

Kosciusko Leadership Academy

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“SPANISH RADIO STATION”

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INDEX

Page

3	Executive summary
4	Introduction
5	Population statistics
7	The purpose of radio communication
9	Requirements of a radio station
11	Commentary on related issues
13	Conclusion
14	Sources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It only takes a visit to the grocery store, the license branch, or the local park to recognize that the Hispanic population in Kosciusko County is growing rapidly.

Many of those migrating to Kosciusko County lack fluency in the English language, creating an obstacle to communicating in the marketplace and in the community. Typically, this barrier is broken within one generation, but the need remains for a method of communicating effectively to our neighbors: a radio station with Spanish language programming.

Soon into our research, it became apparent that a Spanish-only radio station for only our county would likely not be economically feasible. Therefore, this paper analyzes the content needs as well as communication needs that could be met for this growing segment of our county.

INTRODUCTION

It wasn't a nationwide census that made us realize the Hispanic segment of Kosciusko County's population is growing the fastest. Rather, scenes from everyday life at school, at work, and at play allow us to see a growing Spanish-speaking population.

Most immigrants are drawn by the prospects for work or an opportunity to live with their extended families. The Midwest, with its recent opportunities for employment, has attracted many into the fields of agriculture and industry. This situation creates issues of communication and integration.

A Spanish-speaking radio station would be an excellent medium to reach those who do not already speak English, with a message of community, opportunity, and integration. Our objective in this white paper is to review the feasibility and justification of establishing a Spanish-speaking radio station for Kosciusko County.

Population Statistics

The 2000 U.S. Census notes a 3.5% Hispanic population for all of Indiana. This represents a 117% growth of Hispanics since the last Census in 1990, compared with a 9.7% growth in the overall population. ⁽¹⁾

Kosciusko County's Hispanic population, however, grew 196% since the 1990 Census, compared with a 13.4% growth overall. This provides us with an official 5% Hispanic population in Kosciusko County. ⁽²⁾

In an effort to verify the validity of these official figures, we called major employers in the county, requesting their statistics for Hispanic employees as a % of total employees. This informal poll represented 4,718 employees (out of a Kosciusko County workforce of approximately 49,000 ⁽³⁾), and resulted in a weighted average of 8.5% Hispanic workforce.

We also called the administrators of the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in our Warsaw, Wawasee, Leesburg, and Whitko Community School systems (Wendy Long, Alice Navarro). Out of a school population for these systems of 12,460 in the 2000-2001 school year,

over 600 are enrolled in the ESL program to improve their English skills. This does not count those who speak Spanish but do not have a need to be enrolled in ESL. Our estimate is that more than 7% of the K-12 students in Kosciusko County are Spanish-speaking. The vast majority of students enrolled in ESL are Hispanic ⁽⁴⁾.

The main reason for the growing Hispanic immigration has been the availability of employment in the county. Prosperity in local agriculture and industry has provided a wealth of jobs, many of which would remain unfilled as historically low unemployment levels have allowed native job-seekers to be somewhat selective with their employment options. Hispanic job-seekers generally bring with them a high motivation and excellent work ethic, which has contributed further to their success in obtaining employment. ⁽⁵⁾

The Purpose of Radio Communication

Hispanic culture has traditionally lent itself to people building upon the strong foundations of relationships, family, and community. This is evident in their tendency to congregate out in the open air and to share resources in their community. Radio entertainment is often part of their lives in broadcasts of music, talk shows, and local information. Currently, Kosciusko County residents can take advantage of Spanish broadcasts from Chicago, New York, or Miami through internet broadband, but this is not always practical when driving or gathering outside. Radio Tremenda out of Chicago also reaches Warsaw at the low end of the frequency band.

WRSW, a local English-speaking station, does currently offer several hours of Spanish programming on Sunday evenings, which is appreciated.

However, we propose a full-time Spanish radio station. In speaking with WRSW, the idea of adding a new full time show was well received and open for consideration. Proposing the idea to an already existing station that already understands the need to broadcast to the Hispanic population may prove the most cost and start time effective. ⁽⁶⁾

WAWC 103.5, a Syracuse easy listening station, currently broadcasts the church services of a local Spanish-speaking protestant congregation on Sunday mornings, further underlining the understood need to support the growing Hispanic population.

Hispanic listenership is not being debated here. A front page article from the Wall Street Journal confirms “As the Spanish-speaking radio audience in the U.S. has grown over the past decade to nearly 15 million people, the number of Spanish-language stations has jumped by more than a third, to nearly 600.” In fact, KLVE in Los Angeles was No. 1 among all radio stations in 1995, reaching an audience of 5.3% of radio listeners in L.A. ⁽⁷⁾

A full-time Spanish radio station would fulfill a variety of needs:

- Entertainment-syndicated shows and music are available from larger-city networks
- Informational
 - ❖ Announcement of public events
 - ❖ Announcement of school and work closings due to inclement weather (which can be frequent in Northern Indiana)

- ❖ Advertising for local businesses-after all, Hispanics tend to pay cash for consumer products
- ❖ Advertising for job openings with local employers
- Community help
 - ❖ Questions/answers for those new to the community on issues such as health care, housing, drivers' licenses, voting opportunities
 - ❖ A resource for answers on immigration issues, including matters relating to illegal immigration

Requirements of a Radio Station

From a business standpoint, it should be noted that Hispanic consumers spend over \$325 Billion per year in the United States ⁽⁸⁾. Their purchasing power is growing, which in turn is expected to lead to increases in Spanish radio advertising revenues nationwide. Although the need for a radio station is valid in Kosciusko County, the economics of a self-supporting entity may take some time to develop given the overall Hispanic population of less than 4,000. As this population grows and transmitter technology costs possibly become lower, the concept may become feasible. Other possibilities are to 1) seek municipal support, or 2) to seek non-profit status and funding from

foundations. Below are outlined the principal requirements for getting started:

Regulatory requirements

- FCC approval for frequency use and coverage area
- Certification of transmitter service
- Monthly reporting

Capital requirements:

	<u>estimated cost</u>
• FM Transmitter 50,000W for county coverage	\$150,000
• Engineering fees to install & certify transmitter	\$ 10,000
• 2 PCs for producing programming and mixing	\$ 5,000
• Software for FCC reporting	<u>\$ 2,000</u>
	\$167,000

Personnel & operating expense requirements:

- 1 Full-time DJ
- 1 Part-time DJ/Technician
- Monthly transmission electricity bill
- Operating supplies

Content requirements:

- Syndicated programming (Music, talk shows) 50%
- Local programming (local information) 20%
- Paid advertising 20%
- Unpaid announcements 10%

Commentary on related issues

Community integration

A typical argument against this type of initiative is that a Spanish-only station merely maintains separation of the Hispanic community from the mainstream. Our answer to that is that integration is inevitable within one generation. In addition, we would argue that a Spanish station would represent a celebration of the diversity in our community. It would be viewed as a welcome sign by new residents. Furthermore, local programming can be designed to inform the public how and where to educate themselves on law, banking, social services, English classes, etc., all of which will promote and encourage integration but still celebrate that which makes this community unique and culturally beautiful.

WRSW and WAWC have also received some resistance to the Spanish programming they have done from a minority of their listenership.

However, their continued support of limited airtime is evidence of their belief in serving the entire community.

Fort Wayne, in neighboring Allen County, began in the early 1990s the Hispanic Leadership Coalition, a group dedicated to the development of Hispanic leaders in its community. Jose Hernandez, the chairman of the board for this organization, has stated "...we need to start looking at this issue seriously...because we're not a fad...we're here to stay!" This group has recognized the benefits of integration while valuing cultural differences.

Changing technology

Broadcasting of big-city stations through the internet is becoming commonplace. However, this technology will not replace local radio until the internet broadcasts become portable and convenient. Currently this medium is limited to the PC being turned on and the listening taking place near it. In addition, internet radio does not provide local news or other coverage.

Conclusion

A growing Hispanic population within our community brings with it a growing need to communicate in a way that is understood by all. Radio has provided this medium for decades in English. It is now time to recognize the need, and support community growth through Spanish radio.

Sources:

- (1) U.S. Census Bureau
- (2) STATS Indiana (www.stats.indiana.edu)
- (3) Northern Indiana Workforce Investment Board 1998
- (4) Times-Union 2/26/01 "Schools See Big Increase in ESL Students", by
Laurie Hahn
- (5) Interviews with Explorer Van and Maple Leaf Farms
- (6) Interview with Patrick Brown of WRSW
- (7) WSJ, February 27, 2001, by Eduardo Porter
- (8) The News-Sentinel 2001, by Pamela Perez