



THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

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Several Bellingham businesses filmed for upcoming PBS special

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BELLINGHAM - Bellingham will be one of many cities nationwide featured in a PBS "Now" special called "Fixing the Future."

TV crews were in the city Aug. 8-11, filming at sustainable businesses for the one-hour special scheduled to air Nov. 18.

David Brancaccio, host of "Now," said the special's focus will be on finding new ways to think about and structure the economy after the financial meltdown and recession.

"We're asking the question: Is there a way to make an economy serve more people?" Brancaccio said. "Because the old economy wasn't good enough."

Brancaccio said Bellingham was an ideal city to film because of the number of local and sustainable businesses working together to support a healthy economy that keeps money and jobs within the community.

Other cities to be filmed to be in the special include Austin, Texas; Portland, Maine; St. Paul, Minn.; and Berkeley, Calif.

"Bellingham is kind of the gold standard for sustainable, local businesses. It seems like people here get what it's about," Brancaccio said. "And it's not just price, it's something else. (In Bellingham) you know where your food is coming from, rather than it being a mystery. (Food) doesn't come from across the world, emitting carbon (in travel)."

The crew filmed in a variety of locations: Lummi Island Wild, which practices sustainable reefnet fishing; the Willows Inn, a bed and breakfast that serves local fish and produce; a treetop office with a green roof that hangs over Chuckanut Bay; the Vehicle Research Institute at Western Washington University; Whatcom Educational Credit Union, which has built three LEED-certified buildings; Wood Stone Corp., which manufactures ovens; Mallard Ice Cream, which uses local ingredients; and the Community Food Co-op.

"There are so many good stories in Bellingham and Whatcom County about local businesses reducing their environmental footprint and ... supporting one another," said Derek Long, executive director of the nonprofit business group Sustainable Connections. "(Bellingham) is faring better in this slow economy than other

communities are, and I think all our investments over the years in supporting each other and local businesses is why."

One of the TV special's goals was to find a manufacturer that doesn't outsource - Wood Stone fit the bill.

The oven manufacturer provided 45 new jobs in Bellingham when it upgraded its factory near Bellingham International Airport with a robotics system in December 2008. Wood Stone does 95 percent of the manufacturing in the Bellingham factory, leaving only 5 percent of its parts coming from other countries.

Keith Carpenter, one of the founders and presidents, said sustainability is a large part of the Wood Stone culture, even though it can be a challenge in a tough economy.

"Sustainability isn't something you do, it's something you live," Carpenter said. "Our employees learn to be a participant in sustainability."

Brancaccio said it would be up for the TV audience to decide whether structural change and sustainable businesses are the solution to fixing our economy.

"We're hoping that if we say 'fixing the future' and we talk about ways to ensure our economic survival, I think everyone will be interested in that," Brancaccio said.