2023 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY: TV

WKAR Television is a valuable part of Michigan’s Capital Region.

The station provides public broadcasting services on five WKAR television stations plus radio.

Serving a 19-county viewing area, WKAR is involved with those communities through a variety of activities including: Ready to Learn; WKAR Family, public community screenings and discussions; participation in community events and with station representatives on community boards and committees; and community support through student learning internships.

WKAR produces local content that addresses key issues impacting our community.

In 2023, WKAR provided these vital local services:

- Five Television Stations
  - WKAR-HD
  - WKAR Create
  - WKAR World
  - WKAR PBSKIDS
  - Michigan Learning Channel
- Two Radio Stations
  - WKAR (AM) 870, 102.3 FM, & 90.5-HD2
  - WKAR-FM 90.5
- Online Streaming of TV and Radio programming
- Educational workshops
- Community-wide family events
- Screenings/discussions
- National and local programming including news, public affairs, arts, health, education.
- 60+ hours of children’s programming per week.

WKAR’s local services had a deep impact in Michigan’s Capital Region.

Through station partnerships with local schools and agencies, WKAR Family initiatives centered on PBS KIDS and additional resources reached thousands of local children and their families to better prepare them for school.

Locally produced programs, with work including DEI principles, target issues of importance to the community, and our free public screenings feature speakers and panelists of local experts and MSU faculty who lead dynamic discussions with participants.

Connecting people to powerful ideas that inspire personal growth, exploration of our world and positive change.

Jennifer Sturdy
Vice President, Client and Community Relations Director
PNC

“Greater Lansing is lucky to have WKAR to serve and engage with their people, and we take great pride in partnering with an organization as dedicated to service and community impact as WKAR.”
Connecting people to powerful ideas that inspire personal growth and positive change is the mission of WKAR. WKAR serves that mission through broadcast services WKAR HD, World, Create, PBS Kids 24/7, and the Michigan Learning Channel; through research partnerships at our host Big Ten university; through a rich digital presence across multiple platforms; and through educational outreach and engagement events across our community.

WKAR began in 1922 as an AM radio station broadcasting agricultural news and information. Over the course of 100 years, WKAR has grown into a robust media organization that includes two radio stations, digital platforms, community and educational outreach, and five broadcast channels from WKAR-TV.

On the actual 100th anniversary date of Aug. 18, 2022, WKAR hosted community leaders and special guests to launch a yearlong celebration of a Century of Service. A Community Celebration open house took place two days later. In all, more than 400 guests visited WKAR Public Media in August to commemorate one hundred years of service to the mid-Michigan and Spartan communities.

EDUCATION

WKAR’s dedication to education extends throughout its history. Today, WKAR’s primary channel airs over 60 hours of PBS KIDS shows per week. The WKAR PBS KIDS 24/7 channel offers free children’s programming around the clock. The Michigan Learning Channel airs free instructional content 24/7.

Our senior director of content position has been updated to include an emphasis on education.

WKAR original educational content includes “Curious Crew,” “Curious About Careers,” and the “WKAR Family” video series.

The WKAR education team presented the new WKAR original documentary, “Building the Reading Brain,” at professional development sessions attended by more than 300 educators across mid-Michigan.

In 2023, more than 9,700 children received WKAR Family Reading Kits containing books and engaging literacy activities. 92 partner organizations helped distribute the kits free to children across WKAR’s viewing region.

In collaboration with the NOVA Science Studio project, WKAR mentored high school students studying investigative journalism and digital media production who went on to produce 12 videos published on digital platforms.

At WKAR-hosted and community events, the WKAR education team reached an estimated 18,500 children across mid-Michigan with fun and engaging direct family activities.

POLITICAL COVERAGE

“Off the Record” continued to build on its legacy of more than 50 years as Michigan's only weekly, statewide political talk show.

Additional political coverage in 2023 included the inauguration of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, live from the steps of the Capitol Building on January 1; “Michigan State of the State 2023;” and the annual “Evening with the Governor” series, shared with public media stations across Michigan.

A new special in the Jim Blanchard Public Service series was presented: “An Evening with Leon Panetta” aired in March and “An Evening with Secretary Pete Buttigieg” aired in December.
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

WKAR-hosted events included film screenings, studio tours, family events, and more. WKAR could also be seen in the community at the MSU Homecoming Parade, MSU Science Festival, East Lansing Art Festival, Lansing ArtPath, and more.

PBS KIDS Day with WKAR in January drew more than 900 community members of all ages to the WKAR TV studios. More than 350 fans of Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood joined us for Be My Neighbor Day with WKAR at Impression 5 Science Center in April.

In-person and virtual film screenings featured insightful conversations with a diverse range of panelists on a variety of topics. Featured films included “Goin Back to T-Town,” “Free Chol Soo Lee,” and “Afrofantastic.”

WKAR’s Curious Crew made a special appearance at Grand Slam School Days hosted by the Lansing Lugnuts baseball team. Dr. Rob and cast members demonstrated science investigations between innings. The WKAR education team was on hand and gave away hundreds of free books.

In all, WKAR hosted more than 20 engagement events at WKAR studios and in the community, drawing more than 2300 attendees. We also took part in 25 partner-hosted and community-wide events with total attendance in the tens of thousands.

WKAR ORIGINALS

WKAR has a rich history of producing award-winning original programming. Some of the new offerings produced aired or published online July 2022-June 2023 are highlighted here. In all, WKAR produced 19 original series or specials for TV and digital through that period.

A Conversation with Coach James Bibbs
WKAR’s Al Martin has a conversation with former MSU Mens Track and Field Head Coach James Bibbs about his life and career and being named Grand Marshal of the 2022 MSU Homecoming Parade. Aired: 02/01/23.

An Evening with Leon Panetta
Leon E. Panetta has served in several key government positions, including Director of the CIA and Secretary of Defense under President Barak Obama, White House Chief of Staff for President Bill Clinton, and, as a United States congressman. Panetta sits down with former Michigan governor and MSU alumnus Jim Blanchard for an engaging conversation as part of the Jim Blanchard Public Service Forum. Aired: 03/21/23.

Afrofantastic: The Transformative World of Afrofuturism
Championed by artists, scholars, and activists around the world, Afrofuturism offers a tool kit for a better tomorrow. This documentary explores the definition and activism linked to Afrofuturism and the ways this movement is informing dynamic discussion about social practice, politics, and the arts in the United States and around the world. Presented by WKAR. Aired: 06/20/23.

Building the Reading Brain
Explore the science of reading and ways to help ready your child for this complex task. Reading is essential for daily life, but humans are not born with the ability. Experts in education and neuroscience explain the science of how neuropathways are built, the brain's reading centers, and their impact on early childhood literacy, skill development, and school readiness. Aired: 06/01/23.
Music for Social Justice

*Music for Social Justice* features artists as they relate the music they play to societal issues and their own lived experiences. Three new video shorts were produced in this ongoing series, in partnership with the College of Music at MSU.

Curious Crew and Curious About Careers

The educational series *Curious Crew* continues to challenge kids to explore science through hands-on learning activities. The ninth season with eight new episodes premiered on WKAR-TV in May of 2023. Episodes include *Curious About Careers* segments featuring young investigators exploring career possibilities by visiting women working in STEM-related professions. *Curious About Careers* segments are also available as standalone shorts for broadcast and on-demand viewing online. *Curious Crew* and *Curious About Careers* are offered nationally each season through NETA.

NOVA Science+Society

“The Future of EV Batteries” is the latest in a series of video reports produced and published to digital platforms as part of the *Science+Society* project from NOVA. Will next generation batteries accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles? Researchers at the University of Michigan are on the cusp of a breakthrough in developing solid-state batteries. Published: 05/03/23.

TECHNOLOGY

The broadcast industry has been focused on deployment and development of the new ATSC 3.0 broadcast standard, with little thought being given to how to use the technology to serve communities. WKAR is focusing on real world applications of ATSC 3.0 technology. One project, in collaboration with partners at Michigan State University and throughout the greater Lansing area, focuses on ways to leverage ATSC 3.0 television technology to deliver educational content to underserved families in mid-Michigan.

LEADERSHIP – LOCAL TO NATIONAL

WKAR is fortunate to have a leadership team that gives our local community a voice within the public broadcasting system nationally. WKAR’s Amanda Flores, senior director of diversity, equity, and inclusion, completed the Public Media Diversity Fellowship Program in 2023. It’s part of a national program designed to explore opportunities and challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the public media sector. WKAR’s Brant Wells, senior director of television production and operations, serves as chair of the PBS Digital Media Advisory Committee. Additional WKAR staff members share expertise through presentations at public broadcasting and industry conferences and exhibitions.

PARTNERSHIPS

Local partnerships inspire WKAR to best serve our local community through educational resources, timely news and helpful information. This last year, WKAR collaborated with national partners: PBS, WETA, NETA, and Fred Rogers Productions to bring our community new content, educational and engagement opportunities; as well as local partners: PNC, Capital Area Head Start, Impression 5 Science Center, Wharton Center, MSU Broad Art Museum, MSU College of Music, MSU College of Social Science, MSU College of Education, and MSUFCU.
Celebrating a Century of Service

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In that month, WKAR was honored with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition from U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow and a Special Tribute to WKAR signed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist.


The 32-page publication, *WKAR: A Century of Service*, shares the many stories and accomplishments of this media organization’s impact in mid-Michigan through 100 years of service to community.
WKAR Family Reading Kits

WKAR Public Media at Michigan State University gave away more than 9,000 WKAR Family Reading Kits to families across mid-Michigan through March and April of 2023.

Each WKAR Family Reading Kit included two new, highly engaging books, local community resource information, high quality literacy activities from PBS LearningMedia and Scholastic, reading practice games, and lots of WKAR PBS character swag.

Robin Pizzo, WKAR director of education, and the education team collaborated with the Early Childhood Literacy Coalition, Capital Area Community Services, Ingham Great Start Collaborative, MiRegistry, Capital Area District Libraries, and numerous other organizations to distribute the kits to families.

The WKAR Family Reading Kit project was supported in part by a grant from United Way of South Central Michigan.

“Early literacy support is extremely important for every child’s development. The WKAR Family Reading Kits allow us to increase reading proficiency in the youngest learners. The impact is exponential.”

Robin Pizzo
WKAR Director of Education

Be My Neighbor Day with WKAR

Families from across mid-Michigan came together on a day in April to celebrate Be My Neighbor Day with WKAR.

The event took place at Impression 5 Science Center and drew more than 400 attendees. It was the first in-person celebration of Be My Neighbor Day with WKAR since 2019.

The celebration featured activities that highlighted ways to be a caring neighbor. Visitors had a chance to explore the science center and meet helpers who serve the community.

Families also enjoyed StoryTime with Daniel Tiger and Katerina Kittycat, of the PBS KIDS program Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood.

“As WKAR Public Media has recently celebrated their 100th Anniversary, it’s important to acknowledge that the station has worked for over a century to serve the community and partner with other longstanding organizations. Impression 5 and WKAR have worked for years to help the community come together in many noteworthy and impactful ways, such as PBS Kids Day, and Be My Neighbor Day.”

Erik Larson
Executive Director, Impression 5 Science Center
2023 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT
SUMMARY

From July 2022 through June 2023, WKAR helped children learn to read, get excited about science, and be ready for school.

We expanded our programs and specials to showcase Michigan Capital Region talents and professions, and we addressed timely issues.

We increased awareness around local issues, provided discussions, and featured world-class MSU researchers.

As a result, membership and viewership are up and our audiences are more diverse.

“Our annual gift for another year. It’s not much and in no way represents your value, but on my fixed income it is all I am able to give. Despite all the streaming services I have available via my smart TV, I watch Ch 23, World, or Create most of the time. Thank you, always, for the wonderful service you provide to the Lansing area.”
Jan
Lansing, MI

“[I’m] A long time supporter of the station and I really appreciate what the station does for the community.”
Mary
Perry, Michigan

“Thank you for your wonderful contribution to our community.”
Laurie
Lansing, Michigan

“Thank you for inspired programming and congratulations on 100 years of service!”
Elizabeth
Lansing, Michigan

For more than 100 years, WKAR has been a steady and reliable source of information, education, and inspiration for mid-Michigan communities. From the early days of radio and the birth of public television to today’s focus on the next generation of television and digital media, WKAR has been a leader in broadcast excellence and innovation.

As we continue to grow into the future, we look forward to introducing new audiences to the excellent content and rich community engagement that lives at WKAR.