

Long Beach

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KFWB's 'On Your Corner' Brings Long Beach To The Southland

Broadcasting Live From Legends, 5-9 A.M. This Friday, June 24th, And 2-7 P.M. From The Airport



Phil Hulett and Penny Griego, who anchor L.A.'s Morning News for KFWB TALK RADIO 980, will be broadcasting live from Legends Restaurant & Bar this Friday, June 24, as they present the first in a series of "On Your Corner" events in Southern California cities. (Business Journal photograph by Thomas McConville)

■ By **MICHAEL GOUGIS**
Contributing Writer

Nearly 10,000,000 people reside in the County of Los Angeles. Each of them calls a particular corner of that area home. And it is easy – too easy – to overlook the wide variety of people, places events and activities that make up the Los Angeles just outside of our personal field of vision.

KFWB News Talk 980 is bringing new technology to an old concept of taking the news to the people, with its new "KFWB On Your Corner" series. The radio station, instead of broadcasting news from its headquarters to the far-flung communities of Los Angeles, is going into those communities and bringing the news from those neighborhoods to the rest of the Southland.

And KFWB (980AM on the dial) has chosen Long Beach as the starting point for the new series, scheduling a full day of broadcasting from the beachside community this Friday, June 24. Beginning at 5 a.m. at Legends Restaurant & Bar in Belmont Shore, KFWB's news personalities will be

live from Long Beach, hosting local guests and bringing local news to KFWB's radio audience. Local personalities from elected officials to business leaders to entertainers are on the agenda, as topics range from the economy of Long Beach to its dog beach.

"This is really where I consider my home. But one thing that I feel – even as I consider myself a Los Angeles native – is that I don't know very much about areas that are off my beaten path," says Andy Ludlum, director of news programming at KFWB.

"All of a sudden you're working in Hollywood, and you know all the ways to get there and everything about it, but we can live a sheltered life in Los Angeles and know only about the places that we have to go to and we're completely amazed when we hear about thing things going on in other places.

"I believe that radio is a little bit like politics. You know the old saying, all politics is local? I believe that is absolutely the golden rule about information radio – it's all about local. But how do you localize something as immense as the greater Los Angeles area?

"On Your Corner" is one way of localizing the massive Los Angeles metropolitan area. KFWB is setting up remote broadcasts from Legends and at the Long Beach Airport. Advances in communications technology make the process of live remotes simpler and less technologically challenging while allowing the remote location easier access to the information dataflow that comes through CBS radio headquarters.

"We go down there and do stories that we think are going to be interesting not only to the people of Long Beach," Ludlum says, "but also to people who live in Oak Park or Agoura Hills, who will say, I didn't know that was there."

That means the station's LA's Morning News program with Penny Griego and Phil Hulett can broadcast from a stage at Legends from 5 to 9 a.m. and consumer issues expert Bob McCormick will host Money 101 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., and the entire process can be handled with a technician and a laptop at the scene.

However, KFWB has more in mind than



Andy Ludlum is the director of news programming at KNX 1070 NEWSRADIO and KFWB NEWS TALK 980. He has more than 35 years of experience in news and information broadcasting on radio and television, including the past 16 years in Los Angeles. (Business Journal photograph by Michael Gougis)

that plays to the strengths of the medium – immediacy. It has never been easier to get information, and it has never been easier or faster to disseminate that information.

“I’ve been doing news radio for 35 years. The Internet has become our doorway to the world. We have a very large number of people who get headline news from us by texts – and that’s a very good way for me to communicate with thousands of my most passionate listeners,” Ludlum says.

“Anyone with a cell phone has a microphone. If you’re stuck on the 405 and there’s a big accident, you call us and – the listener’s not going to get that information faster from anywhere. It’s an amazing development. The technology has liberated us,” Ludlum says. “The technology’s only made our job more fun. I can do more and more and more, and I can serve my listeners better.

“We’ve had tweets when there have been major news events, and listeners have been tweeting our anchors. But there’s a whole new level of responsibility in how you handle this. You’re not just a funnel. You’re still a journalist. You have to make decisions about what you’re looking at.”

Ultimately, the one technology that continues to keep radio at the forefront of the communications environment relies less on electronics and more on oil, gasoline and tires.

“What makes this region unique is the automobile. That is where we continue to live and thrive,” Carver says.

Indeed. In the car, the driver cannot watch television. It is a very bad idea to read while driving. It is highly illegal to text message while driving. The information flow to the driver goes one way, and is delivered verbally. It is the only way to safely communicate with the person behind the wheel. And in Los Angeles, at any given moment, there are a whole lot of people behind the wheel.

“If you just count the car population here, there are more people in their cars at any given moment than the entire populations of most other cities,” Carver says. “You have entire cities worth of people on the move. And there’s no doubt that their primary communication medium is radio. It’s a wonderful medium. And with the way people are living today, it seems as new and relevant as it’s ever been.” ■

just an audio broadcast. The station will be producing digital video footage of the event, which will be uploaded to the CBS Los Angeles Web site, and serve as a foundation to build an Internet database of events, stories and personalities unique to Long Beach.

For you early risers, Legends will open early and feature a 98¢ breakfast buffet and drinks specials starting at five. It’s not just a way to feed hungry people. It’s a way to attract Long Beach’s residents to the live broadcast, allowing the station and its on-air personalities to interact with the community face-to-face.

In the afternoon, the broadcast will shift to the Legends of Aviation restaurant on the second level of the Long Beach Airport, where Les Brown, Maggie McKay and Michael Shappee will broadcast from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Bringing the talent to the people is part of the philosophy of KFWB’s information radio, Ludlum says.

“We take a special approach with KFWB. We focus on the personalities. If you listen to KFWB, it sounds like a conversation – generally, a conversation with friends that you’d like to have at your table,” Ludlum says. “You want people to identify with your talent. With KFWB, it’s information, from these warm personalities. One of the promos we’re running is that they’re your news friends with benefits – but we don’t want to go too far with that, they’re not that friendly!”

“We try to be a credible source. Because we try to make it a one-on-one medium, we want the listener to feel like they have a relationship.”

The emphasis on local is one of the reasons that radio continues to be a viable economic enterprise, even as new technologies have turned much of the “traditional” mass commercial media on its head.

Instead, the new technology has allowed radio to extend and expand its offerings of information, while focusing in on the communities that it serves, providing a platform for advertisers who want to reach a local audience, rather than an international audience.

“Radio – its localness has always been its great strength. These sorts of things (live remotes) were not uncommon years ago. We’re sort of re-inventing an old idea. And with today’s technology, it’s become easier,” states Steve Carver, senior vice president/market manager for CBS Radio Los Angeles.

“Our business model, the protection of it, is that we are local. You look at some of the other technologies, and the one thing they can’t do is be as local as I can with these radio stations,” Ludlum says.

The immediate access to information technology and eyewitness reports allows the radio broadcaster more data and more eyewitness testimony than ever before in history. That offers a radio journalist the opportunity to present news in a manner