathe, and eat."

Many ALS patients lose those abilities almost immediately, she explained.

"My goal is to increase awareness of how quickly this horrendous disease can strike anyone and how debilitating and devastating it is. It's my hope that doing so it will stimulate increased funding support that will translate into increased research, clinical trials and eventually a medical knowledge of the causes of the disease and most importantly, treatments and cures."

Bradley says her goal today, and for the rest of her life, is to educate everyone in her wake about the disease and how it has no singular face. It strikes people of all ages, degrees of health and environmental backgrounds. Creating awareness of ALS and encouraging support for its cure has become her new biggest passion.

She hopes to organize at least two fundraisers to benefit ALS research in the Somerset area in the coming year. Events will be publicized throughout the region.

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Congressman Rogers is one of many on board for the journey. He has awarded Bradley his most distinguished honor as a way of saying thanks for her service: The Hal Rogers Difference Maker Award.

“As Pat battles ALS, she hopes to raise awareness and advocate for a cure for the disease that thousands of people are diagnosed with each year,” Congressman Rogers said. “We will keep Pat and her family in our thoughts and prayers as she begins this difficult journey.”

For more information about ALS or to donate, visit: [webky.alsa.org](http://webky.alsa.org).

*CUTLINE: Bradley is pictured being presented the Hal Rogers Difference Maker Award by Carlos Cameron, Congressman Rogers' field representative.*