



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Codi Spodnik (541) 773-8946

### SOREDI's June LAUNCH|Talk Panel to Cultivate Local Food & Beverage Producers

Thursday, June 6, beginning at 5:30 pm, SOREDI will offer a LAUNCH|Talk featuring local experts in the development of local food and beverage products. The program will be held in the PLEXIS Healthcare Systems building on Oak Street in Ashland. Appetizers, beer and wine will be served. Tickets are \$10, available at [www.soredi.org/events](http://www.soredi.org/events).

Panelists, Tom Marks-Ladd, Stefan Schacter, Elizabeth Vujas and Kelly McNamara will explain how a local company can grow a successful food and beverage business beyond the local markets, develop a national brand and break into major retail distribution.

**Tom Marks-Ladd** is the founder of Rogue Natural Foods, the Rogue Valley's premier organic food distribution hub, located in Ashland. In business since 2004, Tom has witnessed the popularity of artisan foods into a commodity market and routinely helps small food producers access stores along the I-5 corridor from Mt. Shasta, CA to Vancouver, WA.

**Stefan Schachter** is the founder and president of ECOTEAS, an organic tea company specializing in the South America herb, yerba mate. A long time Ashland resident, Stefan has taken ECOTEAS far beyond the region, while living locally and loving the Southern Oregon lifestyle.

**Elizabeth Fujas** is the founder and CEO of Rising Sun Farms, one of the largest and fastest growing food companies in Oregon. Founded in 1982, Elizabeth and her husband Richard have grown Rising Sun Farms from one of the very first organic farms in Oregon to a multi-million-dollar-a-year operation.



**Kelly McNamara** is the Ashland Food Co-op's Gourmet Food Manager. She works closely with local food and beverage purveyors of all kinds. In addition to managing product at store level, Kelly assists local food and beverage producers go from concept to a finished product that is ready for retail.

LAUNCH|Talks are held monthly. To attend, visit [www.soredi.org](http://www.soredi.org), or simply show up at the door. Please invite any entrepreneurs, start-ups, or interested parties on your list. LAUNCH|Talks are one part of LAUNCH, SOREDI's entrepreneurial support initiative. LAUNCH is made possible by SOREDI members and our generous sponsors; City of Ashland, First Interstate Bank, Novum Visuals, Oregon Entrepreneur Network (OEN), Southern Oregon University (SOU), and our region's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC).

**About SOREDI:** SOREDI is a private, membership-based, non-profit organization, governed by a board of directors. Its eight-person staff is charged with local business expansion and new business recruitment efforts, financial assistance to start-up companies through its business loan fund, entrepreneurial support and management of Enterprise Zones in Jackson and Josephine Counties. The agency was formed as a regional economic development agency in 1987. Learn more at <https://www.soredi.org>.