



March 2010

INITIATIVES

Rural Development Initiatives builds leadership networks and rural communities.

Facing Aryan Nation Threat: RDI Joins Forces

When members of the Aryan Nations (AN) wearing swastika arm bands marched through the tiny rural town of John Day, Oregon, in search of property for their national headquarters, Grant County was shocked. Self-proclaimed Aryan Nation (AN) leader Paul Mullet toured the old junior high school building and a vacant church on Dayton Street in downtown John Day, as possible sites for their headquarters, barracks and meeting spaces.

Rather than keeping a low profile, the ANs group flew the Nazi flag in their hotel room and wore their uniforms down Main Street.

Grant County didn't keep a low profile either. Ironically, news of the ANs intentions broke the same day that over 100 residents were attending the Grant County Economic Summit where RDI's Vernita Ediger was facilitating community discussion. Residents, who had spent the morning exploring creative ways to generate jobs and boost the local economy, suddenly discovered that their future could include a real threat to their values and any potential for economic surge. They were jolted from enthusiasm to fear, outrage and action.

Many knew all too well that the AN's presence near Coeur d'Alene, Idaho had decimated the local economy, frightening away tourists and causing real estate values to plummet.

Just two days after the announcement, local leaders began organizing to bring nationally recognized civil rights activists Tony Stewart and Norman Gissel from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho to John Day for a "Knowledge is Power" session. Between the both of them, Stewart and Gissel have worked for decades assisting communities in thwarting the AN from taking root. Tony Stewart opened his remarks to the crowd stating, "I'm here to declare victory in Grant County! There has never been a

community to act as quickly as you have... you have shown there is no place for hate in Grant County. You have spoken

with one voice. Hate cannot penetrate that kind of unity. You will win!"

Marissa Williams, writer for The Blue Mountain Eagle and a graduate from an RDI facilitated Ford Institute Leadership Program, was instrumental in bringing Stewart and Gissel to John Day. As part of organizing the event, the local newspaper

contacted Vernita Ediger of RDI, to assist in planning two informational sessions, facilitating question and answer portions of both programs, and leading a focused action-planning session with a small group of community leaders.

RDI was proud to be invited to be part of Grant County's response to this threat, and supports this community in its ongoing process of uniting to celebrate diversity and human rights.



Photo courtesy of Blue Mountain Eagle

What resulted from one rural community's bold efforts?

- The Aryan Nation, has thus far, been held at bay and has been unsuccessful in purchasing property anywhere near Grant County.
- The State of Oregon contacted RDI in hopes of collaborating to reduce the likelihood of hate groups finding a foothold anywhere in Oregon.
- Twice, over 350 people from Grant County and surrounding counties flooded the Canyon City Community hall, filling it to capacity, sending a clear, united message that hate was not welcome in Grant County.

"I'm here to declare victory in Grant County! There has never been a community to act as quickly as you have... you have shown there is no place for hate in Grant County. You have spoken with one voice. Hate cannot penetrate that kind of unity. You will win!"

- The Grant County Human Rights Coalition was formed during the action-planning session facilitated by RDI with a smaller group of leaders and concerned citizens.
- Lime green ribbons are now a visual symbol worn by those who promote civil rights in Grant County. Before the action-planning session was

over, the local sheriff, a participant in an RDI facilitated training Effective Organizations, had bought the local hardware store out of lime green tape and handed it out by the roll to Coalition members. At that evening's informational session, the podium was adorned with an enormous lime green bow.

- New education efforts and outreach around embracing diversity have taken root.
- Multiple peaceful rallies and demonstrations continue to unite the community further. Local businesses posted signs in support of human rights; demonstrators waved signs asking people to honk if they supported human rights, and picketers carried signs stating their opposition to hate.
- Supporters came in all shapes, sizes, ages and colors to include students from the local high school, grandmothers and community members from nearby counties.
- Letter writing campaigns to elected leaders are under way.
- Celebrate Diversity events, promoting a local image that clearly articulates the value of human rights are on the horizon.

What could have been a crisis has united Grant County residents and invigorated them toward unified action. While this may lead to some self-reflection regarding how the outside world perceives them and rural communities in general, Grant County residents also have an opportunity to forge a more positive future—and they are doing it together! Returning to the community weeks later, RDI's Ediger noted lime green ribbons flying everywhere....

All communities face challenges of various kinds. Regardless of the challenge, strong leadership and social capital are key elements in ensuring a community's successful response and RDI stands ready to help.

Community building reflects RDI's belief that rural communities hold the key to their own success and inclusive decision making generates the best ideas. RDI's community building services include visioning, strategic planning, facilitation, consensus building, and more. We have facilitated nearly 100 strategic plans and visions for rural communities and regions and have worked with more than 200 community groups. To learn more about how RDI can help your community, contact Heidi Clark Khokhar, email: hkhokhar@rdiinc.org or phone: 541-968-2542.

Economic Vitality: RDI Takes Active Role in National Jobs Forums

Recently RDI helped rural communities have a voice in improving their economic prospects. Through a collaborative partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), RDI is embracing its role as an important regional convener and facilitator, bringing networks of leaders together to work on common economic concerns.

At the request of President Obama, USDA Rural Development and Farm Service Agency co-sponsored over one hundred Forums on Jobs and Economic Growth all across the country. Oregon held two forums, one in Albany and one in Bend. Both were facilitated by RDI.

"We were thrilled to have RDI participate in our forums," said Vicki Walker, Rural Development-Oregon State Director. "Their neutral presence and professional demeanor allowed for the kind of open and frank conversation needed to generate constructive ideas from the attendees about what is needed for job creation in rural Oregon."

The forums featured community leaders, panels of economic experts and elected and state agency officials gathering together to discuss unemployment, green job technologies, affordable housing, living wage jobs, collaboration between government and non-profits, and enhancing rural assets.

"These kinds of forums really play to one of our important strengths - our networking ability," said RDI Executive Director, Craig Smith. "It is a key component in our mission--building leadership networks and strong, vibrant communities."

RDI played the role of neutral facilitator at the forums to gather input from communities about what is and isn't working economically in their rural regions. The forums showcased RDI's ability to bring together diverse groups of people and facilitate open discussions.

"RDI helped get the word out and get people to these forums," said Coos County Commissioner,

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Cultivating Community

Latino Leadership

When winter storms in Astoria left much of the Latino community vulnerable and unsure of who to contact in an emergency situation, a need was identified in the community. "Communication within the Latino community in Astoria is difficult," says

"There are definitely people who have met through the trainings and are interested in working together."

Norma Hernandez, Director of the local Hispanic Council and a graduate of a previous FILP training. "There are no Spanish language newspapers or radio stations. If you want to get information out to the community, you need to go to the churches."

Over the past few years RDI has been developing a number of programs to reach out to the Latino communities like Astoria. One success story, has been the Cultivando Comunidad program.

Cultivando Comunidad is Spanish for "cultivating community." Intended to serve both communities and individuals, it is designed to be a collaboration between RDI, the Ford Family Foundation, rural Latino organizers, and curriculum specialists. This program is a shorter and modified version of the Ford Institute Leadership Program (FILP) and is delivered entirely in Spanish in communities that have a large Latino community and Latino leadership already in place. Each class features classroom training along with a hands-on project or event that class participants plan and deliver.

When Hernandez helped organize a Cultivando Comunidad training in her community, "Emergency Preparedness" became the theme for the project selected by the class. "After already going through the FILP training, I thought reaching consensus on a project in an all-Latino group might be difficult," said Hernandez. "What we found out was that the Latino community really just enjoys a gathering.

For them it was about getting together. It wasn't about building something or fixing something. It was about celebrating being together."

The Astoria class partnered with the Portland and Astoria Red Cross to present an open house style, educational workshop to teach preparation and survival skills like First Aid, what to do in case of a tsunami, and who to contact for services.

Francisco Ianni from the Portland Red Cross helped present

the information. "Francisco was able to speak to them in Spanish," said Hernandez. "He used a lot of humor--he wasn't too serious and that really worked with our audience. It was very relaxed with not too much structure. Francisco was really great!"

According to Hernandez, the event ended up being as much about helping the community be prepared for an emergency as about the opportunity to celebrate being together. "On the day of the event, everyone showed up," says Hernandez.

"We had so much food, I thought we could probably feed the whole city!"

An additional benefit of the project was that Hernandez's Hispanic Council received some much needed visibility and was recognized as a resource in the community. The Hispanic Council in Astoria

has been in existence for ten years and is run by volunteers. Many people in the community learned about the council for the first time at the event.

RDI staff person, Jessica Rodriguez-Montegna has seen a change in the Astoria Latino community since the training took place. "There are definitely people who have met through the trainings and are interested in working together," she said. "They've created a standing working group, and RDI is evaluating how we might continue to work with them." Possible opportunities include securing grants that could lead to training in Effective Organizations and Economic Vitality.

Hernandez says she thinks the Cultivando Comunidad class has been great for the Latino community in Astoria, a community which in the past has not always been very visible. "I am so grateful to RDI for the opportunity to give this to our community."



Francisco Ianni from the Portland Red Cross presented an open house style, educational workshop to teach preparation and survival skills like First Aid, what to do in case of a tsunami, and who to contact for services.

Cultivando Comunidad (Cultivating Community) is for communities who wish to embrace the diversity that exists in rural parts of Oregon and are ready for inclusive community development. RDI will collaborate with educational institutions, businesses, community, and social service organizations to tailor the curriculums to each community's unique resources and

interests. To develop a program that supports your community's way of life, contact Jessica Rodriguez Montegna, email: jsrodriguez@rdiinc.org or phone: 503-473-9622.

RDI Helps Blue Mountain Forest Partners With Strategic Planning

Recent work on a Strategic Plan for the Blue Mountain Forest Partners in eastern Oregon highlighted the real meaning of collaboration and just how diverse some groups that RDI is working with can be.

The Blue Mountain Forest Partners (BMFP) brought together representatives from the Forest Service, timber interests, conservation organizations, county government, and the local community. The focus of the BMFP is developing and implementing ecological restoration projects and agreed upon forest management practices in the Malheur National Forest that benefit forest recovery, watersheds, wildlife, and local communities.

Take a moment to go back and read that last paragraph again. Think about who the key players are that make up this group--in the Pacific Northwest-- loggers, environmentalists, and the forest service. Now think about what it is they're trying to accomplish--forest management. Now think about the challenges that might

be encountered when trying to develop a collaborative plan for action with these diverse partners at the table.

Under these demanding circumstances, RDI was invited to work with BMFP to help develop a Strategic Plan for their group. RDI staff person Vernita Ediger was given the assignment of working with the partnership to help them create a plan for moving forward together.

According to Ediger, the history of forest management in the region has not lent itself to collaborative work.

What resulted was a logjam, so to speak, where lawsuits and injunctions have kept any real forest management from taking place.

The BMFP came together in 2007 as a working group to try to promote agreed upon practices. Josh Walker, who has been working as a part-time coordinator for

BMFP for the past year agrees that a new approach was needed. "The idea is the more people involved and

at the table from the beginning, the less likely there is to be lawsuits and disagreements in the future," says Walker. "But, it takes a while in this type of collaboration for members to reach a level of trusting relationships," says Walker, explaining just one of the many challenges the group faces.

Ediger met with the group for two days this past fall. On day one the group did some pre-work, setting the stage for the actual strategic planning session. The group developed Vision and Mission Statements, identified key themes for their work together and also specified some cautionary areas that the group should try to stay away from.

The group then reconvened for a second day of work, when they worked on the actual strategic planning. They identified goal areas and prioritized strategies. "The membership really worked together," said Ediger. "The group was really motivated to set some clear goals and priorities and we ended up with a real push for action instead of getting bogged down in finalizing details of planning."

Walker, of BMFP, was impressed with the results of the session. "Through this Strategic Planning process the group came together and was really able to get on the same page," he said. "People had a chance to voice their concerns. And now I think we've established some momentum."

"The group established a clear decision making process--a set of rules, and got buy-in from all the interests," continued Walker. "We have an agreed upon vision and goals and we have a decision making process established. Having zero litigation on projects is the key to the whole thing. With everything we now have in place, we should be able to move forward."

"I think the Strategic Planning process was great," said Ediger. "It helped the group focus their energy and we've created opportunities for them to achieve some early small successes that I

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believe will enhance their work together into the future."

According to Walker, the group is currently in the process of hiring an Executive Director who can assist them with facilitation of their Strategic Plan. The Forest Service Project Committee was recently reconvening and Walker expected BMFP to have the opportunity to test their new decision making policy process soon.

"Establishing guidelines and policies and open communication should really make projects more efficient here," said Walker. "I see our work with RDI as a real catalyst for moving forward."

The services that small nonprofits and government agencies provide are invaluable to creating healthy rural communities. Through specialized programs and technical assistance, RDI helps organizations effectively plan, communicate, and generate energy and concrete action for a better future. To bring RDI's services to your organization or community, please contact Noelle Colby Rotell, email: nrotell@rdiinc.org or phone: 208-452-6196.

Hire Us!

RDI offers exceptional leadership training, technical assistance for groups or organizations, and project facilitation for communities who need help putting their plans into action. We design our services to conform to the culture and needs of your group or community. Contact the RDI office to find out what we can do for you!

rdi@rdiinc.org // 541.684.9077



RIPPLE: Join The Views And Voices From The Rural Northwest

Ever wonder if other rural communities struggle with the same issues your community is dealing with? What are they doing about unemployment, access to high speed internet, and developing tourism? How are new "green" technologies impacting rural life? What's working in other rural places that might work in yours?

The RIPPLE blog is a great place to ask these questions and more. There are host writers starting conversations about topics that might be relevant to you and your community. It's also a great place to share ideas, suggestions, and solutions that you've seen work in your community or heard about working somewhere else.

A few months ago RIPPLE was redesigned and relaunched in part to provide a place to ask questions like these. WOW, what a difference! The new site looks great, is so easy to navigate, and offers many opportunities for users to interact. Especially on the blog, where community members from all over our rural region can participate in conversations and share information about living in a rural community.

Now, you might be asking yourself, "Why would I want to post a comment on someone else's blog?" Well blogging is becoming a unique form of social networking--really another form of collaboration, and we're all interested in collaboration, right? The whole point of blogs and social networks is to create and encourage interactive conversations around topics we have in common. And in rural communities, we have a lot in common.

Sometimes we just lack resources outside our

own communities from which we can draw a different perspective. Well, not anymore--have no fear, the new RIPPLE is here!

Never blogged before? That's OK, neither have lots of people, so that shouldn't stop you. Here are a few basic tips on how-to successfully blog:

Tip #1--Know your motivation and have a clear idea why you want to respond before you start. Clearly add something meaningful or something new to the conversation--don't just agree or disagree with the poster.

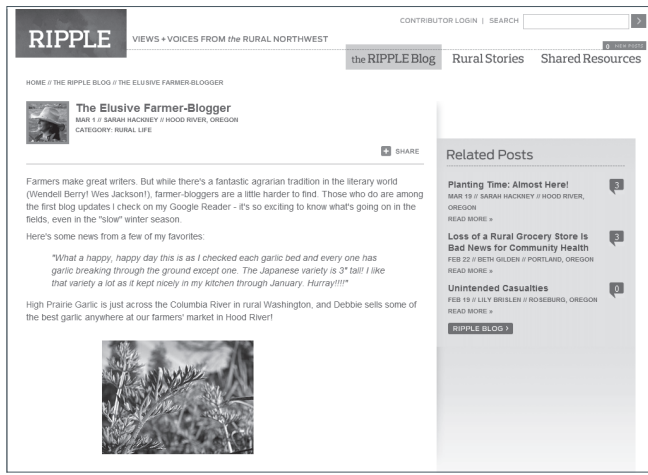
Tip #2--Be respectful and be clear as to whether

you are responding to the original post or someone else's comments. And you probably shouldn't post anything that you wouldn't say in person.

Tip #3--Have some knowledge about the subject you're posting about. Remember, we're trying to share information about rural life with each other.

Even if you aren't interested in blogging, you should still check out the new and improved RIPPLE site. The stories about rural life are very interesting and you will get a sense of some of the great things happening in rural communities and the RDI world. It makes great reading and beats the heck out of on-line solitaire!

So grab your keypad-thoughts-ideas and head over to the RIPPLE website, www.ripplenw.org. You never know what you might learn or who you might meet!



RDI connects rural communities through blogging on RIPPLE!

RDI has worked in more than 300 rural communities in the Northwest, and through this we have access to the Northwest's most important asset: people. We facilitate networking formally through events, online through our RIPPLE website, and informally every chance we get, so that the knowledge, skills, and experiences of the people we work with can be passed between communities that may lie far apart. If you are working on a project in the rural Northwest, RDI is here to help you find the right people. To find out more about how RDI actively works to bring you together to share information, contact Robert Ault, email: bault@rdiinc.org or phone: 541-337-9765.



Bay Area Class Helps Redesign Curriculum

Youth Leadership

While RDI values the youth-adult partnerships fostered in our traditional leadership classes, recently RDI began offering another option for youth aiming to create partnerships and network opportunities with their peers. As a part of RDI's traditional programming, youth community members are included in training groups, working side-by-side with adult community leaders as part of the Ford Institute Leadership Program (FILP). As that side-by-side work grew, community members began to ask for all youth classes. At first, the all youth classes were based on the traditional curriculum and processes, but have since evolved. Youth were incorporated into the redesign process, to meet the specific desires and experiences for youth leaders.

When asked what is different about the new, redesigned youth program, RDI staff person, Max Gimbel replied, "Plenty!" According to Gimbel, who is RDI's Youth Program Manager and the lead trainer for the current youth class in the Oregon Bay Area. Gimble explained, youth who sign up for the class send out requests for project proposals to organizations in the community prior to the class beginning. The students select a project with an already clearly defined scope and an identified partner. The partner organization attends the classes which helps build relationships between the youth and the organization and adds to the overall success of the project. Class projects are limited to \$3000 and are implemented during class meetings, (rather than being implemented afterwards as is currently the case with traditional FILP classes).

In the Bay Area twenty-two students from the Coos Bay and North Bend School Districts are participating in the current class. There is also a youth class currently being held in Cornelius where thirty-two students are part of the program. Youth class schedules vary to meet the demanding needs

of high school students but typically run for thirty-five hours of training. In the Bay Area, students are meeting during school in-service days; in Cornelius students are meeting on Saturdays. According to Gimbel, Bay Area youth were brought into the planning process early and helped shape and adjust the curriculum and class schedules prior to the class beginning. Youth Community Trainers were also identified.

"It was really an amazing feeling knowing that the work we did was going to help teach others," said Youth Community Trainer and high school junior, Kyleray Katherman, about the Bay Area youth's work on the curriculum. "Leadership is a

very important skill, and it is good to see RDI and The Ford Family Foundation working so closely with youth to bring rural Oregon to a new level."

The Bay Area Class is now in the process of refining the project proposal they are considering -Charity Car Wash Kits to reduce the environmental impact on their bay in partnership with the Coos Watershed Association.

School officials appeared pleased with the program as well. "Our students stated that at first they weren't so sure (about the class), but by the end of the day they were

glad they went and look forward to returning," said Harding Learning Center Administrator Linda Vickery.

The overall goal of RDI's Youth Leadership Programs is for middle and high school students to share ideas and challenges related to leadership within their schools and communities and find solutions together.

Adjustments by RDI staff to the training curriculum seem to be having a positive effect on the engagement level of the youth involved. By providing a more interactive approach and including youth in the design, RDI has found a way to involve rural youth that will hopefully increase their future community involvement.



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What's Next for Youth?

March 2010: RDI is partnering with OSU 4H to host 'Activate Oregon Youth Summit 2010'. From March 28-March 30, young adults, adult mentors, numerous youth empowerment



advocates and elected officials will converge on Portland to inspire and be inspired, support and be supported and teach and learn hands on tools that youth can use immediately to transform the power and impact of youth voice in your community and across Oregon. Designed for and in partnership with youth, this summit is focused on amplifying youth voices on a community level. Watch for more in our next e-newsletter!

July 2010: Want to learn about asset mapping and go white water rafting in the same week? Youth from S. Siskiyou, California can! Our first ever Ford Institute Youth Camp is designed to support rural middle schoolers transitioning to high school from S. Siskiyou, CA and is aimed at providing an engaging experience for youth to practice personal leadership. For more information on being a camper or a teen-adult camp mentor, contact Max Gimbel, email: mgimbel@rdiinc.org or phone: 541-359-5284.

RDI's dynamic, fun and hands-on youth program covers a range of topics including team building, characteristics of effective leadership, decision making techniques and is focused around the selection, design, and completion of a real service project. During RDI workshops, young people learn skills they can apply now to make things happen; they'll meet new people, have the opportunity to earn credit or community service hours, learn about scholarship opportunities, and eat great food. If your community is interested in an all-youth leadership class or designing a youth leadership program, please contact Max Gimbel, email: mgimbel@rdiinc.org or phone: 541-359-5284.

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow - The Tradition Continues

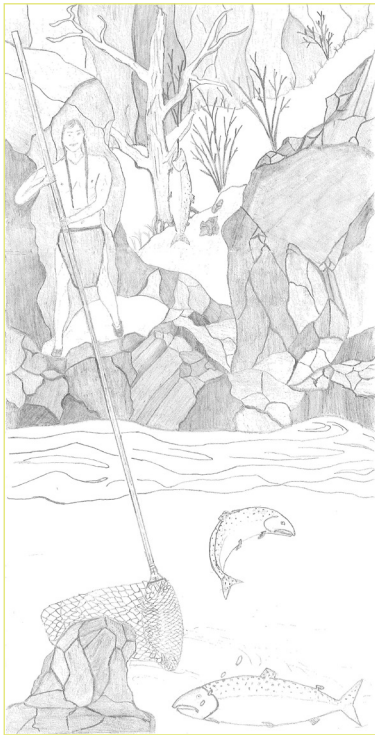
Celilo Village Tribal Leadership

Developing a leadership model for a tribal youth academy based on relevant culture and traditions is critical to Celilo Village because it allows residents to set their own standards in regard to how, what and by whom their children are taught, explained RDI staff person, Dr. Az Carmen.

Carmen has been assisting a group of Celilo Village leaders to develop the Celilo Village Youth Leadership Academy.

"Indian Leadership is handed down from one generation to the next," says Carmen. "The Academy will focus on the youth learning the traditions of their own people, not that of other tribes or another race. This program honors and recognizes the critical importance of sovereignty, culture, leadership, and tradition to the Indian people of the Columbia River."

Recently, the Celilo Village Youth Academy Committee held a contest for the youth of the village to create a logo design for the Academy. From the two divisions, K through 8th and 9th through 12th grades, two brothers, Cody and Wade Begay, were chosen as the finalists. After much discussion and several more votes, Cody's design was ultimately



Logo Design Winner by Cody Begay

chosen as the winner for the logo design contest.

A vision statement was also created for the Academy that emphasizes the importance of the relationship between elders and youth: "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow--The Tradition Continues."

The Youth Academy will feature a leadership curriculum that is based on the traditions and culture of the area. "Through culturally appropriate visioning and design processes we are looking at what Native leadership looks like in the community and then developing a curriculum where the people are setting the standards for what their youth should be taught and by whom," says Carmen. "...what the village residents are designing is something that is relevant to this particular group of Natives and not a cultural overlay from another society."

Carmen says that the development of the curriculum has been "...organic and culturally based," and includes a strong emphasis on math and social studies at its core. The singing of traditional Native songs, ribbon dress making and drum making will be at the heart of what is created by the community. Most importantly, it will be their leadership story and not that of another people.

"Singing is a very important part of the culture," says Carmen, explaining one example of how traditional learning will be emphasized. "An elder will visit the village and sing with the students all day, singing the same song over and over. And that's how the youth will learn and remember the tradition of that particular song."

Carmen notes that the youth of the Celilo Village are strongly aware of the traditions of their people.

"The people of the Celilo Village are handing down their knowledge to future generations."

When the young children were asked to draw pictures of their community for the logo contest, they did not draw pictures of cars and I-pods. They drew pictures of their families fishing the river. "So much of Native American culture is handed down,"

says Carmen. "The people of the Celilo Village are handing down their knowledge to future generations."

In addition to the Celilo Village Tribal Youth Leadership Academy, RDI has developed and will deliver a tribal leadership program that is modeled after the successful Ford Institute Leadership

Program. This curriculum is scheduled to be delivered to members of the Shasta Nation and the Burns/Paiute Tribe.

These two tribal programs are based on a model that recognizes the significance of culture and how RDI develops leadership training that is relevant to individual communities. There isn't just one way to teach or learn community leadership, and RDI is

making that a focus of our mission.

RDI's tribal programs support the tribal and personal sovereignty of all Indian people through offering services like this one that are culturally competent, community based and focused on the strengths and assets that already exist in Native American communities. RDI will collaborate with tribal entities, community and social organizations to provide training, technical assistance and other culturally appropriate services tailored to each area's unique resources and interests. Please contact Az Carmen, email: azcarmen@rdiinc.org or by phone: 541-221-8915 for more information.



Logo Design Runner Up by Wade Begay

Economic Vitality: RDI Takes Active Role In National Jobs Forums

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Nikki Whitty, who is also an RDI Board member. "I believe working on economic vitality is a very important role for RDI." Both forums were well-attended and numerous rural Oregon counties were represented at each.

RDI is no stranger to working to improve rural economies and create jobs. More than 2,500 entrepreneurs were helped by RDI's Connecting Oregon for Rural Entrepreneurship (CORE) project. Success stories have poured out from the CORE initiative, from the establishment of a student-run kayak rental business in Lincoln County, to the creation of a business incubator in Warm Springs, Oregon. To date, CORE has been responsible for the creation or retention of over 300 rural jobs in Oregon.

Smith sees the new relationship with USDA as a good fit with existing economic development work like CORE and as a stepping stone to continue affecting community vitality on a larger scale. "I see this as a valuable partnership for both of us," says Smith. "Bringing people together to talk about what the needs are in rural communities and ways to re-tool programs to make them more effective is

a critical step in creating new jobs and combating unemployment."

These forum discussions will be a source of insights and ideas that will inform President Obama's approach to job creation. Feedback is being compiled into a report that will be sent to the Oval Office for review. Some initiatives being discussed include:

- An Innovation Agenda and Green Jobs of the Future
- Paving the Road for Small Business Job Growth
- Encouraging Business Competitiveness and Job Creation
- Preparing Workers and Strengthening Main Street

Up-to-the-minute information can be accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/economy/jobsforum>.



RDI gives rural Oregon a voice in improving the nation's economy. Laurel MacMillan, RDI's Economic Vitality Program Manager and Vicki Walker, Rural Development - Oregon State Director

RDI believes vital economies are essential to the future of rural communities, and entrepreneurs are the back bone of rural economies. That's why RDI's economic vitality programs focus on helping small businesses thrive through networking, skill building, and planning. In addition to supporting entrepreneurship, we help communities develop economic development and rural tourism plans that reflect the needs and values of their community. To learn more, please contact Laurel MacMillan, email: lmacmillan@rdiinc.org or phone: 503-803-8260.

Rural Development Initiatives was formed in 1991 to respond to crisis in the Pacific Northwest as small communities faced waves of economic change that challenged their courage, livelihoods, and way of life. Since then, we've worked with nearly 300 rural communities to foster economic development, plan and implement community improvement, address growth-related challenges, and build strong leaders and organizations. We do this in a way that guides and teaches community members so that when we leave, success is possible and it rests in the able hands of those who most deserve it: the people who live it. Rural Development Initiatives builds leadership networks and rural communities.

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