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Maddy Institute hits the radio

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The Maddy Institute at Fresno State recently partnered with KMJ 580 to provide listeners with discussion of a wide range of issues affecting the Valley.

The show, "The Maddy Report – Valley Views Edition," provides the style of radio coverage heard in the Bay Area and Southern California, said Mark Keppler, host of the program and executive director of the Maddy Institute.

"We wanted to bring top-level political discussion to the Valley," he said. "We wanted to make sure the Valley wasn't flyover territory."

The Maddy Institute was established in 1999 with the goal of providing nonpartisan, interdisciplinary and fact-driven analysis of public policy issues impacting the region and state.

A TV show called "The Maddy Report," which can be seen on PBS and several other channels, is primarily filmed in Sacramento and covers public policy in the state capital and Washington, D.C., that is pertinent to the San Joaquin Valley. The first half of the show is audio from the television broadcast. Keppler and weekly guests follow this in the second half.

Keppler said the topics are wide-ranging and incorporate voices from all three sections of the Valley.

Not every guest will be a politician. The first show included Michael Doyle, Washington D.C. based national correspondent for McClatchy Newspapers, UC Merced political science professor Nate Monroe and Paul Hurley, former editorial page editor for the Visalia Times Delta.

Having all three areas of the San Joaquin Valley consistently represented adds flavor to the program by showing how topics can be viewed differently by people in Madera compared with those in Bakersfield, Keppler said. The discussion will concern topics from school finances to government regulation.

"We all have differences of opinion, but we should all start from the same place," Keppler said. "Facts are facts. We want discussions to be made with facts."

Keeping to the facts, he said, creates a rational not an emotional environment to discuss even the most sensitive political topics.

"There's more agreement than you would expect," Keppler said. "The media sometimes likes to highlight extremes, but most people are rational."

The audience for the program is supposed to be everyone who wants to have the facts about an issue, but students are an audience that can be uniquely affected by the program, he explained.

"I feel I am still a professor, but the classroom is different," Keppler said. "The job is still the same."

Ideally, he said, students and professors would listen to the program and incorporate what they hear into their lessons.

One example on the program is the three-part show on the history of California politics. Guests give perspective on how things worked when they were in office and how the politicians themselves have changed.

“I see it as an opportunity to increase student discussion,” Keppler said. “We have thoughtful discussions with intelligent people who have different positions. It’s going to make you think.”

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