

BONNERS FERRY

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BA BONNERS FERRY HERALD Thursday, August 7, 2003

CD-ROM promoting Bonners Ferry may be in the works

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Staff writer

An Idaho business is using cutting edge computer technology to show business owners some of the beauty and culture of the Panhandle.

Brad Nixon, an economist from Canada conducting market research for System Interactive, has been talking to the Bonners Ferry Chamber of Commerce about creating a custom interactive CD showcasing Bonners Ferry as a means of encouraging businesses to relocate in Boundary County.

The Hayden Lake-based company is promoting the region with its CD-ROM advertising package "The Best of North Idaho: An Interactive Media Tour."

The mission of SI is "to showcase the beauty of this area not only within the United States, but around the world," Nixon said.

The "Best of North Idaho" CDs use photo slide shows, "virtual tours" of several counties and many other features to encourage people to move into the area.

"The unique thing about it is it's a community building type of concept where we're trying to promote the region's artists while promoting the business and the entrepreneurial spirit of the area," Nixon said.

Nixon said he thinks that business owners on the East Coast would love North Idaho if they learned more about the region.

"The cost of living is so high in those areas," he said. "This is a tremendous destination to move your business. That message needs to be heard."

The "Best of North Idaho CD" has been sent to business owners in Italy, Asia and "all over the world," Nixon said.

The local Chamber has been sending relocation packages to businesses in order to help generate more interest in Bonners Ferry, McKenna and

"There is no reason why it shouldn't be a vibrant economic region in the future."

—Brad Nixon of Systems Interactive.

Nixon feel that a custom CD highlighting the benefits of life in Bonners Ferry would be a great addition to them.

"They send out about 45 packages a month," he said.

Nixon gave an example of how the CD-ROM might help the Chamber's current efforts.

"If it got one business that needed 200 to 400 employees to move here and support this economy, then it would be a tremendous achievement," he said.

Nixon said he feels that as business owners have concentrated more on day-to-day operations, they have drifted away from other things that help maintain the quality of life in their communities and make people want to live there.

"The businesses and the professionals in past cultures tended to support the arts, but we've lost that," Nixon said.

Nixon said he thinks the "Best of North Idaho" CDs are a good step in the right direction. The interactive CDs feature songs by "five of the best regional artists from Idaho," Nixon said.

Jim Boyd, Kelly Hughes, Shari Short, The Standards and Mike Wagoner all have songs on the soundtrack. They cover a range of styles from seventies-flavored country-rock to a capella doo wop. The five songs in the "soundtrack" section of the CD-ROM can be played on regular CD players.

Nixon said he is amazed by how SI founder Rob McKenna thinks in creative ways about how to stimulate the local economy while preserving the North Idaho way of life.

Determining "what drives an economy and what makes artists in a region flourish

requires revolutionary thought," he said.

Nixon said he is talking to chambers of commerce in all 10 Idaho counties about the opportunity for them to lead other chambers on a nationwide basis. It can be done with this concept and technology.

Like many experts who have been following advances in electronic publishing, Nixon sees SI's multi-media advertising as the wave of the future.

"The use of CD-ROMs and DVDs for marketing will be mainstream in three to five years," he said.

Currently, much of the information available on the CDs and their web site, www.bestofnorthidaho.com, focuses on Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint. Nixon would like to see more Boundary County information made available.

"Bonners Ferry needs to be added. The interest here is quite strong in supporting the idea," he said.

Nixon presented the idea of doing a special Bonners Ferry version of the CD-ROM to Tina Wilson and another member of the Chamber who met the idea favorably, "but it's too early to tell," according to McKenna.

McKenna is hoping local business owners and organizations will be interested in a special edition "more tailored specifically for that region," he said.

Anyone interested in supporting the project can call (208) 762-4014 or send them e-mail at info@systeminc.com.

"We would encourage the input of Bonners Ferry's businesses and civic organizations and creative contributions by Bonners area artists—musicians, fine artists, video producers and photographers," McKenna said.

Nixon sees great potential in Boundary County.

"There is no reason why it shouldn't be a vibrant economic region in the future," Nixon said.

South Boundary Fire District approved

Voters in the south half of Boundary County overwhelmingly approved the formation of the first tax-supported fire district in county outside city limits.

Out of 171 voters casting ballots in Naples Tuesday, 74 per cent (127 voters) approved the measure while 44 were opposed. To pass it needed a simple majority.

"This is a start of something very big for this county," said Nap Volunteer Fire Association Captain Tony Rohrwasser. Boundary County Commissioners will canvass the votes Aug.

The Best of North Idaho: An Interactive Media Tour

This CD is one in a series from the "Best of North Idaho" CD Library. Content from the Kootenai River near Bonners Ferry, courtesy of Warren Stewart.

Soundtracks:
The Standards
Mike Wagoner
Kelly Hughes
Shari Short
Jim Boyd

This CD contains:
North Idaho Screensavers,
Virtual Tours,
Photo-galleries,
Video, Games
and an Easter Egg.
The music can play in most standard stereo CD players.

Windows Mac Stereo
MP3 CD-ROM