

Editorials

Radio project is a breakthrough for community

Everyone who reads this newspaper or website knows how important it is to be able to gather information and ideas, and have an opportunity to communicate with others in your community.

For years we have known that a portion of our population in Ventura County has been left out of our communication loops, whether it be the daily weather report or health advice or court proceedings because their language is not widely spoken here.

That is changing thanks to the tremendous work by the Mixteco/Indígena Community Organizing Project in Oxnard. They have created a radio station to serve the estimated 20,000 indigenous Mexicans in our community who speak Mixteco or Zapoteco, not Spanish.

These migrants, many of them farmworkers, have up until now had to rely on each other to pass along information. Now, like the rest of us, they have the beginning of a "one-to-many" means of communication for the entire community.

But the organization needs some help to take the next step with its radio station. Radio Indígena launched on the Internet earlier this summer with weekend programming (at <http://mixteco.org/radio>). More than 25 volunteers were trained as community radio DJs to provide a broad mix of programming.

They're playing music, talking about history and culture, offering legal and labor advice, and engaging in conversations. The online station has drawn international attention, with listeners writing in from as far away as New York, Spain and Central America.

The organization wants to expand the radio project from the Internet to over-the-air. It has received Federal Communications Commission approval to operate as a low-power community radio station, able to broadcast its FM signal about 5 miles from its antenna. That's enough, organizers believe, to serve the majority of its local community.

To get this exciting project operating, they need to raise some money. MICOP Executive Director Arcenio Lopez, of Oxnard, estimates it will take \$20,000 to cover the antenna and studio costs. The goal is to raise the money and launch the station — broadening the programming to weekdays as well as weekends — by October.

It's an ambitious goal. But it's a worthy one that deserves community support.