



## **KASU Station Activity Summary for 2020. Submitted to CPB on 2/15/21.**

*1. Describe your overall goals and approach to address identified community issues, needs, and interests through your station's vital local services, such as multiplatform long and short-form content, digital and in-person engagement, education services, community information, partnership support, and other activities, and audiences you reached or new audiences you engaged.*

KASU is the only public radio station serving our largely rural, tri-state area. The station seeks to provide its listeners with a diverse selection of public radio programming, reflected in the station's slogan - "Music, News, Arts, and Views."

KASU provides music programs in a variety of styles and genres that are not being offered by other radio stations in our region. From our classical and jazz programs in the evening and overnight, to blues, bluegrass, celtic, and Americana programs on the weekends, to our noontime "Arkansas Roots" program which airs six days a week, KASU serves an audience with diverse musical tastes and interests.

In addition to classic and obscure recordings, "Arkansas Roots" features new music from Arkansas musicians and promotes performances at local venues. When live performance venues shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, program host Marty Scarbrough began reaching out to regularly featured musicians to interview them about the ways in which they were navigating this difficult time.

Prior to the pandemic shutdown, the station's in-person engagement was exemplified by our monthly Bluegrass Monday concert series; the Arkansas Roots Music Festival; KASU Music Nights at the Johnny Cash Heritage Festival; the Downtown Entertainment Series in nearby Newport, Arkansas; and other music events the station sponsors.

KASU has continued to provide local and regional news from our own news team, and to incorporate stories shared through cooperation with other public radio stations in the state. Often, media events are presented to our audience as they happen, through Facebook Live. These videos are available on demand for later viewing, and these events are shared, along with other news stories, on our website and through social media. KASU's news team has been diligent, both on-air and online, in providing information on news events, on election issues and candidates, on developments in city and county government, and on the emerging pandemic. The news staff, led by KASU News Director Johnathan Reaves, has provided stories dealing with agricultural and economic issues, area efforts to address renewable energy, and changes in the local economy and in education prompted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, KASU began broadcasting the COVID-19 news conferences from Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, presenting the latest statewide statistics on the virus, and discussing the state's response to the outbreak. These press conferences were first held daily and later dropped to weekly updates, and they were very much appreciated by our audience. News Director Johnathan Reaves also initiated a regular series of conversations with Dr. Shane Speights, Dean of the NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine, located on our campus. In these interviews, Dr. Speights presented the latest information available about the virus, offering KASU listeners facts, providing new information as more became known, and debunking myths about the disease. These conversations were broadcast and also presented on the station's website and social media. A Coronavirus tab was set up on the station's website, to provide easy access to all of KASU's reporting and to links for coronavirus information. Many KASU members expressed their appreciation for these broadcasts and services while making their donations to the station.

In addition to music and news, KASU also offers regular features and interviews promoting the activities of Jonesboro's Foundation of the Arts and other arts organizations in the area, keeping listeners informed about art exhibits, performances, plays, film festivals, and concerts throughout the region. KASU's news and interviews, along with NPR programs such as "1A," "Fresh Air," and "Here and Now," provide listeners with multiple viewpoints on a wide variety of topics.

The KASU program "A-State Connections" entered its second year on the air. This locally-produced program focuses on research, programs, and activities at Arkansas State University that have an impact beyond our campus. This program has led to partnerships with other campus departments and organizations, and it has spawned a podcast that focuses on student research. This program and the "Create @ State" podcast are aimed at informing audiences of the impact of our higher learning institution on the broader community, and at engaging with more of our diverse student population.

This year, KASU dropped its subscription overnight jazz program and began offering our locally-produced "Jazz Tonight," which features recordings from the station's extensive jazz library. KASU also continued to offer locally-produced, weekly music programs, airing on Saturdays and Sundays and hosted by community volunteers. These programs present our audience with diverse selections in a number of genres, such as Celtic, bluegrass, blues, black hits from the 1960s and 1970s, Americana, folk, popular music with Mississippi Delta connections, and progressive rock. All of these programs align with KASU's mission to provide educational and entertaining programming that is truly unique to our audience.

In addition, this year KASU was awarded grants from the Kay's Foundation at Arkansas State University and the Arkansas Arts Council, to assist in the development of a new program. The program, called "In Performance at A-State," would present selected recordings from a variety of concert performances given by the Music Department at Arkansas State University, with information about the groups or musicians featured and the works they are performing. While the launch of this program was delayed due to the pandemic, much of the planning and production work for it was done during this reporting period.

*2. Describe key initiatives and the variety of partners with whom you collaborated, including other public media outlets, community nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, the business community, teachers and parents, etc. This will illustrate the many ways you're connected across the community and engaged with other important organizations in the area.*

KASU has partnered with the NYIT College of Osteopathic Medicine, located on the Arkansas State University campus, to present a weekly segment called *Delta Health*. This short program features the voice of a medical professional from the college discussing a topic of particular concern to people living in our Mississippi Delta region. The program dealt with a variety of health issues prior to the pandemic, but it has focused primarily on COVID-19 since the outbreak of the virus.

As previously mentioned, KASU continued to participate in a statewide cooperative to share news and exchange stories with other public media stations in Little Rock, Fayetteville, and Texarkana. This service adds to the variety of stories and voices heard on KASU and helps supplement the local news provided by our reporters.

In addition to the radio news collaboration, KASU continued partnerships with several arts organizations in the region to present or promote various concerts and performances. KASU has partnered with the Delta Symphony Orchestra in a trade agreement in which KASU promotes the orchestra's concerts in exchange for recognition in concert programs and on the organization's website. We have a similar arrangement with the Fowler Center, Arkansas State University's performing arts center. A partnership with the Foundation of Arts of Northeast Arkansas includes interviews and promotion of their events and performances, for which KASU gets placement in their programs and in their season brochure. The station also has a banner displayed in the Foundation's Arts Center.

KASU has partnered with the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism to record a weekly feature with one of the department's travel writers. Each week, KASU's Mark Smith talks with Kim Williams about upcoming festivals, events, and attractions around the state. This feature aired on Saturday and again on Monday, as part of KASU's "Arkansas Roots" program, until parks and events were shut down in March due to the pandemic.

KASU maintains a long tradition of offering live music performances throughout the region. In 2019, KASU partnered with a downtown revitalization effort in nearby Newport, Arkansas. DRIVE, the Downtown Revitalization and Improvement Volunteer Effort, sponsored a series of events in the spring and summer at a park in downtown Newport. KASU, with funding from a local industry, provided a live, monthly concert as part of DRIVE's Downtown Entertainment Series. These blues and jazz concerts brought outstanding performers from Memphis, Little Rock, and other locations to Newport each month, for a memorable evening of outdoor music and fun. These concerts were enjoyed in the summer and early fall of 2019. The first concert of 2020 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, but by June the series organizers were able to get approval from the Arkansas Department of Health to continue the series under COVID-19 restrictions – enforcing masks and social distancing in the outdoor park. Four monthly concerts were held successfully and enjoyed by the community.

KASU also continued its long-time partnership with the Collins Theater in the nearby town of Paragould, where the station sponsors its very popular Bluegrass Monday concert series each month. These concerts remain the most well-attended events the station sponsors. These concerts continued until March, when the venue shut down due to the pandemic.

KASU continued what has become an annual event in early December, 2019, with our "Jazz for the Holidays" concert held in the nearby town of Pocahontas, Arkansas. Renowned jazz trumpeter Gary Gazaway, a Pocahontas native, brought together an outstanding group of musicians from around the region and presented a wonderful concert of holiday classics for a near capacity crowd at a local venue. With the backing of local businesses, the concert was again a

tremendous success, and attendees were already excitedly planning to come back next year. Sadly, the 2020 concert was cancelled due to the pandemic.

KASU once again partnered with the Delta Symposium at Arkansas State University to help in the planning for this annual series of events that highlight the scholarship and research into the culture and traditions of the Mississippi River Delta region in which we are located. The Arkansas Roots Music Festival, typically held on the final day of the Symposium, is sponsored by KASU in conjunction with the ASU Department of English, Philosophy, and World Languages. While much planning occurred, this year's symposium and music festival had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

KASU News Director Johnathan Reaves continued to serve as Small Station Representative on the Board of Directors of the newly renamed Public Media Journalists Association (PMJA). In that role, he was involved in the organization's establishment of a foundation to provide funding for training and internships for budding journalists and for journalists who are new to the realm of public media. Johnathan was also instrumental in the planning of PMJA's annual convention. That convention ended up being postponed by the pandemic, and was ultimately held as a virtual conference, in conjunction with the Public Radio Program Directors Association (PRPD). Johnathan was also asked to serve on PMJA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee, which formed in the spring and early summer of 2020 to address issues of race and diversity in public media.

KASU maintains memberships in four area Chambers of Commerce - Jonesboro, Paragould, Newport, and Batesville. In 2020, KASU personnel were able to participate in the annual Business Expo in held in February in Paragould. KASU's Director of Underwriting and Corporate Relations, Doreen Selden, helped with the planning for the Jonesboro Business Expo, which was converted to a virtual event due to the pandemic. Doreen also attended the Jonesboro Chamber's Business After Hours events and ribbon-cuttings for new businesses, and has attended monthly Chamber events held virtually after the start of the pandemic.

Finally, KASU partnered with Arkansas Heritage Sites at Arkansas State University to present KASU Music Nights as part of the first Johnny Cash Heritage Festival, held in Cash's hometown of Dyess, Arkansas. The festival was held in October, 2019, and featured three days of lectures, scholarly presentations, and film screenings, culminating with a major concert featuring friends and family of Johnny Cash. KASU's Music Nights provided entertainment for festival attendees following the first two days of the symposium, bringing a variety of performers from around the region to pay tribute to Cash's legacy and keep the crowd dancing well into the evening. Several area businesses and the local electrical workers' union provided support for these Music Nights.

*3. What impact did your key initiatives and partnerships have in your community? Describe any known measurable impact, such as increased awareness, learning or understanding about particular issues. Describe indicators of success, such as connecting people to needed resources or strengthening conversational ties across diverse neighborhoods. Did a partner see an increase in requests for related resources? Please include direct feedback from a partner(s) or from a person(s) served.*

KASU assisted in planning the Johnny Cash Heritage Festival, provided live music for two nights during the event, and then participated in the planning for the following year's festival. The festival is held in Cash's hometown in October, 2019. As part of the festival, the station sponsors KASU Music Nights, two nights of live concerts by a variety of musicians and bands. These concerts cap off two days of symposium sessions and presentations, and precede a larger concert

on the final day of the festival that features nationally-known performers and members of the Cash family. Adam Long, Director of A-State Heritage Sites, which organizes the festival, said, “KASU does a terrific job sharing the history of regional music and promoting current regional artists, and they used their knowledge and contacts to develop an excellent line-up for KASU Music Nights and to promote it to our community. In addition, they shared all the events of the festival with their listeners, helping to make the festival a success.”

In the fall of 2019, KASU partnered with Arkansas State University Heritage Sites and Arkansas PBS in organizing an event that featured a live screening of an episode of Ken Burns’ documentary “Country Music,” focusing on the career of Johnny Cash. The screening took place at The Forum Theater in downtown Jonesboro, and KASU provided live music from a local band to entertain attendees prior to the screening at a local park across from the theater. For its part in this event, KASU was awarded the 2019 Media Support Award from Arkansas Delta Byways, a regional tourism association. This award was presented at a banquet held in February, 2020.

KASU continues to invest in the annual Delta Symposium at Arkansas State University. The event showcases research into the music, culture, and heritage of the Mississippi Delta region and its impact on our nation and our world. KASU collaborates with A-State’s Department of English, Philosophy, and World Languages to cap off the symposium with a day of live music that has come to be called the Arkansas Roots Music Festival. Dr. Greg Hansen, a professor of folklore and English, says, “I enjoy working with KASU in selecting the talent that we present each year to round out our symposium. The Arkansas Roots Music Festival is a great way to wrap up the symposium, and it’s become a really fun event for the community.” Sadly, after much planning, both the symposium and the music festival had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

KASU’s “Arkansas Roots” does more than just play local and regional music. Throughout the year, the program offers arts features that inform the listeners about concerts, recitals, plays, and exhibits that are being presented in the community. There are about 50-60 of these features produced over the course of a year.

KASU’s local music programs continue to attract attention. During our fundraising drive in the spring of 2020, one donor commented, “I love *Arkansas Roots*, *Down Home Harmonies*, and *Music from the Isles*.... Thanks for all the good programming.” Donors had similar compliments for *Six Degrees of the Delta*, *Rhythm & Grooves*, and *Mr. Rogers’ Rock Collection*, all produced in the KASU studios. Another donor said, “I’ve been a public radio listener from Little Rock to Dallas and now back home. KASU is by far the best of all the stations I’ve lived around.”

The Collins Theater in Paragould, Arkansas continues to host KASU’s Bluegrass Monday concert. KASU’s longest running concert series, Bluegrass Monday brings nationally known, award-winning bluegrass bands to the Collins each month to perform for an enthusiastic crowd. The admission is free; we suggest a 5-dollar contribution when KASU literally passes the hat for donations with all proceeds going directly to the band. Underwriting support helps us pay for rental and technical assistance. KASU Program Director Marty Scarbrough emcees the event each month, and works diligently to book the bands well in advance. For his efforts in promoting bluegrass music, Marty received Folklife Award, one of the 2020 Governor’s Arts Awards presented by Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson. Marty was also awarded “Promoter of the Year” at the 2020 Arkansas Country Music Association Awards, which were presented virtually. The Executive Director of Main Street Paragould, Gina Jarrett, is also on the Collins Theater board. She said KASU’s bluegrass concerts are known to bluegrass fans nationwide, and that license plates from seven different states have been seen in Paragould on concert nights. Jarrett tells of a local lawyer who was attending a national legal conference and mentioned he was from

Paragould, to which a lawyer and bluegrass fan from California responded, "That's where the Collins Theater is!" Jarrett said, "KASU has helped put Paragould and the Collins Theater on the map for bluegrass fans everywhere, and that's really remarkable!"

*4. Please describe any efforts (e.g. programming, production, engagement activities) you have made to investigate and/or meet the needs of minority and other diverse audiences (including, but not limited to, new immigrants, people for whom English is a second language and illiterate adults) during Fiscal Year 2019, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2020. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.*

KASU is continually looking for ways to grow our audience and reach out to underserved populations in our community. Among the national programs we air, we are proud to carry "1A," which often addresses issues and problems faced by minority and diverse populations. This program has become one of our most popular national programs. We also seek out local stories and provide information about local and regional events that involve or engage the diverse populations in our region.

Stories aired on KASU's local and regional newscasts throughout the year covered such issues as:

- The controversy surrounding the placement of a monument commemorating the Elaine Massacre, a tragic 1919 event in which hundreds of black sharecroppers were killed while trying to organize for fairer treatment from white landowners.
- The culmination of a long and controversial struggle by the local NAACP to rename a Jonesboro street in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- The local Pridefest event presented by the NEA Pride organization.
- Support programs offered by Arkansas State University for first-generation college students.
- Black History Month activities at Arkansas State University.
- Jonesboro's annual Hispanic Celebration.
- The groundbreaking for a "Veterans Village" for homeless veterans in the Jonesboro area.
- Martin Luther King, Jr., Day activities on the Arkansas State campus.
- A traveling civil rights exhibit at the ASU Museum.
- Local protests following the death of George Floyd, a black man killed by police in Minnesota.

In addition to news, KASU also offers weekend programs of music and information produced by local staff and volunteer personnel of ethnicity. Programs such as "Arkansas Roots," "Rhythm and Grooves," and "Tradition," feature roots music from the soul, rhythm & blues, and gospel traditions, which appeal to a diverse audience and often include obscure and vintage recordings and fascinating information on Arkansas' diverse history and culture.

*5. Please assess the impact that your CPB funding had on your ability to serve your community. What were you able to do with your grant that you wouldn't be able to do if you didn't receive it?*

KASU is the only public radio station serving a largely rural, tri-state region. We would not be able to provide the local and regional news, the unique, locally produced music programs, the live music performances, and other programs and services without the support we get from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Small stations like KASU are the ones most greatly impacted by CPB funding, as this funding makes up a significant percentage of our budget.

We continue to fund one staff position from the Community Service Grant: Doreen Selden's position is paid for with CPB funds. Through her efforts, along with those of the Membership Development Director, KASU continues to show increasing local support for its mission and

programs. In addition to recruiting new underwriters, Doreen provides the important service of maintaining relations with existing contributors by personal visits, phone calls, and general public relations. She works the phones during our fundraising drives, attends business related functions in the community, and helps with special events and projects. She also manages KASU's still travel program, which has afforded KASU members with wonderful opportunities to experience exotic locations such as Cuba and Iceland. She has gone above and beyond the call of duty to make sure our travelers had the most positive experience we could offer. The Community Service Grant makes her job – and our financial growth -- possible.

KASU's staff includes five on-air personnel and six volunteers who produced an estimated 1,742 hours of music programs, 104 hours of news and public affairs, and 120 hours of arts and culture features. Local programming is labor intensive. We could not fill an entire schedule of high quality programming seven days a week, 24 hours a day, without financial support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Community Service Grant (CSG) allows KASU to provide well-known national public radio programs of news, discussion and music. Audience research shows that some of our most popular programs are 1A, Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me, and Morning Edition. KASU is able to provide these and other national programs because of the CSG. Without the grant funding, the quality of our music offerings would suffer, because it is practically impossible to find local hosts with the time and talent to produce classical and jazz music programs in this area. Performance Today, Concert Hall, and Jazz Tonight are prime examples of programs that are enjoyed throughout the region, and these programs are a great service to listeners in northeast Arkansas, southeast Missouri and northwestern Tennessee.