

The Community Advisory Board of WVIA Public Media

Report to the WVIA Board of Directors, June, 2021

Summary:

Federal Law requires public broadcasting stations to have an independent citizen's panel to review the programming goals and services, and the station's Board of Directors' underlying policy decisions so to assure that the station is meeting the specialized needs of the communities it serves. In the case of WVIA, the station has a Community Advisory Board (CAB) which has reviewed the performance and policies; and finds that a) WVIA has done an outstanding job in meeting the public affairs needs of the region; b) it has responded very well to the educational needs of the communities it serves and c) is an important cultural resource to the people of Northeast Pennsylvania.

Introduction:

Prior to Covid-19, staff at WVIA asked the CAB what it thought the most important problems faced Northeast Pennsylvania. The Board identified four major issues: the economy—including business development, jobs and job training; health; support for the Arts, broadly speaking, and the need for community cohesiveness. The station has responded to those concerns very effectively.

The Arts:

Even before Covid, public support for the Arts had issues, as tight budgets led some school districts to curtail Arts programming; and the shutdown of public performances, in person education, and mandated social distancing as a result of the pandemic intensified the problem. WVIA has always led the region with its programming of classical and jazz music, ARTSCENE, and outreach to artists via its FM station; and the television programming of PBS cultural programs including music, dance and drama. In the wake of Covid, the outreach to the cultural community was expanded. Interviews with artists, carrying programming from local performances, such as the ballet version of *The Nutcracker*; announcements of various artistic groups featuring livestream concerts, performances and other events, and assists with fundraising to keep local arts alive were part of WVIA's response to the need to support and expand the Arts.

Education:

WVIA, true to its educational television roots, had always been supportive of the educational process; but in the wake of Covid, really expanded its outreach. Specific educational programming was developed in conjunction with local teachers and school districts; and broadcasting augmented educational; programming helped bridge the digital divide and assist less affluent students to keep up with their educational needs. Education

of the broader community is equally important; and WVIA increased its coverage of health education, public safety education and job training education.

Public Affairs

2020-21 will be long remembered as a time of political turbulence and cultural conflict. WVIA's response to this situation was simply outstanding. The efforts of the station to keep the citizenry informed were many and varied, but three stand out: First, the station's transmission of the fact-based reporting from NPR and PBS served as the anchor for citizens trying to separate fact from fantasy; secondly, decisions to carry live and in full the actions of Congress in the impeachment hearings and the events of January 6th were essential in following the events shaping our nation's future; and thirdly, hosting political debates between Congressional candidates which gave viewers and listeners the opportunity to learn first hand of the views of potential leaders. *Conversations for the Common Good* marked an ambitious effort to help bridge political divide so apparent in Northeast Pennsylvania and the nation.

New efforts:

In 2020, the FM station embarked on a reportage program—Keystone Edition—to respond to the issues raised by the CAB in 2018. This featured short reports on business and the economy; health, the arts, and public affairs, done locally and featuring local people. This has now been expanded to a broader, more detailed weekly program carried on the television station with a shorter version on the FM station. Local reportage focused on key issues facing the region is the essence of public service and WVIA is off to a splendid start.

The station features not only a television broadcast facility and three different FM outlets but also has been actively engaged in digital distribution of educational and cultural content, including its clever locally produced set of *Short Takes*, very engaging snapshots of people and events in the region.

WVIA's vision is that of “a joyful, engaged, well-informed, compassion community via public media”. It is the opinion of the Community Advisory Board that WVIA is a major contributor to the public health, cultural well-being, and civic responsibility of the region.

Respectfully Submitted,

Thomas Jay Hall, Ph.D
June, 2021