New local production follows women’s air race

The new documentary film BEYOND THE POWDER: THE LEGACY OF THE FIRST WOMEN’S CROSS-COUNTRY AIR RACE premiered on Western Reserve PBS (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1) over Labor Day weekend.

Produced by Cleveland-based Hemlock Films and Western Reserve PBS, this production is directed by Northeast Ohio native Kara Martinelli and narrated by actress Michaela McManus. It was recently accepted for national syndication by American Public Television, with Western Reserve PBS as the presenting station.

BEYOND THE POWDER is a one-hour program documenting the 1929 Women’s Air Derby and the women who continue to fly the cross-country race today as the Air Race Classic. It highlights the societal and aviation challenges women faced in 1929, exploring the rich history of the race, while comparing the competition as it is flown today. Filming wrapped in 2014, following that year’s Air Race Classic, a contemporary race with over 50 teams of women pilots.

The first Women’s Air Derby in 1929 was flown from Santa Monica to the finish line in Cleveland, kicking off the National Air Races. The eyes of the country watched as these brave women made history flying cross-country, breaking into a competition that was thought to be for men only. They encountered sabotage, death and all the difficulties of flying at the dawn of aviation.
Newly enhanced STUDIO C SESSIONS hits the air

It has been nearly a year since STUDIO C SESSIONS, a weekly program that features live music performances, began airing on Western Reserve PBS and Fusion. This program is a collaboration between The Summit (91.3 FM Akron/Canton and 90.7 FM Youngstown/Warren/Western Pennsylvania) and Western Reserve PBS.

Studio C’s intimate music moments are recorded at The Summit. To attend the sessions, one must be a member of The Summit, a nonprofit public radio station. In addition, Western Reserve PBS station members can request an invitation to attend by emailing members@WesternReservePublicMedia.org.

The program, which originally was produced just for radio, has recently undergone upgrades to improve the television quality. These include new lighting, enhanced set design and a more viewer-friendly production rundown. In addition, many new episodes are airing as of January 2016.

Ken Burns productions dominate April schedule

Fans of Ken Burns’ award-winning productions will enjoy our April schedule, which includes the new two-part documentary JACKIE ROBINSON, plus encore presentations of Burns’ series on jazz and the national park system.

JAZZ
For the first time since 2001, the 10-part series returns to PBS. It will air on Saturdays at 5 PM beginning April 2. Filmmaker Ken Burns tells the story of jazz, the quintessential American art form. The series follows the growth and development of jazz music from the gritty streets of New Orleans to Prohibition-era speakeasies to the more egalitarian Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, where people of all colors mingled.

JACKIE ROBINSON
This new production will air on Monday, April 11, and Tuesday, April 12, at 9 PM. By changing the racial equation of our national pastime, Jackie Robinson set out to prove that black Americans could compete as equals. He was greeted with ugly abuse, shouts and hate mail that threatened his life. This film looks at not just Robinson’s life in baseball, but at its complex whole.

THE NATIONAL PARKS: AMERICA’S BEST IDEA
To mark the centennial of the National Park Service, we offer an encore presentation of the six-part series from Monday, April 25, to Saturday, April 30, at 9 PM. THE NATIONAL PARKS is a human history set against the most stunning backdrop imaginable. The series works its way chronologically through the history of the national parks and explores how majestic places came to be part of the park system.
Educational Services

Medina students learn about producing videos

Jeff Good, director of education, recently visited Buckeye Local Schools in Medina to help establish a video production program for middle school students. He returned in January to conduct a first session of video production training for both students and teachers.

Good taught production techniques by using our station’s “You Be the Producer” multimedia project materials and his own career knowledge. At the end of the training, students worked in teams to create a simple how-to video, which was later shared with the class.

Sessions offer technology training to educators

During the fall, our Educational Service staff presented 20 face-to-face sessions and eight online courses to area educators interested in the integration of technology into the classroom. For the winter session (January through March), 19 professional development sessions and eight online courses are available. From April to June, there are 14 face-to-face sessions and seven online opportunities scheduled.

Early-educator workshops

The Ohio Ready To Learn program, which offers free workshops for early-childhood teachers and caregivers, has been funded by the state for the coming year. Over the fall and winter, Pam Oviatt, our project coordinator, has conducted 13 workshops attended by 153 participants. Seventeen more workshops will be held from now until the end of June.

Educators’ symposium scheduled

Western Reserve Public Media and the statewide instructional technology organization ITIP Ohio will partner with Microsoft in December 2016 to present the Microsoft in Education Symposium. The event, to be held in Columbus, will discuss the educational benefits of Microsoft products including Office365, Windows10 and more. The event will be held at the Ohio State University Student Union.

Jeff Good participates in state conference

Western Reserve Public Media was well represented at the annual Ohio Educational Technology Conference, which was held in Columbus in February. Our organization had an informational booth there that focused on multimedia projects and professional development services.

In addition, Jeff Good, director of education, conducted a Google Hangouts learning session that focused on this collaborative videoconferencing tool. He also led two “slam” events that featured favorite iOS and Google apps. Finally, Good presented the annual ITIP Ohio Outstanding Technology Using Teacher and Administrator award.
**Educational Services**

**Staff to attend technology summit**

Our Educational Services Department will participate in the annual ITIP Ohio Summit featuring Google for Education in mid-May at Ohio State University. Attendees will learn how to save thousands of dollars using Google’s free Apps for Education, how to simplify school operations and more.

**South Range School staff receives Google training**

Jeff Good met with principals, guidance counselors and secretaries at South Range School in Mahoning County to conduct training on Google Apps for Education. Participants learned about creation of documents, spreadsheets and presentations; use of Google tools; and gathering and reviewing the information received. South Range is proposing a one-to-one Chromebook initiative at the high school, with incoming freshman receiving the laptop and keeping it for use throughout their high school years.

**Good offers tech help at Hartford STEAMM Academy**

Jeff Good worked with the Hartford STEAMM Academy to develop and implement educational gaming. Good helped the academy to connect with technical support to establish a Minecraft server in its building, and students are now learning how to work in the Minecraft world.

**Marketing & Development**

**British Landscapes Tour nearly sold out**

From Aug. 20-29, Western Reserve PBS will host a trip to England, Scotland and Wales. Coordinated by Collette Tours, the 10-day excursion will hit most of the area attractions and will include tickets to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. As of the printing of this report, only one seat is left. This, too, is a fundraiser for the station.

**“Downton Abbey” keeps on giving**

On Dec. 13, together with Akron Civic Theatre, we hosted our final “Downton Abbey” event, as this is the wildly popular show’s last season.

A Downton Abbey Evening featured a free screening of the first episode of the show’s new season. Those interested in a more fabulous evening could attend a soirée held prior to the screening that featured live music, signature drinks and a buffet of foods from the era.

A successful fundraiser for both organizations, the soirée sold out and netted each organization more than $5,000.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

Follow us for program updates, contests, announcements, fun links and more on our Facebook fan page and at Twitter.com/WR_PBS. You can watch all of our local programming on our YouTube channel, too!
Western Reserve PBS is going (more) mobile

We are working with a local company to build a Cloud-based mobile app that is so user friendly, it takes a mere thumb click to get to where you want to go.

The platform is called Squawqr and in the first phase will have our programming as the primary feature, with more components to come as we grow our mobile presence. The best part about it is that we won the app free of charge from Uniontown-based ad agency Grabowski & Company. Look for the launch sometime this spring.

Passport member benefit launched

In December, we joined other PBS stations from around the country in launching a new member benefit aimed at rewarding those who support us at the $60 level and above.

Passport gives eligible members extended access to an on-demand library of quality public television programming online. The library features episodes from popular programs including AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, AMERICAN MASTERS and MASTERPIECE — including all five seasons of “Downton Abbey.”

Qualifying members receive a unique activation code to access Passport-eligible videos.

We cleaned our closet

Harken back to the days when we fulfilled our thank-you gifts for pledge programs on site. Back then, we would have to anticipate how many items to buy and place the order with the premium company in advance of pledge.

While we were pretty darn good at being close to the needed amount, it wasn’t an exact science and over the years we accumulated a variety of items, from wellness DVDs to stuffed animals to program CDs.

To clear out the extras, in November, we offered these treasures to the public at a discounted rate. The effort netted us $1,100 in revenue and we helped our viewers with their gift-giving needs. Now the closets are clean!

Sustained giving option yields results

In July 2013, PBS rolled out a new contributors program in an attempt to increase overall member retention rates, especially among new members. This program, called the Sustaining Membership Program, gives contributors the option to set up their membership with an ongoing, monthly amount.

Since we began offering the option, we have received 2,203 sustaining membership pledges. Among these, 58.7 percent were made by new members. As of February 2016, 46.2 percent of these new members who originally signed up as a sustaining member were retained for a second year. In comparison, only 17.6 percent of all new members acquired in fiscal year 2013 renewed for a second year. We expect that in the current fiscal year, we will raise $61,000 from sustaining members.

Partnerships and sponsorships

Over the past few months we have enjoyed collaborating with several local community organizations including Akron Civic Theatre for A Downton Abbey Evening, Akron Museum of Art for NeoGeo, Canton Museum of Art for its Moving Toward the Light exhibit and the Disney University training by Doug Lipp presented by Stark County District Library.

“Finding the Gold Within” project completed

In 2014 we began work with Dr. Kwame Scruggs of Alchemy, Inc., to produce two educators guides for a grant that his organization had received from the Ohio Humanities Council. The work centered around using mythical storytelling to engage young males who are otherwise alienated, disengaged and cynical toward their lives.

The program, titled “Finding the Gold Within,” centers on drum circles and other activities, education and mentorship as the foundation of the program. Western Reserve Public Media facilitated the development of one manual for classroom teachers and a second for guidance counselors.
Jeff Good completes term on school board

Jeff Good, director of education, completed his four-year term as school board member with South Range Local Schools in Mahoning County in December 2015. During his tenure, Good served as vice president and president of the board. He was recognized for his service in December.

Engineer Ricky Patterson retires

After 30 years of service, engineer Ricky Patterson retired from Western Reserve PBS in November. Patterson started working part time here in 1985 as a transmitter engineer. He saw the station through multiple milestones and was the self-designated station historian. His retirement won’t stop us from hitting him up for fascinating station facts in the future! We wish him all the best.

Gary Manke joins staff

In December, Gary Manke joined our staff as part-time producer/director. Manke has more than four decades of experience in television and media production and has worked with us on a freelance basis for the last 10 years.

We welcome him to our staff!

Staff celebrates national fun day

On Jan. 28, Joanne Brooks, accounting assistant, notified Trina Cutter that it was National Have Fun at Work Day, so Trina quickly solicited ideas from the entire staff as to how the station could celebrate.

We ended up having a Words With Friends competition, eating submarine sandwiches for lunch and root beer floats for dessert and playing back-to-back episodes of “The Office” on the TV in our front lobby area. A fun time was had by all!

Board of Directors News

Board member Iris Harvey steps down

On Feb. 11, Kent State University hosted a farewell reception for Vice President for University Relations and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Iris Harvey, who also happens to be Western Reserve Public Media’s Interim Chairwoman of the Board of Directors.

Harvey is taking leave from her position at KSU to participate in a leadership program at Harvard University. At the packed-house reception, which President and CEO Trina Cutter attended, many people gave testimonies as to how Iris has touched their lives and by example helped them to reach a standard of excellence both professionally and personally.
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Available to 5.13 million people in 22 counties, Western Reserve Public Media serves the largest population of Ohio’s eight PBS member stations. (The second largest station reaches 1.2 million fewer people.) Our over-the-air broadcast service area is extended by carriage on almost all cable systems and satellite services in Northeast Ohio and parts of Western Pennsylvania.

Sources: 1 2010 A.C. Nielsen audience data; 2 2011-2012 Media Audit, Cleveland-Akron