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Good morning! What a marvelous gathering. Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet and talk with a number of inspiring young entrepreneurs. Any small town would be lucky to have these business creators. Your small town is lucky to have you. You and your fellow business owners are the heart and soul of your town. You see all too often what happens when people like you leave, and you experience the excitement first hand when a new business opens up next door.

Let me start with some clarification.

*Some of you are here today thinking, “She’s talking about entrepreneurs and I’m not an entrepreneur. I’m just a small business person.”

You are right. Many, in fact most of you may not be entrepreneurs. But I’m here to talk to you too, because you are innovators...

*like Steve Jobs, prince of innovators. Since his death, there has been a ton of information in the press about how Jobs took a little from Xerox, a little from the Homebrew Computer Club, a little from friend, Steve Wozniak, a little from gifted Apple employees and created the most valuable company in the world. He was an innovator.

On a little smaller scale, so are you. You take your own brilliant idea to open a salon, or coffee shop or (take this from registrant’s) and use it to transform some kind of unused space in a small town. You along with your town’s other innovators and entrepreneurs are transforming your whole town. You are much like Steve Jobs. You didn’t invent something new. You took ideas and inspirations from others, mix it with your own special genius and created a business.

You are here today to do what innovators and entrepreneurs do – to get more inspiration, ideas and *help.

*Every successful business needs three things, whether you are an entrepreneur or a innovator. You need your * brilliant idea. *You need money and you need *marketing. * This is the three-legged stool that rural development genius Ernesto Sirolli and other rural development people talk about. You might have heard this from your contacts through Center for Rural Affairs.

You already have that brilliant idea. But it’s help with one or both of the other two legs of that stool that you need. There isn’t an entrepreneur or innovator alive in any successful business big or small who can do all three. Ask any seasoned business owner here today why he or she is here.

They’re looking for help with one leg of this 3-legged stool. They know that their business success depends on it.

*The best place in the world for an entrepreneur or innovator to get help these days is in a small town, a place where everybody knows your name. Why, because we townspeople understand that our very existence depends upon YOU. We’re ready to help!

*In an urban center, you’re a dime a dozen. Local businesses come and go, and when they’re gone, everyone just goes to WalMart. In a small town you are the anchors of the community. If you’re

new, you are excitement. You are the future.

*How do innovators and entrepreneurs get what they need in major metropolitan areas? They write elevator speeches and prospectuses and talk to venture capitalists and investors and people who have their finger on the pulse of the metropolis.

Small towns do things a little differently. In my town of Dunsmuir, California, those innovators and entrepreneurs *need to ask Julie. Our Julie is the city staff person who answers the phone and accepts your water bill payment at city hall. She's lived in Dunsmuir for years with her husband and two boys. She has always been involved with everything Dunsmuir, from the school to Railroad Days, our annual town event.

In every small town there are Julies – people who love their community and have their fingers on the pulse of the town. She, or he, works in the city office or chamber of commerce, or the post office or grocery store. She, or he seems to know everybody. And, She or he is better than Twitter at getting news out around your town. Every small town has Julies, and they are the key to finding help and answers.

*Where do you find your town's Julies? How do you find your town's Julies?

*Let me tell you a story about Sam. About a year ago Sam moved to Dunsmuir from the San Francisco Bay Area. He opened a new, incredibly innovative business in our town *Called Fire What? He and his crew are certified firefighter trainers who bring firefighters from all over the West to town for week-long training sessions.

You can imagine how excited everyone in town was to have a business that brought about 30 visitors a week to town, who stayed in our motels, ate in our restaurants, and shopped in our little shops.

*Sam had a problem. His students, those firefighters who come for week-long seminars, needed 3 meals a day, and with only 6 restaurants, there were times that there was no place in town open. Sam was so concerned he thought he might have to move his business to a bigger town. He came from an urban center and didn't know *the principle of Ask Julie.

But word got out. Julie heard, and thanks to her, *one of our restaurant owners, David got all the restaurant owners together – all six of them and created a plan to always have someone open for Sam's students. 20 or 30 more customers for a small business in a small town is a good incentive. Competitors become collaborators when the future of a key business in a small town is at stake and there is good money on the table.

*Are you faced with a problem that seems big enough to sink your whole business that the Julie in your town can help you find a solution for?

*Is your rent higher than you can afford right now which has you thinking about leaving?

Do you need financing for a project and don't know where to turn?

* Are you having trouble finding a supplier for a key product?

*Are you having trouble with your broadband speed or internet marketing?

*In an urban center, a small business may truly be all alone when facing these kind of problems.

*In a small town, what you need to do is find Julie!! She or he knows who to talk to in town to help you find a solution. You have a whole community pulling for you. You are not alone.

Here are a few ways for finding the Julies in your town.

*Use your expertise to help your town. This will get you on Julie's radar. Remember, she or he is into everything.

*Getting back to Sam. Sam has learned that when he has a business need, help for finding a solution is probably just a few doors down or a few phone calls away. He has learned to ask Julie, and to tap into the collaborative community network that is pulling for him to succeed.

He has also become part of the solution for our whole town. Our volunteer fire department was in dire need of a new fire engine. Anything fire related is part of Sam's special brilliance. He singlehandedly landed us a grant for that fire engine. He has become someone Julie can tap to help others.

*Be a collaborator.

As a small town business owner, you have to rethink the whole idea of competition. In most small towns, the reality is that there are not enough residents within the city limits to support a robust, diverse business community. There never was and there never will be. In the past, small towns depended on the farmers and ranchers and miners and loggers to come into town for supplies. Now, besides the few farmers and ranchers and miners who are left, we depend on visitors, and people from neighboring communities. Here is Kearney, it's students! Different crowd, but the same principle. To make it you have to pull together to bring in those outsiders. Julie is a natural networker, bringing people together. Tap into the network and you'll find Julie.

In my town, we have 6 restaurants. (go to the audience here. Ask how many times a week everyone eats out, once week? Once a month?) It would be hard for 1700 of us to support those restaurants. They know that, and together they work to grow that proverbial pie to generate more foodie traffic from neighboring towns and tourism. Traditional competitors have become collaborators. Working together they helped to solve Sam's problem. And working together they have helped Dunsmuir to develop a reputation as the best place to dine between Sacramento, California and Portland OR.

*Be a volunteer

Small towns, any small town depends on volunteer energy. Becoming part of that engine that makes your town run, from the city council to the kid's sports teams is good for your business. This isn't about your expertise, it's about your time. (EX: me and revitalization team and garden club.) It gives you a straight line of communication with Julie, because she, or he is involved with everything in town.

Julie isn't an expert in everything, but she or he knows who the experts are. She gives her time for everything.

3 Points I want you to leave here with.

*1. Don't try to go it alone. That brilliant idea of yours is one of the three legs of that three-legged stool that is your business. You can't expect to do everything well. Ask for help.

Find your Julie to help you when you get home. And don't miss this opportunity to make connections here. Networking is hard. We come to a conference like this with the best of intentions, and end up only talking to the people we come with. Talk to everyone. Pass out business cards and collect cards from everyone you meet. Make a note on the back of those cards to make them truly useful when you get home. This room is full of Julies – the people who know people who can connect you to what you need.

*2. The help you need may be anywhere in your town. Give up any urban ideas you might have about how to get'er done. In a small town everyone is in charge of something and the person you need is probably not wearing a suit and tie. The guy who pumps your gas may be a city councilman who can help you get that EDBG grant. The woman who runs the grocery store is in charge of the historic district. The realtor down the street knows the owners of every building in town and may be help you negotiate a better lease deal.

*3. You have a whole community pulling for you. Get out of your business and volunteer. Offer your skills and talents to your town and it will help you succeed.

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Marketplace 2012 is a temporary small town, and this room is filled with Julies – the people who know people who can connect you with what you need.

Our time together today is so short, let me give you some help in discovering where those Julies might be.

First of all, who are new business owners? – Raise your hands high. Seasoned owners, take note. Remember that first flush of optimism and enthusiasm? These people have it. Catch it again by spending a little time networking with them.

Who are our seasoned business owners? Anyone who has been in business for 4 years or longer, Please stand up. These are the people who have seasoned the worst recession since the Great Depression. Give yourselves a hand. Newbies, these people have probably faced anything you need answers about. They are the Julies who can help you find the people you need.

Okay, now, who are the people involved with some kind of business assistance? Center for Rural Affairs people. Any of our speakers and presenters here? These people are probably the people Julie may ultimately get you connected with. This conference is a good substitute for Julie. You have a direct link to these problem solvers. Use it.

Time is short. Let me give you another trick to help you make the best use of your networking time today. Remember earlier I mentioned the phrase elevator speech. Do all of you know what an elevator speech is? Everyone who participated yesterday knows. When an entrepreneur goes for venture capital or any kind of financial assistance, they are expected to describe their business and their need in the length of an average elevator ride.

There are few elevators in small towns, so let's change this to a grocery checkout line speech. I

have never stood in a grocery line in a small town longer than about 45 seconds.

Can you describe your business in less than 45 seconds? Can you describe your problem or need in a minute? I grocery store checkout speech will help you immensely today.

Small towns like Marketplace 2012 and your town work because of networking. Use your grocery checkout line speed liberally today, and also use the phrase, "I just met a person who might be able to help" ... as often as possible.

Use your networking time today to find your Julie. Be Julie for someone else today.

Have a successful and profitable conference.