

PBS documentary features Bellingham's economy

WRITTEN BY JEN SAWYER

TUESDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2010 09:16

Bellingham is one of four cities featured in a Public Broadcast Service documentary called "Fixing the Future," which will be previewed at the Mount Baker Theatre on Thursday. The documentary focuses on local economies across America that are creating regional jobs.

"We want to show that there are alternatives to the economy that is driven by Wall Street speculation," executive producer John Siceloff said. "People are making money on Wall Street and it's risky capital. We wanted to list alternatives that are created locally."

The preview of the documentary is hosted by local nonprofit Sustainable Connections at 5:45 p.m. Nov. 18, at the Mount Baker Theatre. This event is free to the public and will include a reception at 5 p.m. in the Encore Room.

During the one-hour special, host David Brancaccio also visits Austin, Texas; Portland, Maine; and Fargo, N.D., looking at cities that have experimenting businesses, which range from a cooperative catering service to an hour-in-exchange program.

Siceloff said he believes it is important to build jobs from the ground up, which is the main reason for highlighting Bellingham in the documentary.

"Bellingham is a leader in thinking carefully and building companies that make an effort to work together," Siceloff said. "They make a big effort to thinking locally."

There are about 600 businesses in Bellingham that are part of a collaborative network called Sustainable Connections. Businesses in this network find ways to build the economy and create local employment that is environmentally conscious, Siceloff said.

"I think [the film crew was] blown away and very happy with what they saw," said Derek Long, executive director of Sustainable Connections. "We are producing great results in terms of

economic stability and we are an overall great community. Other people are continually taking notice in us.”

Some of the local businesses featured in the documentary are Lummi Island Wild, the Willows Inn and Wood Stone Corp. They have been collaborating together to purchase locally and use each other’s products.

Riley Starks, owner of the Willows Inn and partner of Lummi Island Wild, is a member of Sustainable Connections and said he believes in what they are trying to do.

“It’s a big network, which is what [documentary host] David Brancaccio was interested in – how the businesses work,” Starks said. “And we are all working together to create small carbon footprints.”

Long said Bellingham has a viable economy that serves the community and there is a responsibility of businesses to continue this model of sustainable functioning, so others can follow similar models.

“These Bellingham local businesses and their efforts to create jobs help build [an] environment that is a very inspiring model,” Siceloff said. “Young people will be able to pursue their dreams in a way that creates jobs [and] helps the environment.”

"Fixing the Future" will air at 7 p.m. Nov. 26 on KCTS 9.
