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**Heart of the Earth
McCloud, CA.**

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*JEDI & Cascade SBDC...
Partnership supporting Small Business*

Tourism: How Do We Make It Work to Benefit the Community?

Whether or not tourism is good for Siskiyou County may very well be the most debated topic in our communities today. When JEDI thinks about its role in helping to create prosperity in the community, it is not a topic we can avoid. Tourism provides a significant percentage of revenue to the county. There is a tension created from our lack of consensus about how to create a vibrant economy that supports local residents, and still retain the beauty and quality of life this area affords. According to Joanne Steele of the Siskiyou County Visitor's Bureau, indicators such as Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) show that all towns in Siskiyou County are recording increases in the number of people visiting and spending the night anywhere from an 11.9% increase in Yreka last year to 30% increases in the South county region. Making tourism benefit the community requires public consensus to achieve the best possible result.

This is exactly the reason that Penny Heil and Mike Rorke, Sr. seek out information that helps them understand the issues facing their community. “You can't complain if you haven't participated in the process,” says Penny Heil. “I want to maintain the local flavor of our area and have input into the decisions that affect it.” She and her husband serve as officers on the McCloud Chamber Board, are members of the All-American Road Steering Committee, and own and operate a local business in McCloud, *Heart of the Earth*, where they make and restore fine jewelry and sell distinctive gifts. “If not aggressively planned, our communities will be overrun by the scope of the rampant growth,” states Penny.

They joined the Siskiyou Great Outdoors Tourism Project (SGOTP) in order to network and learn more about what is and isn't working in other communities and how they can learn from each other and build a common vision.

The project seeks to create a network of outdoor tourism-related businesses, provide practical business and industry-specific expertise to business, and build an outdoor travel industry that supports our local economy and provides stewardship to our environment. Over 50 project participants are examining ways to become more profitable, exploring cooperative efforts to market themselves, and looking for ways to build community understanding and consensus around the tourism industry. The team of agencies supporting this project include JEDI, the Siskiyou County Visitors Bureau, the Upper Sacramento River Exchange, and the Cascade Small Business Development Center.