

WebWorks: Anywhere! Forum Summary
Goldendale, Grange Hall
November 18, 2015

MCEDD, the Goldendale Chamber of Commerce, and Community Enrichment for Klickitat County gathered four presenters together to explore how businesses and organizations in rural Washington are utilizing broadband to connect with customers, suppliers, and staff. Each entity utilized internet for different aspects of their businesses, but all saw it as vital to their ability to work effectively in the 21st century.

The following presenters highlighted broadband utilization and needs in education, business, tourism, and health care.

- **Two Mountain Marketing: Nicole Lundin.** Nicole noted that the emergence of the internet was a game changer for small business. Marketing for small businesses has also gone almost exclusively to online, with the model varying depending on the company's focus. She shared that an online presence is something to be developed, but not a "set it and forget it" type of endeavor. This is so important because smart phones and the internet are the place that visitors and locals are looking for information about where to find goods, services, and experiences. Nicole has recently focused the Chamber's recent website overhaul. A big piece of this process has been to provide up-to-date information about happenings in the community but also to provide a hub for local businesses without online presence to support them in reaching more customers. After the updates, the chamber has gone from 324 visitors to over 1000 visitors a day. Nicole uses Google Analytics to review information on site visitation, and encouraged others to explore that tool.
- **Golden Pine Alpacas:** Barb Patterson. Barb and her husband Pat raise alpacas to harvest their wool and create products to sell on their own website and on Etsy. They also breed alpacas to sell to others. The Golden Pine Alpacas website and an Etsy site provide exposure for their alpacas, the yarn, and other products that are produced from their alpacas. She noted the importance of the site being responsive, or mobile friendly, as so many people are using their phones for their searches. Barb echoed the need to keep your site up-to-date, as their inventory changes and that needs to be reflected on the site in a timely manner. In order to facilitate this, they use a service that provides a template that is easy to change to suit the company. Barb also encouraged exploring blogs and videos as a great way to better connect potential customers with your story. This story is important because it is what differentiates small businesses from others. Barb noted that they also utilize Facebook for this purpose, but that it can be challenging to get your posts seen at times. However, it is a great way to connect with those interested in the same topics, so can be a good way to spread the word about your work but also learn from others. Overall, broadband is integral to almost every aspect of the running of their farm and business.
- **Linda Williams.** Linda has been working with Community Enrichment for Klickitat County for many years focusing on broadband access among other topics, but it is also something she has seen impact her work and her family ranch as well. Linda teleworked from 2009 until her recent

retirement from WSU Extension. She noted that telework provided a lot of flexibility in her work hours, and the ability to work from her rural location. To work out of her home, she upgraded from a dialup connection to satellite. Despite this upgrade, it has been very challenging for her to accomplish necessary work with their connection due to the data caps and speeds. However, cellular connectivity has provided an additional avenue for her to work on the go. For their cattle ranch, Linda shared that they have been using tools that have changed their business. For example, they can now use google earth to look at mapping for their grazing. They can easily price supplies from a variety of sources and chose what best meets their needs, and they can get details on basics like weather and market prices easily. With CEKC, Linda has seen the importance of broadband for connecting with the community. Their website is a place for community members to learn about what the organization is currently working on, and how they can utilize their services.

- **Hire Electric:** Jonathan Lewis. Jonathan noted that he moved to the Goldendale area in 2003, and had started Seraphim Energy to focus on renewable energy installations. With their online presence, they were able to work with clients all over the Northwest and beyond out of his Goldendale location. In 2009 when Hire Electric bought his business, they were able to use his strong online presence as the backbone of their launch into an online presence of their own. This has made them more competitive over the years. Jonathan also noted that with increased connectivity, Hire Electric can have their employees telework when possible, or check on progress at job sites and be in constant communication even if they are out of the area.

The panel was followed by conversation around strategies for small businesses to effectively use the internet to connect with customers. Key takeaways included the need for one-on-one training or mentoring to get businesses started with their online presence, the need for an up-to-date site, and opportunities for local businesses to take advantage of the moves toward e-commerce effectively.