Chardon Polka Band presents fun nationwide road trip

Members of a popular Ohio polka band produced a new documentary that spotlights entertaining polka musicians, with each performance serving as a musical postcard from around the country. The production, POLKA ACROSS AMERICA, premiered on PBS Western Reserve in January.

The Chardon Polka Band, known nationwide for its eclectic and modern take on an old genre, typically performs around 200 shows each year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic left the band members with no gigs, no live audiences and limited ways to create and deliver their art. As a way to both celebrate their genre and bring fellow musicians together, the group launched POLKA ACROSS AMERICA by leveraging their experience with music video production. The result is an hour-long documentary that provides the viewer with a delightful quilt of unique songs by unique artists.
Historic 1936 union conflict in Kent is subject of new documentary

UNDER FIRE, UNDER SIEGE: STRIKEBREAKERS IN KENT, OHIO, a new documentary about an intense 1936 union conflict, premiered exclusively on PBS Western Reserve in January. The production is the work of veteran journalist and filmmaker Fred Endres of Hudson.

In June 1936, two truckloads of Cleveland strikebreakers crashed through a peaceful picket line in Kent. They fired sawed-off shotguns and tear gas in an attempt to intimidate the workers and break a six-week-old strike at the Black & Decker Co. They not only failed to end the strike, but the strikebreakers had the tables reversed on them. They ended up under siege in the plant, with more than 100 strikers and sympathizers firing high-powered rifles at them for six hours.

The program examines how the terrified strikebreakers eventually were led to safety and documents the aftermath of the event.

February programming spotlights African American history and culture

In celebration of Black History Month, PBS Western Reserve presented a month of special programming, including three new local productions that premiered on Feb. 5. Community events surround all three productions are being planned for later this year.

Nick Cave, Summit Lake: Heard

This new production brings to life the transformational journey of a small, urban community in Akron, touched by a unique performance by internationally renowned artist Nick Cave.

In April 2019, Summit Lake community members joined Cave in staging a vibrant display of music, art and dance, providing them with an opportunity to not only showcase the talents and skills intrinsic to their own neighborhood but to also be “heard” by the surrounding area.

PBS Western Reserve commissioned Waters Media of Canton to produce the documentary. It features an explosion of color through Cave’s signature, life-sized, dancing horses—each composed of two dancers—with choreography by William Gill. It also provides a behind-the-scenes look at one community’s commitment toward making their voices heard.

Lines Broken: The Story of Marion Motley

In 1946, Marion Motley was one of four African American men to break pro football’s color barrier when he joined the Cleveland Browns. Those men’s efforts to play a physically brutal game in the face of societal racism and state-sanctioned Jim Crow laws trailblazed a path for Black athletes in the highest echelons of professional sports, including baseball’s Jackie Robinson.

Motley was recognized as one of the gridiron’s greatest players when he was enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1968 in his hometown of Canton, Ohio. However, five decades after being immortalized there, the memory of Motley and his great accomplishments on and off the field are beginning to fade in the city where he first made his name.

PBS Western Reserve commissioned Canton native James Waters to produce LINES BROKEN. The program tells Motley’s story of adversity, personal tragedy and triumphs using rarely heard archival interviews and new interviews with historians, friends and descendants.
February programming spotlights African American history and culture (cont’d.)

Black College Football Hall of Fame: Journey to Canton

“Headed to Canton” is often used synonymously when referring to an NFL player who will one day be enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, located in Canton, Ohio. The museum celebrates the greatest players, coaches and contributors to the professional game.

Now, more than 50 year later, heading to Canton has expanded to include collegiate football. In 2019, the Black College Football Hall of Fame was officially welcomed to the campus of the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

PBS Western Reserve commissioned this new documentary to Waters Media and its producing partner, Fog City Media. It tells the story of the formation of Black college football, the contributions that players from historically Black colleges and universities have made to the NFL, the founding of its hall of fame and why the hall is in the unexpected location of Canton.

Computer science project wins national award

A video project designed by PBS Western Reserve for educators’ use won an award in January at The 52nd Annual Public Media Awards (PMAs), which honored public media’s achievements in 2020.

The project, Computer Science for Your Classroom: Ohio’s Standards, won in the Division II category Educational Resources for the Classroom. It is designed to help teachers in grades K-8 better integrate into their classrooms the state’s learning standards for computer science. To access videos for the project, visit PBSWesternReserve.org/computer-science.

PBS Western Reserve dedicates this award to the memory of our former Educational Services employee Maria Mastromatteo, who died in January.

Area families learn about PBS KIDS app

PBS Western Reserve recently conducted four virtual sessions to help local families learn about the PBS KIDS ScratchJr app. Fourteen families, participating via Zoom at seven family child-care centers, learned how to use the app to create their own interactive stories and games featuring favorite PBS KIDS characters.

This project is phase two of an early learning grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Ohio Ready to Learn trainings continue

PBS Western Reserve’s Educational Services Department continues to deliver family child-care provider training. Sponsored by Ohio Ready to Learn and United Way of the Mahoning Valley, 16 virtual training sessions recently enabled providers to secure Ohio Step Up to Quality certification.

Educators can access professional development

Professional development opportunities for educators will continue in February and March via self-paced online and virtual methods. Topics covered include techniques supporting remote learning in an elementary classroom, Google certification, invention literacy utilizing MakeyMakey, and use of $martPath, a free, easy-to-use interactive online platform for teachers in grades K-8.
Staff News

Trina Cutter's activities
President and CEO Trina Cutter has been busy with industry events, including a national public media general managers’ discussion on diversity, equity and inclusion. In addition, she completed a six-week course on conscious marketing training.

In February, she attended virtually the APTS Public Media Summit, where public broadcasting general managers and community leaders join to explore issues of importance to the industry.

Jeff Good to review content
Chief Education Technology Officer Jeff Good was recently invited to be an instructional materials reviewer for the RemotEDx Exchange, powered by INFOhio. This state-level initiative offers parents and educators resources for remote, hybrid and blended education models.

The Ohio Department of Education is supporting RemotEDx through a $15 million investment of state activities funds made possible by the federal CARES Act.

Staff members attend seminars
Several PBS Western Reserve staff members have participated in career development—all of it virtually due to the pandemic:

- In January, Randy Lipscomb, account executive, attended two days of virtual sales training presented by the Ohio Association of Broadcasters
- Susan Scheible, membership specialist, recently participated in three trainings related to membership services
- Five employees participated in the annual NETA Conference for public media professionals, held Jan. 25-28

In loving memory
Maria ‘Ria’ Mastromatteo
1944 – 2021

With heavy hearts, we said goodbye in January to one of our retirees, Maria Mastromatteo. Ria joined our Educational Services staff following her retirement from Ravenna City Schools and worked here from 1998 until 2019. We’ll always remember her sweet personality, kindness and dedication to teaching. Our sincere condolences to her family, friends and former students.