

Entrepreneurs as



EVERY DAY, WHEN I DRIVE DOWN RACE OR BEEBE-CAPPS, I wonder how our local businesses are faring, and how are the entrepreneurs who created these businesses coping with the challenges of our economy. Some are thriving, some are struggling, but overall, most seem to be chugging along. Therefore, it might be tempting to forget about them and consider the businesses they have created to be a part of the landscape of Searcy.

Wrong! These entrepreneurs are heroes! They have accomplished the near unthinkable: by discovering opportunity, taking risks, and working very hard, they have provided goods and services that are solutions to our problems. In some cases, they have just saved us a trip to Little Rock, but in others, they might have saved our lives.

As much as society tends to disparage wealth creators, we should not just be grateful for them, but elevate them, honoring them and supporting them in their endeavors.

You see, I teach entrepreneurship at Harding University. My job is to help young people recognize opportunities, plan a business and build an ethical construct that will sustain them for the long run. They learn the theory, then the practice of entrepreneurship. They learn concepts such as value creation, disruptive innovation, customer service, and financial planning. This doesn't always get them fired up, but when I ask them (okay, require them) to go out into the community and meet entrepreneurs, they invariably return with a real appreciation for the

creativity, hard work, and immeasurable efforts required for these entrepreneurs to prosper.

What I have not really figured out how to teach is the tacit knowledge required, through creativity and imagination, to recognize an opportunity. I call it entrepreneurial judgment. This seems to be a special gift entrepreneurs have, one which I probably value the most.

Entrepreneurs are the market's change agents. They are visionaries who bring radical change, and as everyday producers who work far from the limelight, they aren't doing this for glory or out of greed. They are seeking to provide for their families while indirectly contributing to the general welfare of our community. Their

enemy is not their competitor, but the bureaucrats who try to find ways to slow them down. Their friends are those who get out of their way, while encouraging them, clearing a path for them to do their thing.

Entrepreneurs are heroes, because they are the primary drivers of employment in our economy. They create the jobs we need to provide for our own. They pay more

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**By David Kee
Harding University**



taxes than anyone else, thus heavily contributing to the funding of our government services. They are heroes, because they are willing to risk everything they have (and more) to find a very special joy in service to their fellow man. They are heroes, because they are resilient, picking themselves up after failures and bearing the uncertainty of the markets with an uncommon ability to see beyond the smokescreens. They are heroes, because they are willing to take the responsibility for the success or failure of their enterprise. They are heroes, because they are generous, not just with their funds, but with their time and knowledge.

Entrepreneurship is about building relationships with customers, figuring out a reasonable price to charge, and how to secure funding for the next business opportunity. It's the special relationships they have with

their customers, employees, suppliers, and stakeholders which lift them up as the glue our community needs to progress and prosper.

Thank you, Searcy entrepreneurs. You have substantially improved our standard of living. Keep up the good work! *



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