

Tualatin Named One of America's Best Communities

On April 27, John Bartholomew got the call he'd been waiting for anxiously for weeks – the local Frontier Communications office phoned to say his Tualatin team's entry had been named as one of fifty quarter-finalists in the America's Best Communities competition. And that they'd won \$50,000. John let loose a big, hearty laugh.

And with that, Tualatin became one of fifty small towns across the US competing for a \$3 million top prize. Yes, \$3 million.

This is just the second round in the America's Best Communities (ABC) competition, a multi-stage \$10 million initiative to stimulate economic revitalization in small towns and cities. The Tualatin team was awarded \$50,000 to develop a comprehensive strategy for accelerating the revival of our local economy and improve the quality of life. \$15,000 of the prize money is being provided by a local sponsor – Intel – while the remaining funds are from the competition's national sponsors: Frontier Communications, DISH Network, CoBank and The Weather Channel.

For the next five months, the Tualatin team will complete their semifinal round plans, meeting with local STEM educators, technical and manufacturing employers, and performing arts groups. They will also pursue a required \$15,000 in matching funds by August 4th from Tualatin companies, organizations and individuals to demonstrate local support for the plan.

"Our planning process will be an inclusive one," says Bartholomew, who is a member of

both the Mask and Mirror Community Theatre executive board and the Tualatin Tomorrow Advisory Committee. "We need community input to help refine our plans – we'll be at many public events over the next few months (Farmer's Market, ArtSplash and more) to discuss our efforts and solicit feedback."

The Tualatin ABC team envisions a shared community space to bring the elements of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) together in one place. This center will be a place to educate people of all ages, a venue for the performing arts, a cultural discovery experience and a community gathering space. It will also support the needs of our local businesses by providing a space for training and continuing education, recruiting and meetings. This center will serve as a catalyst for economic development and community revitalization.

"The Tualatin Chamber is thrilled to be a partner on this opportunity", says Linda Moholt, Tualatin Chamber of Commerce CEO and member of the Tualatin ABC team. "There's a huge need for a community meeting space that can hold more than 200 people. In addition, this project supports local efforts to connect with the National Park Service Ice Age Floods Driving Trail that will bring visitors to our community. Once they get here, the Center will offer an Ice Age Floods cultural experience to enrich their visit and to give them a reason to dine, shop, stay and play."

The team is vying for an additional \$100,000 in the semi-finalist round, to implement planned



Front row, L to R: Melissa Dubois, Sherilyn Lombos, Sara Singer; Back row, L to R: Renee Willer, Linda Moholt, John Bartholomew, Jeanne Danielson, Frank Bubenik

projects over the course of the following year and a chance to win one of the competition's three grand prizes: 1, 2 and 3 million dollars. And Bartholomew is confident Tualatin has what it takes to be one of those eight finalists.

The Tualatin ABC team is led by Mask & Mirror Community Theatre and the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce. Additional assistance is provided by the Tualatin Tomorrow Advisory Committee and the South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership (hosted by Oregon Institute of Technology).

You can read more about the Tualatin America's Best Community competition entry and team at www.tualatinabc.org. You can also sign up for email updates, connect to the team's Facebook page, and learn how to donate via check, credit card or PayPal. To find out more about the ABC competition, you can visit www.americasbestcommunities.com.

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