

For the RECORD

A compilation of facts, large and small, about our community

- Number of hospitals that are part of the CareOregon Health Plan Provider Network: 51
- Percentage of members of CareOregon Health Plan that are 19 and younger: 59%
- Percentage of members of CareOregon Health Plan that do not speak English as their first language: 26%
- Number of playgrounds that are part of Portland Parks and Recreation: 129
- Number of Community Gardens that are part of Portland Parks and Recreation: 48
- Miles of regional trails that are part of Portland Parks and Recreation: 155
- Annual volunteer hours for Portland Parks and Recreation: 475,324
- Number of basketball courts in Portland Parks and Recreation's care: 229
- Total tonnage of cargo moved in and out of Port of Portland for September: 755,680
- Total PDX Flight Operations for September: 17,730
- Number of veterans in Oregon who receive SNAP benefits: more than 37,000
- Pounds of food the Oregon Food Bank Network received from July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013: 86.3 million

Sources: CareOregon; Portland Parks and Recreation 2013 Performance Report; Port of Portland Aviation and Marine Statistics; Oregon Food Bank

New voices, new stations converge on rare FM license offering

BY DEVAN SCHWARTZ
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

New low-power FM stations will soon become part of Portland's media landscape, representing a different set of voices from commercial and public radio.

Among the applicants are student-run radio stations from Portland State University and Reed College. The Portland Radio Project, which recently launched online, now seeks its own low-power FM license as well.

The range of low-power FM transmitters vary based on terrain and wattage but average about a 3.5 mile radius in cities.

A rare application window was opened by the Federal Communication Commission as a result of the 2009 Local Community Radio Act. The window was originally set to close Oct. 29 and then extended until Nov. 14 due to the government shutdown.

Radio experts explained to Street Roots that low power FM stations didn't even exist in the United States until 1999. Between then and now, the FCC hasn't offered any opportunities to apply for low-power FM licenses in urban areas.

"It appears broadcast radio still has legs and people are still interested," said Michael Brown of Portland-based Brown Radio Services, a radio consulting company.

A handful of local applicants are consulting with Brown Radio Services and about 30 nationally.

"We're working with groups that intend to have a studio, lots of volunteers and lots of community involvement," Brown said.

Portland Radio Project's news director Rebecca Webb says community involvement is a large part of why they are pursuing a low power FM license — whether that's locally produced news, music programming or information about Portland non-profit organizations.

Webb, a radio veteran, says decades of media consolidation has led to airwaves dominated by commercial stations and automated programming. So when the FCC announced the extended filing window, she says they decided to jump aboard.

"With all the publicity of the low power FM window, we decided it would be a good idea if we could get in on this window," Webb said. "It's our goal to act as a community hub. The media landscape is so fractured right now and it will be interesting to see how things shake out."

Currently, the Portland Radio Project rents studio space at Mountain Air Studios in the Brooklyn neighborhood and will seek an existing FM transmitter if its application is accepted.

The first wave of low power FM licenses will be granted in January, according to Julia Wierski of the Prometheus Radio Project, a Philadelphia-based non-profit community media advocacy group.

But Wierski said competitive markets like Portland won't know the results of their

applications for considerably longer.

"Nothing's ever that concrete with the FCC until they give an official announcement," the development and communications director for Prometheus added.

On the cost of running a low-power FM station, Wierski said it can be done fairly inexpensively, with ongoing costs ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 per year.

In a market as large as Portland, Michael Brown said \$100,000 per year is a reasonable fundraising goal for stations seeking to pay at least one full-time staff member.

Besides the money, Brown added that organizing so many volunteers can be difficult.

"You need people who are dedicated — and that's the greatest challenge. A radio station is like a baby that needs to be fed every two hours, 24 hours a day. It's an ongoing thing, it's the effort that never sleeps."

Low-power FM licenses offered in urban areas such as Portland means more groups competing for fewer frequencies. The competitiveness has also led some groups to keep their plans under wraps until the application window is closed.

In order to reward applicants with genuine community ties, Prometheus staff advocated for the FCC to adopt a point system for applications, which it did.

For example, a two-year established community presence gives an additional point. The same goes for stations offering eight hours of truly local content per day. Another point goes to publicly accessible studios staffed 20 hours a week or more.

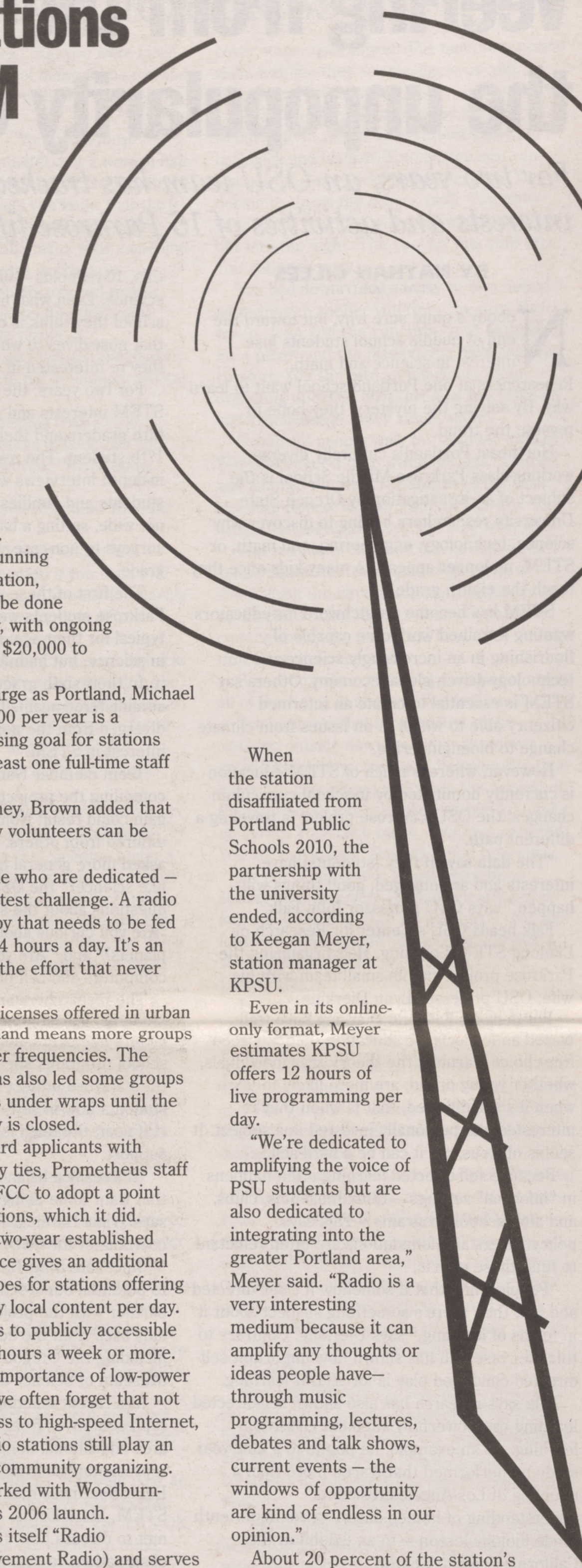
Describing the importance of low-power FM, Wierski said we often forget that not everyone has access to high-speed Internet, and terrestrial radio stations still play an important role in community organizing.

Prometheus worked with Woodburn-based KPCN on its 2006 launch.

The station calls itself "Radio Movimiento" (Movement Radio) and serves as a community hub through Spanish-language broadcasts for Latino listeners within a 10-mile radius, including a strong concentration of farmworkers.

But low-power FM can amplify the voices of whichever groups are involved — from rural laborers to college students.

The station at Portland State University is online only, although it previously broadcast through a station-share with KPBS at Benson Polytechnic High School.



When the station disaffiliated from Portland Public Schools 2010, the partnership with the university ended, according to Keegan Meyer, station manager at KPSU.

Even in its online-only format, Meyer estimates KPSU offers 12 hours of live programming per day.

"We're dedicated to amplifying the voice of PSU students but are also dedicated to integrating into the greater Portland area," Meyer said. "Radio is a very interesting medium because it can amplify any thoughts or ideas people have—through music programming, lectures, debates and talk shows, current events — the windows of opportunity are kind of endless in our opinion."

About 20 percent of the station's DJs are community members and the rest students, Meyer said. If the FCC grants their application, the plan is to erect a transmitter on the roof of Ondine Hall.

It's true that the Portland radio market already has many commercial stations, along with Oregon Public Broadcasting and community-run KBOO.

But if you scan your radio dial in the coming months, you just may hear something new riding the airwaves.



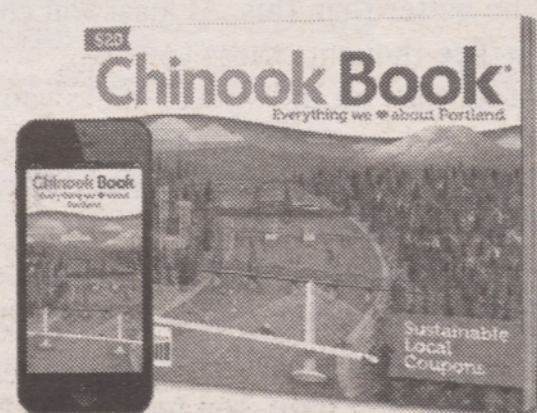
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