

Group wants power to the PPL at convention

The PPL aims to provide space, collaboration for independent media.

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The PPL founders are, from left, Desiree Kane, Justin Ruckman and Matthew Tyndall. James Willamor photo -



Michael J. Solender for Neighbors of the City. His column is called 'neighborhoods'

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To find out about The PPL, go to theppl.us/ or call 704-817-0866.

To find out about Culture Initiative, go to www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=62936265529.

Charlotte blogger, social media consultant and independent media guru Justin Ruckman is putting his expertise behind a big idea that will deliver Charlotte hospitality and resources at an even bigger event, the 2012 Democratic National Convention.

Together with Matthew Tyndall and Desiree Kane, Ruckman has launched an ambitious media house and community space project called The PPL (pronounced "the people").

The group is working to capture the power of collaboration and sharing of resources within the independent media community - those outside the mainstream media - covering the convention.

It will accomplish this by developing an uptown location that will serve as a communal gathering place and resource center for local and visiting media personnel.

The concept will provide workspace, Internet access, networking venues, interview space, arts showcases, social events and additional resources for the legions of unaffiliated journalists, citizen bloggers, filmmakers, artists and nontraditional media voices that will flock to Charlotte for the convention.

Ruckman, Tyndall and Kane see The PPL as a perfect moniker for their project, as the DNC has been labeled "the people's convention" by the Democratic National Committee. The PPL is nonpartisan and welcomes participation and involvement from those on all points of the political continuum.

The PPL's organizers each have considerable experience with independent and community-based media and know well the strength of sharing voices and perspectives from a variety of different sources.

Ruckman and Tyndall are co-founders of the local citizen media outlet CLT Blog and are principals with Priceless Miscellaneous, an online media group consultancy.

Kane is CLT Blog's director of community and a communications strategist who helps clients with marketing and social media communications.

"I see so much talent, strength and influence behind a united community of independent journalists," said Ruckman, "Long before I started CLT Blog, I had a vision of forming a community of like-minded media producers tapping into diverse voices in ways that traditional media doesn't. The PPL is an extension of that."

Ruckman and Tyndall saw first-hand an example of such a collective when they visited Vancouver, Canada, for the 2010 Olympics. They were inspired by W2, a media house and cultural center established to host visiting independent media personnel.

In addition to workspace, administrative support, Internet access and a coffee house, W2 was a showcase for local and regional artists to spotlight their work and provided a creative outlet and exchange for visitors.

Art and culture is an important element The PPL is incorporating into its design.

It is partnering with Culture Initiative, a grassroots arts movement spearheaded by local artists/curators Joel Andrew Tracey and Arthur Brouthers.

Culture Initiative will create artist space, exhibits and cultural events featuring local, regional and national artists - all designed to complement the creative energy of The PPL.

"Our showcases are ... meant to stimulate and challenge the artist, while offering up a unique experience to our patrons," said Tracey.

"With The PPL, we'll have the opportunity to do that while featuring art that has a viewpoint and is inspired by political themes."

The PPL plans to develop and host a variety of events during the convention. Offerings such as live-feed video conferences, interviews and roundtables with politicians, lobbyists, activists and social events such as

concerts, meet-ups and discussions are envisioned by the PPL's planners.

Tyndall said, "This is a great opportunity for Charlotte to show the creative class we have in play here. The convention is putting our community on a stage where we can really shine; to have a venue like The PPL where art, community and independent media intersect is special."

Kane said, "Creativity begets creativity; people become exponentially more creative when surrounded by others who experiment and push boundaries and ideas. The energy that will come from this type of experience can only be positive."

The PPL is in its early planning stages. The group recognizes September 2012 is not as far off as it seems in terms of the logistics of a project of this scope. It is actively seeking volunteers and partners as it moves forward with planning.

"We are excited to be breaking this ground," said Tyndall, "The next big milestone is locking up physical space."

The group is looking for space in the 9,000- to 10,000-square-foot range to accommodate workstations, conference areas, lounges and a food and beverage provider.

It already has secured an important community media partner in WTVI Charlotte. The community television outlet's vice president of broadcasting and content, Eric Davis, said WTVI is excited by the concept and pleased to provide workspace, technical and editorial support to The PPL planners as they get up and running.

"This project is consistent with our mission at WTVI in bringing people in our community together and helping people with ideas on making Charlotte stronger connect," said Davis.

Interested parties may register with The PPL at its website for updates on the project, volunteer opportunities and event notification; registration is open to the public.

The group plans a more content-rich site as the project evolves and more frequent communication after additional logistic details are established.

For several days in September 2012, connecting the Charlotte community with the rest of the world will be a bit easier, thanks to The PPL.

Michael J. Solender is a Charlotte-based freelance writer. Have a story for him? Contact him at michaeljsolender@gmail.com.

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