

On the Air

A variety of voices power Goldendale's community radio station



Don Blake is the most experienced of the KVG-D group, having worked at KBOO in Portland years ago.

By Drew Myron

Do you hear the hum of happiness? That is KVG-D 100.1 FM, a low-powered station amped with high-power fun.

Goldendale's new community radio station is an all-volunteer effort that hit the airwaves in September.

"It's so much fun," says Kathy O'Brennan, a school bus driver who volunteers as the station's bookkeeper and receptionist. "It's a real thing now. It sounds so good, like we really know what we're doing."

She and the other volunteers erupt in laughter.

"We laugh a lot," says Cory Eberhart, the station's driving force and program director.

These five dedicated volunteers—most with no radio experience—have reason to celebrate. A two-year process full of fevered deadlines, a flurry of fundraisers and a last-minute grant, has produced a tangible result: an independent,

non-commercial, locally owned and operated radio station serving the Goldendale community.

The station broadcasts an eclectic range of music, along with local and national news, community and civic events, agriculture reports, educational features and children's programs.

From Idea to Airwaves

It all began in 2013, when the Federal Communications Commission opened a brief opportunity for communities to apply for a low-power FM station.

This was "the largest expansion of community radio in U.S. history," according to Prometheus Radio Project, an organization advocating for locally owned stations.

KVG-D-LP is one of nearly 3,000 low-power FM stations nationwide that have been licensed thanks to the Local Community Radio Act.

"We believe that community radio is a powerful tool for social justice,



From left, the KVG team Don Blake, Teresa Clyne, Kathy Brennan, Pat Horn and Cory Eberhart. Right, Cory, left, and Kathy enjoy their time at the station.

progressive, and multi-lingual organizing, as well as amplifying great local artists," Prometheus Radio states on its website.

As a low-powered station, KVG operates at 100 watts, with a signal that extends 3.5 miles from its studio in the center of town.

"There's a national movement of community radio," says Cory. "I feel like we're part of something much, much bigger than a radio station in our little town of Goldendale."

Community radio is an alternative to corporate media, she says, and features individual voices.

"It's part of the hyper-local movement—just like food and farmers markets," says Cory. "It's a communication tool for the entire community."

The radio station has no paid employees, relying instead on community members who have an interest in connecting with others to share ideas and information.

"That's the thing about public radio," Cory says. "It's grassroots—volunteer-based—and you learn as you go along. There's room for everybody."

That has been true for Pat Horn.

"I know what a microphone is, and that's about it," says the retiree.

She and her husband, Harry, support the station as members. Pat, who is bilingual, provides Spanish programming.

Teresa Clyne recalls her college radio days. She enjoys writing ad copy and public service announcements.

Don Blake is the most experienced of the group, having worked at KBOO in Portland years ago.

"It was small back then," Don says of KBOO. "We were a hundred struggling hippies with a vision."

Now he is on the air three nights a week for up to five hours each shift. Sometimes he just keeps going if he is having fun.

"The great thing is, there's no real restrictions," he says.

From Opera to Country

What is music to your ears? There is a good chance it plays on KVG.

Country, opera, blues and jazz are regular features. The station also offers a variety of news and entertainment programs.

This small station has a mission to broadcast voices not often heard. Thanks to partnerships with Pacifica Network, Native Voice One, Programs for Peaceful Living, Radio Tierra and local churches, the station offers a range of news and information sources.

Still in its infancy, the station is reaching out. Have a program idea? Handy with sound equipment? Want to gain work experience? KVG wants you.

"We want diverse voices," says Cory. "We want to hear our neighbors."

Organizers hope to work with students by offering internships and hands-on experience, as well as underwriting program opportunities with local businesses.

While securing the license to start the station was a struggle—eased by an \$8,000 grant from Puget Sound Energy—the ongoing challenge is having money to operate.

"We don't have deep pockets," says Cory. "We have empty pockets."

The studio is a no-frills effort. While the group is thrilled to be on the air, they operate from a space that is not much larger than a walk-in closet. The radio console seats two people at most. The transformer, phone and Internet equipment are kept in the bathroom.

The group is actively seeking financial support to cover expenses such as rent, power, royalty fees and general operating costs.

"It doesn't take much to make a big difference," says Don. ■

Learn more about Goldendale Community Radio by visiting the team at 514 S. Columbus in Goldendale; online at <http://kvgd.fm/blog> or by calling (509) 773-0645. Community Enrichment for Klickitat County is the fiscal agent for KVG. Donations are tax-deductible. Make checks payable to CEKC, 514 S. Columbus, Suite 7, Goldendale, WA 98620.