PBS Western Reserve President’s Report

Three new LuminUS productions premiere

PBS Western Reserve is providing great new local shows from Labor Day weekend through the week before Thanksgiving. They are presented under the station’s LuminUS: Stories About US® collection of productions, which are singularly focused on the Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania region.

CITY CENTRIC

From PBS Western Reserve, the new six-episode series CITY CENTRIC aired weekly from Sept. 1 to Oct. 6.

The series presents the stories of six influential citizens per city, with Akron, Alliance, Canton, Kent, Youngstown and Sharon, Pa., featured. Individuals spotlighted include Youngstown’s Derrick McDowell, who beams as he describes his city’s potential and Akron’s Margo Summerville, who has dedicated her life to improving her community.

The series is hosted by Stéphanie Marie, a native of San Juan, Puerto Rico, who later moved with her family to Campbell, Ohio. Production support was provided by members of PBS Western Reserve. We extend thanks to everyone involved with the production, including Waters Media LLC for its tireless work.

The program’s website at https://www.pbswesternreserve.org/luminus/city-centric offers bonus content including links to each program and podcasts.
THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA

A new weekly six-episode series, THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA, premiered on Friday, Oct. 13, on PBS Western Reserve. A passion project dedicated to the polka community, the series follows Ohio’s own zany Chardon Polka Band on an exciting journey across Northeast Ohio and beyond as it explores the rich history and lively culture surrounding polka, a popular style of music and dance originating in 19th-century Bohemia, which is now part of the Czech Republic.

Hosted by Chardon Polka Band bandleader Jake Kouwe, the series embarks on a wide-ranging trip through the history books and polkas through the pages of some of the genre’s most beloved numbers and progressive new hits.

The series is created by Jake Kouwe and Jeff Grau, and executive produced by Gary Manke.

MARAUDER MEN: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

On Nov. 11, PBS Western Reserve premiered a three-episode docuseries spotlighting the Martin B-26 Marauder and the brave World War II pilots who flew them.

A tactical aircraft, this oft-forgotten machine of war flew in support of troops on the ground and was used in operations where precision was essential. In the 1990s, the B-26 Marauder Historical Society videotaped oral histories detailing the experiences of “Marauder Men,” the nickname claimed by Martin B-26 Marauder pilots in celebration of their camaraderie. MARAUDER MEN: IN THEIR OWN WORDS is an intimate look at that footage.

Free screening event and tour

Saturday, Nov. 18 • 1–2:30 PM
MAPS Air Museum
2260 International Pkwy., N. Canton
Enjoy a screening of the first episode of MARAUDER MEN: IN THEIR OWN WORDS, a Q&A session and a short tour of MAPS Air Museum’s resident B-26 Marauder. For more information, visit PBSWesternReserve.org.

Station hosts community coffee chats

PBS Western Reserve is hosting Community Coffee Chat, 50 Years Strong: Sip, Savor & Share. This new initiative invites community members from the organization’s vast viewing area to voice their ideas about the future of PBS Western Reserve, their communities’ needs and the organization’s role in meeting them.

They are taking place on Saturdays at these locally owned coffee shops:

• 8:15-10:15 AM, Nov. 4 — Compass Coffee at The Well CDC, 647 E. Market St., Akron
• 8-11 AM, Nov. 18 — The Mocha House, 120 E. Boardman St., Youngstown
• 8-11 AM, Dec. 2 — Cellar Door Coffee Co., 8138 Water St., Garrettsville
• 8-11 AM, Dec. 16 — Muggswigz, 137 Walnut Ave. NE, Canton

Events across viewing area promote CITY CENTRIC series

To promote the new PBS Western Reserve series CITY CENTRIC, the station participated in these events that were held in communities featured in the show:

• First Friday in Canton on Sept. 1
• Canfield Fair on Sept. 2
• Art in the Park in Kent on Sept. 9
• WaterFire in Sharon, Pa., on Sept. 16

The station booth offered CITY CENTRIC giveaways, photo opportunities and more. In addition, community watch parties were held in Youngstown and Sharon.
At the Canfield Fair, children enjoy insect exploration

The Educational Services Department’s Canfield Fair booth featured an interactive insect station where children had the chance to explore the criteria that define insects using hands-on activities such as a sensory bin, bug tattoos and make-a-bug sticker pages.

Each child received a nature backpack, complete with a bug-catching jar, tools and a scavenger hunt page.

Nearby, station employees offered general information about PBS Western Reserve.

The station was hosted within the Educational Hall by the Educational Service Center of Eastern Ohio.

Educational Services sparks creativity in young writers

This fall at local libraries, Educational Services held four outreach events that were centered on writing skills for children ages 5-8. These engaging events were related to the “Everyday Writing with Coach Write” video series, our multimedia production that is a collaborative effort with Ohio’s Broadcast Educational Media Commission and the Ohio Department of Education.

In addition to empowering young writers, these events served to inform parents of our writing resources, enriching the entire community with literacy opportunities.

Learning plus baseball equals a home run!

On Aug. 20, PBS Western Reserve sponsored a booth at the Mahoning Valley Scrappers baseball game. This event was part of our Ohio Learns 360 initiative to provide family resources to the community.

Both children and adults enjoyed learning about insects through hands-on activities. Parents were provided with Ohio Learns 360 resources such as family webinars and virtual field trips.

Ohio Learns 360 encourages nature exploration

Ohio Learns 360, a statewide initiative conducted in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education, has released the latest Camp-in-a-Box STEM kits, family webinars and virtual field trips. These kits, tailored for grades K-5, focus on nature-themed exploration.

Holly Cartwright, Educational Services project manager, conducted training sessions for more than 30 facilitators engaged in out-of-schooltime programs. The most recent family webinar, led by Dave Anderson, PhD, from the Child Mind Institute, delved into the topic of managing screen time.

Tuesday’s for Toddlers continues at Eastwood Mall

In October at Tuesday’s for Toddlers, held at Eastwood Mall in Niles, children had a delightful surprise of meeting Katerina Kittycat from DANIEL TIGER’S NEIGHBORHOOD.

Grant project results in new pre-K learning resources

The initial phase of the station’s participation in a PNC + PBS KIDS grant project, dedicated to creating high-quality, media-enriched resources for pre-K classroom learning, is now complete.

Educational Services collaborated with 10 local educators to develop and test content for a “Healthy Me” curriculum. These lessons are now readily accessible on PBS Learning Media, a valuable, no-cost platform for pre-K–12 educators.
**Jeffery Good named interim PBS Western Reserve leader**

In August, Jeffery Good, chief education technology officer at PBS Western Reserve, was named interim president and chief executive officer by the organization’s board of directors.

Good’s appointment followed the sudden passing of David Rotterman, who had just started in the position of president and CEO on July 17. Trina Cutter, who led the station for 21 years, retired on Aug. 31.

Good has led PBS Western Reserve’s Educational Services Department for all his 17 years here.

**Good participates in ribbon-cutting ceremony**

Jeff Good participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Mahoning County Career and Technical Center’s new Innovative Energy and Technology Workforce Training Center. The facility will be at the forefront of electric vehicle technology, offering hands-on training and expertise in the rapidly growing EV industry, including charging stations, lithium-ion battery installation maintenance and manufacturing. Good serves as vice president of the governing board of the MCCCTC.

**Station employees attend NETA conference**

In September, station employees Holly Cartwright and Sophia Gillespie attended the NETA Conference held in Grand Rapids, Mich. This conference is committed to fostering valuable connections among public media professionals.

**Staff members complete training**

Membership Department employees Marybeth Gibbons and Amanda Silker, plus Kimberly Holm, chief marketing officer, recently completed extensive training in preparation for the station’s transition to a new membership customer relationship management program, RevCRM.

In early October, the station’s former platform, Salesforce’s NGOC, sunsetted to make way for the launch of RevCRM. The station went live on the new platform on Nov. 1.

**Jeff Good and Ryan Donchess pitch CITY CENTRIC on WFMJ**

On Aug. 31, in the very early morning hours, employees Jeff Good and Ryan Donchess appeared on the WFMJ Today television show to promote the premiere of PBS Western Reserve’s new series CITY CENTRIC. As executive producer of the series, Donchess also was interviewed for several print media stories.

**Good finishes 10th 5K race**

On Oct. 22, Jeff Good, interim president and CEO, achieved completion of his 10th 5K fundraiser race since April 1, 2023, when he participated in the Youngstown Marathon.

Good has participated in 5K fundraisers in Ohio and Florida.