

Newport Set to ‘Think Out Loud’ OPB to launch Rural Economy Project in Newport

By Terry Dillman Of the News-Times
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The Rural Economy Project (REP)—a joint effort of Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) and several partners—will debut in Newport Monday, April 19, when the public broadcasting network’s radio program “Think Out Loud” broadcasts from Café Mundo in the Nye Beach district.

The radio show is promoted as “a daily conversation about news and issues,” and next Monday’s talk of the town is how a coastal community can focus its marketing efforts to attract what are known as “lifestyle entrepreneurs.” Newport residents are invited to join hosts Emily Harris and David Miller in a discussion with city planners about “how to unify business and tourism efforts to develop a destination neighborhood.”

This show will be taped live for airing at 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Tuesday, April 20.

Oregon’s unemployment rate is still among the highest in the nation, hovering around 11 percent. Rural counties like Lincoln County are struggling the most, with jobless rates spiking as high as 18 percent. OPB is leading this effort in collaboration with the Rural Development Initiative, Sustainable Northwest, and The Oregon Consortium/Workforce Alliance “to raise visibility on rural issues and provide critical resources for employment, business development, and networking opportunities.” Find out more at www.ripplenw.org <<http://www.ripplenw.org>>.

The “Think Out Loud” shows will focus on engaging business owners and other folks in rural communities in discussions about rural development opportunities, and Newport is the first to weigh in. Onno Husing, executive director of the Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association (OCZMA), said it’s a chance to put the spotlight on something Newport folks already discussed during a “branding” workshop held last May. The workshop focused on branding the Oregon coast as an ideal place for lifestyle entrepreneurs and knowledge workers—those who could live and work anywhere, but who choose to live on the Oregon coast for the lifestyle it offers.

“Today, with broadband communications (high speed Internet), people can live and work from almost anywhere in the world,” states the executive summary from that workshop, which OCZMA sponsored. “As a result, we have an unprecedented opportunity to diversify our economy by attracting ‘lifestyle entrepreneurs’ or ‘knowledge workers’ to our region.”

A number of them are already here, arriving first as tourists—even “accidental” tourists, either because they knew someone on the coast or were passing through en route to another destination.

What’s lacking, said Husing, is an integration between tourism promotion efforts and business development efforts, using carefully targeted “upscale tourism” messages aimed at lifestyle entrepreneurs in specific regions or demographics (such as age, income, and education levels).

Monday night is a chance to build on what Husing calls “a quiet revolution or renaissance” as extremely accomplished folks move to the coast, run their small businesses (that sometimes grow into large enterprises), join city councils, volunteer, and “slowly, but surely” help to change things for the better. Monday’s event begins with a reception at 6 p.m., followed by the taping at 7 p.m. Seating at Cafe Mundo is limited.

Contact Cassie Wieden at 503-293-1920 or cwieden@opb.org <<mailto:cwieden@opb.org>> for reservation information.

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