

Sister-city visitors, NBC Sports here this week

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When the world watches the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, millions of eyes will be on a media feature package about Crescent City and its sister city, Rikuzentakata, Japan.

With NBC Sports in town this week to film the latest interaction among local educators and a delegation of teachers and students from Rikuzentakata, efforts are building to capitalize on the international story during the Olympics' TV coverage.

Cindy Vosburg, executive director of the Crescent City-Del Norte Chamber of Commerce, is spearheading a drive to raise \$59,000 to spend on publicizing Del Norte County during the 2020 Olympics. She's being helped by Rob Holmlund of Eureka-based Malex Consulting.

Their latest success is a \$10,000 pledge from the Yurok Economic Development Corp.

Vosburg is making similar presentations this week to the Elk Valley Rancheria Tribal Council and the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation and Resighini Rancheria.

She said she's nearing her goal, having already secured several pledges — \$15,000 from the Crescent City Council, \$10,000 from the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors, \$7,500 from the Crescent City Harbor District and \$2,500 from the Crescent City Fisherman's Marketing Association.

That's \$45,000 raised, \$14,000 to go.

Vosburg said the public relations push will tell the world about the developing relationship between Rikuzentakata and Crescent City.

"The thing is that this is an amazing story of that little boat that bobbed across the ocean and landed on our shore, that brought our two communities together," said Vosburg. "It has been beneficial to both (communities), especially students.

“For NBC to recognize this, nobody dreamed this would come out of the relationship.”

In 2011, Kamome, a 20-foot fishing vessel, was swept from Rikuzentakata across the Pacific Ocean by a tsunami, to be deposited on Crescent City’s South Beach two years later.

Local students researched its history and reached out to Rikuzentakata to return it home. The bond between the two communities grew into an official sister-city designation.

This week’s latest cultural exchange was funded by a \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Embassy. The visit includes workshops for the adults on women leaders in business, healthcare and government, while the Japanese students will be welcomed at Del Norte High School.

The delegation’s school principals and teachers from Rikuzentakata and nearby Ichinoseki will explore teaching models used by Del Norte County that focus on inclusion and students who have experienced trauma, according to the school district.

To capitalize on the continuing relationship, Holmlund is planning a pre-Olympics public relations outreach, the first of three phases.

Holmlund, who has been specializing in economic and community development for the past 15 years, is acting as the PR project coordinator. He said he’s contacted public relations and marketing firms to help craft the tale as it unfolds, and to both bring in more national media and to help meet their needs when they get here.

Holmlund said that with this unprecedented opportunity for the region stemming from the Olympics coverage, the most direct and obvious payoff will be tourism dollars ... hotel reservations, spending at restaurants and retail stores. The secondary impact will be revenue collected by county government through taxes.

Long term, Holmlund is developing a five-year plan to secure the additional media attention. He said the initial Olympics story could die within a week -or it could explode. He wants the community to be ready for the latter.

“The Crescent City area should be proud of the remarkable community that exists here. It’s an amazing story to share with the world. People need and want to hear this story. It makes for an authentic, desirable location to travel to.

“People go on vacation more and more to places with a story, not just typical tourist traps. This is our chance to show that Crescent City has a true story worth going to,” Holmlund said.