RADIO *from page 1A*

Bloomfield continued, "They have a great history, and they bring it to the table. They bring it in their dollars, in the volunteership, and all around quality of people. It shows, and we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them."

Bloomfield has been instrumental in getting KXCR into the 21st century: Helping pave the way for the station to livestream on the internet to increase its reach beyond the boundaries of the Siuslaw. The move marks a pivotal point in the local independent radio station, as it looks to define its own story in the increasingly crowded realm of podcasts and radio.

KXCR's is a story that involves jazz clubs in Portland during the 1930s, Siuslaw Pioneers, a healthy dislike of country music, bad acting, a huge record collection and the hope that the voices on the airwaves can bring understanding and freedom to the Siuslaw region.

"It's so difficult to put a radio station in," Bloomfield said. "If you're lucky enough to get one, you have to do everything you can to protect is."

"It's our community radio"

While KXCR has only been on the air for four years, the attempts to get it on its feet spans decades.

"My father was involved with trying to get this going, and he died nine years ago," Bloomfield explained.

He called his father an engineer of the utmost caliber who worked diligently to get the station on air.

"He had a shadow so large that it was just difficult to see the light of day. A very good man," Bloomfield said. "It's nice to know that many years later, I can serve in a capacity that could show that I've actually accomplished what my dad wanted. That's a good feeling inside."

KXCR's transmission reaches north to the lighthouse, south to "about" Reedsport, and west to Mapleton and a tad bit beyond, according to Bloomfield.

"Most towns don't even have one radio station, let alone two," Bloomfield said. "It enables the community to have a voice."

KXCR does not have an accurate count of its listeners, but the estimates are relatively small.

"To give you a real number, the best I can do is say that if you have a community of 100 people, you'll have 3 listeners," Bloomfield said. "And that's kind of sad to say, but you're looking at 3 percent of an area. I'd like to say we have 100 percent, but I like to shoot for the low end to temper expectations. So, we have anywhere from 300 to 500 listeners at any given time."

But the listeners KXCR do have are passionate and engaged, Bloomfield said, and he stated he is frequently stopped on the street by people commenting on the programming and giving ideas on possible shows. It's a community project.

But the audience is currently limited to the reach of the transmission. The station could get more transponders, but that would not be cost effective. Instead, KXCR is investing in livestreaming its programing on the internet — the first radio station in the Siuslaw to do so.

Livestreaming is when a radio station plays live over the internet.

"You'll go to our website, and it will say if you have a android phone, click here," Bloomfield said. "iPhone, click here. Computer, click here.

"With streaming, you could have someone in an obscure location on the other side of the world, or it could be someone just over in Eugene who wants to listen to us but can't."

When the listener clicks, they'll hear the station live, just like they would over a transistor radio, except now they can listen to it anywhere in the world, on any device.

Livestreaming is different than archiving, which is when an individual episode or group of shows is available online. One of the most common forms of archived shows are podcasts. Archiving is also what Netflix does. In this case, listeners are not hearing what's going on live on the radio station, but older shows.

KXCR does have a smattering of archived shows on its website, including a few of "Charlie's Place," and is looking to expand its collection as funding comes in for new computers.

It should also be noted that KXCR will still be broadcasting through its traditional FM station.

Does Bloomfield expect streaming to catch on locally, particularly in a retirement community?

"It really matters on their technical levels," Bloomfield said. "There's those people who stream on their phone and listen to it wherever they drive. And then there's those people who are like, 'What's streaming?'"

However, he stated his door is always open to anyone who wants to learn.

"Anybody who comes in and asks me, I'm going to tell them how," he said. "Because if you're listening to it, you're going to pass it on to someone else. And then we grow."

And growth is really what KXCR is looking for. In the past, KXCR has focused on broadcasting national programs such as Democracy Now. The world was being brought to the Siuslaw. But now, Bloomfield is looking to get community members to create more of their own shows so Siuslaw locals can be introduced to the world through radio.

"We try and get as much local in here as possible," Bloomfield said.

KXCR is looking for any and all takers when it comes to original ideas for local shows.

"If you want to talk about your puppy, I'll still put you on air," Bloomfield said. "Why? Because you came in here. You made the effort. That is what this place is all about. It's community radio. You're not too young, or too poor. And I'll make it sound as entertaining as I possibly can. It's our community radio, and we're going to work to make it as fun and enjoyable as we can."

KXCR already hosts a wide variety of topics, many of which are music based, such as Maggie Montana, Jake the Shark and course "Charlie's Place." But there are more local specific topics, such as Siuslaw Pioneers.

"That particular show is just stories from our area," Bloomfield said. The text comes from historical accounts of the area, provided by institutions such as the Siuslaw Pioneer Museum and written by local authors like Bob Jackson. "I'll have someone like Jake the Shark come in here and read it. These are great stories, stories that are local to our area."

But can locally specific shows like that find a following outside the area, where live streaming will reach?

"What value does that have to me?" Bloomfield asked. "I love listening to old radio westerns, like Lone Ranger. The Siuslaw Pioneers have that same feeling and story lines. But they're historically accurate, or close to accurate."

Radio audiences are looking for stories from faraway places, as hits such as "This American Life" proves. Interest comes not so much from the region a story is from, but from the universality of the story, and how well it's told.

"The key is to put together a local show and put some quality into it," Bloomfield said. "Charlie has had a lot of years to refine himself, and he really has. He's done such a great job that when he gets behind the microphone, it's second nature to him. When you get to that level of character in the show, you cease being a local and truly become a professional. He's a professional."

> **"Music is universal; there's rhythm in everyone's life in some way. Music has meaning for almost everybody and it's a way to bond us together in a way that very few items can do. When I found out that I could buy that on records, oh! The first thing I did was hit the record shop in town and actually buy something, take it home, and listen to it."**
>
> **— Charlie Walker, *KXCR DJ***

"As long as you can tap your feet"

When KXCR began searching for local programs, Walker's ears perked up. He had always wanted to be a disc jockey, and perhaps this was his chance to fulfill a lifelong dream, which came about when he was a teenager. Walker had always kept in tow thousands of LPs and 78s throughout his life, the first of which he bought when he was 14 — Harry James' "Carnival of Venice" and "Flight of the Bumblebee."

"I fancied myself as a potential trumpeter at the time," Walker said. "Turned out I had a terrible time reading music, so I never learned, and I never learned an instrument. I can noodle around on drums, but that's about it."

But he could tap his fingers and his toes, which Walker suggested was the true test of what makes good swing music, his favorite of all the jazz variations.

"I responded by either tapping a foot or snapping a finger," he said. "Swing is whatever elicits a physical response. When you hear it, if you have to get up and move, or you have to at least participate however you can, tapping your fingers on the table, or the foot on the floor, as long as it elicits a physical response, I think it swings. John Philip Sousa said jazz will live in this country as long as people can express themselves — essentially, as long as you can tap your feet. And he was right. That was 100 years ago. He was right then, and he's right now."

And while styles of music change over the years, that central tenet of music is what ultimately attracted, and still attracts, Walker to music.

"I thought anything that affects me that strongly has to has a reason. Music is universal, there's rhythm in everyone's life in some way. Music has meaning for almost everybody and it's a way to bond us together in a way that very few items can do. When I found out that I could buy that on records, oh! The first thing I did was hit the record shop in town and actually buy something, take it home, and listen to it like I was listening on the radio. It was great! Drove my mother mad when you only got one record and you play it over again."

To keep his mother's sanity intact, Walker needed to discover more music. Fortunately, in North Portland in 1936, the era of the big band and rhythm and blues, new exciting music was plentiful.

"I discovered black music before it was popular to admit it," Walker said. "We were in Portland during World War II and there were integrated clubs at the time. One called The Ranch that had black and white waitresses. There was no problem there, because the music was your key to admission. Once you were in the fellowship, so to speak, you were welcome."

Of course, he was too young to just waltz into the swing clubs, but he found other ways of getting in.

"A friend of mine and I were on our way home one night, and we were walking through Albina. There was this club there and we were standing outside the stage door, listening to the music. It was really swinging, wonderful. And a black fella, nine feet tall, scared the hell out of us, poked his head out and said, 'What'cha boys doing out here?' I said we were listening to music. He said, 'Well you can't stand here, come in.'"

The kids were brought behind the curtain where the musicians were playing. They were handed a couple of Cokes and told not to move.

"And we didn't," Walker said. "We were probably there for just over an hour. I was in pig heaven. During WWII, Portland did not waste their police time on crime that wasn't violent. They were after hard crime, but vice just slid by. There wasn't much in the way of regulation in the music scene. Well, let's say I took advantage of it."

By this time, his collection of records had grown to around 50.

"They were 53 cents in Vancouver, 50 cents in Oregon," Walker recalled. "I bought all my records at Meier and Frank, Olson King, all the department stores that had record departments. Then I went over to the east end of the Broadway bridge at a record shop that had my kind of music. Race records and stuff like that. It's kind of set the pattern for my life."

A pattern that would dominate the rest of his life.

"Bottom line — it was the beginning of a collection that has 7,000 titles now," Walker said. "I've reached a point where I don't own it, but it owns me. I've hauled it all over the country, lived on all three coasts."

"The whole world changes"

Walker had dreams of playing his records professionally, "way back when they all wore suits and ties and stood at the microphone and sounded very profound," he said. But the horrors of WWII prevented him.

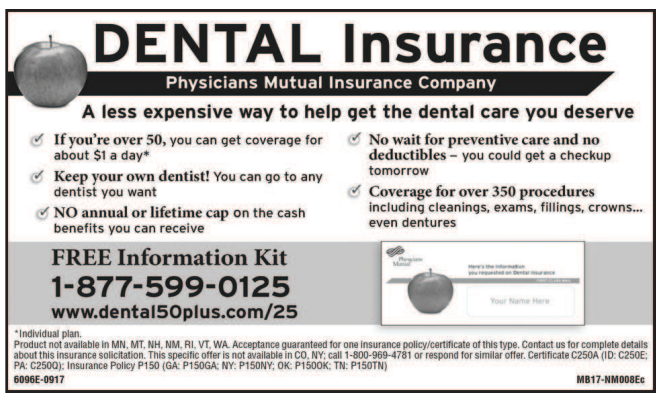
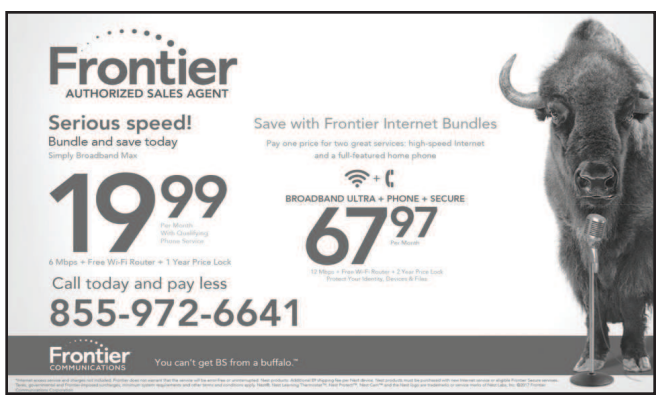
"I went into the army and got a nice case of PTSD that took the form of panic attacks," he said. "When I got out, I didn't do a thing for years, except deal with panic attacks. That made it impossible for me to do the things I wanted to do."

He worked a variety of jobs, making a good life for himself, but his dreams of becoming a disc jockey never came to fruition, even though his son went into the field.

"And he's a darn good one, but he's in a different part of the world, Tennessee, and I don't see him much," Walker said. "We're pretty spread out, like most families these days. We live too far apart to really have an intergenerational relationship."

Walker had all but given up on the dream for himself until KXCR came along. His first show for the station was "Best of Swing," which he co-hosted with his friend Smilin' Dave Craddock, a local piano player who used to play local bars and events before he passed away last November. The show lasted for 100 episodes, and then Walker wanted to try his hand at his own show, utilizing his record collection.

"Doggonit, if you have something you enjoy, you should share it," Walker said. "If I'm going to influence anybody, I'd rather be a solid influence in their life than a negative one. I've had jobs where I left people worse off than I found them, bartending was one of them. I determined that I needed to be in something that would leave people better off."

He based the show around the defunct clubs he frequented in his youth, focusing the music collection on anything that swings.

See **RADIO** *page 8A*