



WKU Public Media Local Content & Service Report

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OUR MISSION

To enrich our communities by providing distinctive programming and services of the highest quality that enhance lives, expand perspectives and connect us to one another.

LOCAL VALUE

WKU Public Media serves critical roles in Kentucky. As the only university joint licensee (WKU PBS and WKU Public Radio) in the Commonwealth, we proudly serve through our television broadcast signal, radio broadcast signals, satellite transmissions and digital content. Our base of operations is in the heart of WKU's campus in Bowling Green.

WKU Public Media provides public service broadcasting to the community, professional training for students and creates and distributes media content that serves WKU, the citizens of Kentucky, northern Tennessee and southern Indiana.

We are responsible for the operation of WKU Public Radio, WKU PBS, The Hilltopper Sports Satellite Network, WWHR-FM student radio and content for the Kentucky Public Radio Network.

Additionally, we provide video production services for the campus constituency and outside organizations. In addition to our professional staff, we employ many WKU students part-time, allowing them to gain valuable real-world experience.



A Message from the Executive Director

Thank you for making WKU Public Media a priority. All of us appreciate the individual support of our members, the corporate support of area businesses, the support of our license holder and the trust that you have awarded to us over the years. We continue to navigate a complicated media landscape and the key to our continued success is tied to ongoing local support.

Throughout this publication you will read about the impact that WKU Public Media is having in our region through our produced content and national leadership initiatives. We have maintained a reputation for peer recognition through successful efforts with the Ohio Valley Emmy Awards and the Kentucky Broadcasters Association Impact Awards. And, for the first time, we were recognized with eight nominations in categories from the National Educational Telecommunications Association.

However, more important than that is the continued impact that members of the WKU Public Media team have in the communities and public media system that we serve. We are excited about how our staff participate throughout the landscape of public media and the continued impact that our content has as a credible source of news and information.

None of this work happens without you. Our mission and goals are tied to efficiently serving all users of public media. As an added benefit this year, our governing board approved and adopted a Code of Editorial Integrity. This simple yet formal recognition of the principles that keep our operation free from undue influence is critical in maintaining content that is produced at the highest editorial standards. Trust is important to us.

So, again, thank you! We appreciate you being the reason that we can provide these services to the communities we serve. It has been my continued honor to serve in this role. Please reach out if you have any questions, suggestions or issues that need resolution.

David S. Brinkley
Executive Director, WKU Public Media



Code of Editorial Integrity (Adopted by WKU Board of Regents on August 11, 2023)

The Board of Regents at Western Kentucky University formally expressed support for public media, its value and mission. The university holds the license for WKU Public Radio and WKU PBS. During the quarterly meeting on Friday, August 11, 2023, Regents approved a Code of Editorial Integrity for Public Media, restating their support for editorial independence.

WKU President Timothy Caboni said it was important for the board to publicly validate its support for the editorial independence of public media, “As president, what I want everyone to understand is that it also has complete autonomy to ask any questions it wants to ask, pursue any stories it wants to pursue, without any interference from the institution, its leadership, or its PR program.” (from a report by Lisa Autry, WKU Public Radio)

A copy of the full text of the Code can be found at:

wkyufm.org/code-of-editorial-integrity



Media Offerings

Over-The-Air

WKU PBS Stations

WKU PBS 24.1

WKYU CREATE 24.2

WKYU-WX 24.3

WKU NPR & Classical FM Stations

WKYU-FM 88.9

WKU CLASSICAL (88.9 HD-2, 97.5)

WKUE-FM 90.9

WKPB-FM 89.5

WDCL-FM 89.7 & 103.3

Online and Over-The-Top

Local live streaming via WKYUPBS.ORG

PBS Passport

Hulu + Live

LocalNow

PBS App

Smart Devices

Live streaming via WKYUFM.ORG

WKU Public Media App

NPR App

Smart Devices



WKU REPORTERS FILED

520 stories to Kentucky Public Radio Network

71 feature stories to enhance local programming

WKU PUBLIC RADIO DELIVERED

250 hours of local news content, including local newscasts, Kentucky Public Radio Network newscasts, local feature stories and live special coverage such as election night results, breaking news, etc.

470 hours of locally originating arts and cultural programming.

wkyufm.org in 2023

937,796 pageviews

362,301 users

451,454 sessions

WKU PBS DELIVERED

137.50 hours of music, arts and cultural original programming.

139 hours of locally broadcast public affairs, news and informational original programming.



WKU Public Radio--Impact

The goal of every story, newscast, interview, and web post of WKU Public Radio is to help create a more informed, engaged and connected community. Our reporters and hosts work to bring our audience the best quality news and public affairs reporting on issues impacting their families, business, schools and local government—all without having to navigate a paywall.

The WKU Public Radio news team created approximately 250 hours of original local news programming during 2023. That number represents our efforts in identifying the most important news and information impacting our service area of Kentucky, southwestern Indiana and northern Tennessee.

The local news team at WKU Public Radio shared 520 news stories with our partner stations in the Kentucky Public Radio Network (KPRN). That means information, voices and perspectives from our communities were broadcast during the statewide KPRN newscasts heard weekdays on member stations Louisville Public Media, WEKU in Richmond/Lexington and WKMS in Murray/Paducah, as well as during those stations' local newscasts in Morning Edition and All Things Considered. These local news stories are also shared on station websites and social media channels. Our news team also benefits from using stories shared by our partner stations, part of our effort to bring the best combination of news, information and interviews to our audiences, both on-air and online.

In July 2023 Jake Martin had a local story picked up on a national level for his coverage of the diverse trucking industry. "Trucking is Getting More Diverse, Partly Due to a Nationwide Shortage of Drivers" was heard nationwide on Weekend Edition Saturday through NPR.

The Kentucky Public Radio Network grew even stronger in 2023, with the addition of a second Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) grant-funded capitol reporter position. That allowed the network to hire veteran Kentucky political journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Joe Sonka as our new state capitol enterprise reporter. Joe and capitol reporter Sylvia Goodman have established a presence in Frankfort and will provide daily coverage of the state's annual legislative sessions, two-year budget writing and statewide elections.

We believe the quality of our local news coverage will only get better in 2024, and beyond. Thanks to support from our donors, Western Kentucky University, and the communities we serve, the WKU Public Radio news team is uniquely positioned to provide outstanding and commercial-free news and information that makes a difference in the lives of our audience.



2023 Awards and Recognition

Kentucky Broadcasters Association

The **WKU Public Radio news team** was awarded **1st place in the category of Best Short Newscast** in the 2023 Kentucky Broadcasters Association Impact Awards. This competition includes entries from radio stations across the commonwealth, both public and commercial, in both large and small markets.

WKU Public Radio host/reporter **Alana Watson** won **1st place in the category of Best Special Series/Documentary** for a series of stories she produced about the challenges facing Kentucky residents who travel out of state to receive abortion care after the procedure was almost totally banned in the commonwealth.

Reporter **Lisa Autry** was also awarded **1st place in the category of Best Use of Sound** for her story about the Honor Flight Bluegrass program, which took a planeload of local military veterans to see national monuments and war memorials in Washington D.C.

Other KBA Nominations Included:

- **Lisa Autry**: Radio, Long Form, Public Affairs: “COVID Still Having Profound Effects on Kentucky Youth in 2022”
- **Lisa Autry**: Radio, Political Coverage
- **Lisa Autry**: Radio, Continuing Coverage: “Bowling Green Residents Impacted by Tornado Still Waiting for Permanent Housing Solutions”
- **Lisa Autry**: Radio, Enterprise Reporting: “Plowing Ahead: How Farmers in Bremen are Coping Six Months after Historic Tornado”

Ohio Valley Regional Emmy Awards

WKU PBS, Western Kentucky University’s Public Television Service, was nominated for awards in five categories for the 59th annual Ohio Valley Emmy Awards. WKU Public Media staff members **Joshua Niedwick** and **Jeff Petrocelli** received Ohio Valley Regional Emmy Awards on Saturday (July 29, 2023) at the 59th Annual Emmy Awards Gala in Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

WKU PBS has been nominated in each of the past 21 years, now having received 32 total awards.



WKU PBS received nominations for the following Ohio Valley Emmy Awards:

- Informational/ Instructional - Short Form or Long Form Content: AUTISM INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE, *Darius Barati & Molly Swietek*
- Documentary – Historical: BY PARTIES UNKNOWN, *Joshua Niedwick, Neil Purcell & Michael Morrow*
- Writer – Short Form or Long Form Content: BY PARTIES UNKNOWN, *Joshua Niedwick*
- Long Form Promotional Spot: BY PARTIES UNKNOWN (TRAILER), *Joshua Niedwick: EMMY Recipient*
- Audio Engineering or Musical Composition: ROMP – RHIANNON GIDDENS, *Jeff Petrocelli : EMMY Recipient*

Quote from **Joshua Niedwick** about By Parties Unknown trailer Emmy Win:

“Distilling a 90-minute documentary into a two-minute trailer is incredibly challenging, especially given the gravity of the story told in By Parties Unknown. For that trailer to be recognized with an Emmy award speaks to the importance and captivating narrative as told by Michael Morrow. I am personally humbled and grateful to Michael for allowing me to work with him on this project and for his life’s work at the SEEK Museum to receive the attention and recognition it so rightfully deserves.”

NETA Awards

WKU Public Media was nominated in eight categories at the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA) Awards. These national awards are the pinnacle of excellence in the public television industry. This was the first time that WKU Public Media had achieved this level of nomination.

Nominations included:

Visual Content/Digital Media: Cash Money Marcus

Visual Content/Historical Feature: By Parties Unknown

Visual Content/Performing Arts: ROMP—Rhiannon Giddens

Marketing & Communication/Annual Report: WKU Public Media Local Content and Services Report

Radio Content/Local Storytelling: Mission Complete—Honor Flight Bluegrass, WKYU FM

Radio Content/News & Public Affairs: Impacts of Historic Tornado Outbreak Still Being Felt One Year Later in Bowling Green—WKYU FM

Radio Content/Society & Culture: Crossing State Lines—Traveling for Abortion Care in Post-Dobbs Southern Kentucky, WKYU FM

Radio Content/Society & Culture: One Year After Historic Tornado, Conversations Turn to Helping Bowling Green’s International Community Weather Next Disaster—WKYU FM



National Leadership Impact

Public Media Diversity Leaders Initiative

PMDLI is a highly interactive virtual program designed with the unique needs of public media in mind. In 2023, WKU Public Media was proud to have Director of Development, Amy Hoffman Combs selected to participate in PMDLI's Cohort 5. Through the 5 days of workshops and discussions, Combs got to learn alongside industry leaders and thought professionals in the public media space. "My time with the professionals of PMDLI was enlightening and thought-provoking. Being able to discuss real-world challenges from across the country and learn how to think outside of myself was an invaluable experience for my personal and professional growth." Combs said. Amy was the second WKU Public Media employee selected for PMDLI. Cohort 4 participant, Jordan Basham, was the first.

PMDLI is led by Juan Johnson, Diversity Leaders Initiative Senior Fellow and is held on the campus of Furman University with the Riley Institute in Greenville, South Carolina.

Peace Studio Fellowship

The Peace Studio, out of New York City chooses only 10 people each year to participate in this highly sought-after fellowship. For the first time, the Peace Studio opened nominations to public media through a partnership with the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). Each applicant went through a three-stage review process, including a panel and ultimately resulted in awarding 5 artists and 5 journalists toward this year-long fellowship focused on building bridges and having a positive impact.

Among the 10 was WKU Public Media Production Manager, Josh Niedwick. The cohort started with a three-day retreat in Grand Rapids, Michigan where they studied "Skills for Creative Peacebuilding" curriculum and how to connect with the Peace Studio community and the Public Media system. Josh will focus efforts on including members of the community in an upcoming documentary to be released in 2024.

The Peace Studio seeks to foster a culture of peace by resourcing and supporting artists and journalists who want to have a positive impact on society.



Public Media Journalists Association (PMJA)

WKU Public Radio reporter Lisa Autry attended the 2023 Public Media Journalists Association (PMJA) conference in San Antonio, Texas. This is the largest annual conference dedicated to training and supporting public radio journalists. The conference included support and strategies applicable to any public media journalist, with certain sessions specifically geared towards small operations that serve primarily rural areas of the nation.

Poynter Leadership Academy for Women in Media

WKU Public Radio reporter/host Alana Watson applied for—and was accepted as—a 2023 Fellow in the Poynter Leadership Academy for Women in Media. This competitive and prestigious fellowship took her to Poynter’s headquarters in St. Petersburg, Florida, where she joined a cohort of established and up-and-coming women in the world of media. Some of the goals of the academy were: navigating ethical issues in a newsroom; finding better work/life chemistry; beating back imposter syndrome; and delegating with a purpose.

The Art of Telling Stories

By Parties Unknown

Throughout 2023, WKU PBS Production Manager, Josh Niedwick, along with fellow producer and SEEK Museum curator, Michael Morrow, were frequently invited to facilitate discussion groups following screenings organized by various groups. The documentary has been shown in multiple locations across the state, including Madisonville, Owensboro, Bowling Green, Russellville and even as far afield as Portland, Oregon. Screenings are set to continue into 2024. Additionally, in February, the documentary was broadcast across 49 states via public media outlets.

The Darel Carrier Story

Student Producer, Jared Kunish created a 30 minute documentary about local legend and nationally known basketball icon, Darel Carrier. Through honing his craft at WKU Public Media Jared learned from among the best about how to tell a story visually. On December 19, over 300 people attended the documentary viewing in Bowling Green, Kentucky and 700 more watched on YouTube before the end of the year.



Fleeing to Flyover Country

In partnership with Ball State PBS, students from WKU Public Media and the College Heights Herald created an eye-opening documentary that discusses the journey of Bowling Green, Kentucky as it has embraced the refugee community and shows the positive economic impact of such inclusion. Ball State, in Muncie, Indiana, has a similar population and the students collaborated to bring light to Bowling Green's success and how other communities can learn from its success. The documentary will have a public viewing in Bowling Green in 2024.

Hilltopper Sports Satellite Network

WKU Athletics once again partnered with WKU PBS to increase the coverage by the Hilltopper Sports Satellite Network, the network which has brought WKU fans coverage of WKU athletic events since 1999. This partnership along with the media rights agreement between Conference USA and ESPN, provides thousands of hours of paid experience for our student crew.

Student Highlights

WKU Public Media employs over 40 WKU students in a variety of roles. Students work alongside award-winning staff members preparing for their future careers in a number of fields.

You might find one of our television production students running a camera for a national production at a WKU Athletics event, one of the operations students programming an automation system in preparation for a future broadcast day or our student logistics coordinator scheduling other students for a production of Lost River Sessions. Wherever you look in our operation you can find a focus on career readiness of the next generation

AT&T Morning Line

WKU Public Media partnered with students from WKU's School of Media April 17-18, 2023, to attend AT&T's Morning Line as part of the Kentucky Derby Festival. This event brings together over a dozen radio stations from throughout the Commonwealth to interview figures associated with the Kentucky Derby, the city of Louisville and the Kentucky state government. This year, WKU Public Media conducted Morning Line interviews for the first time, represented by WKU Public Radio's former Morning Edition Host, Dalton York, and School of Media students Emmy Fazenbaker, Aaliyah Mulero and Austin Preston. Some of the interviews gathered from Morning Line aired on WKU's News Channel 12, The Extra Point and WWHR Revolution 91.7 ahead of the 149th annual Kentucky Derby.



Lost River Sessions

Lost River Sessions is the 11-time Emmy award-winning television, concert and radio series produced by WKU Public Media. Replicating the recording style of older folk records, Lost River Sessions features live music recorded in intimate, iconic settings across the South-Central Kentucky region. Lost River Sessions has a reputation for giving a platform for local Bluegrass, Folk and Americana artist to perform.

Lost River Sessions allows supporters to join together over the soundwaves, the airways and at regional, iconic venues. For 2023, Lost River Sessions welcomed East Nash Grass, Swift Silver, Spooky Fox, Sam Gyllenhaal Band, The Jenkins Twins Band, Flat River Band, Goldpine, The James Carothers Band, Kentucky Shine, Sister Sadie, Hunter Flynn, Eric Bolander, Logan Murrell, Hancock and Shouse, Bowling Green Rock Band Academy, Banditos, The Alley Cats, South Union Bluegrass Band and Vickie Vaughn.

WKU Public Media Supports Autism Awareness Month

On April 20, 2023, Lost River Sessions presented James Carothers LIVE! with Goldpine at The Capitol in Bowling Green, Kentucky. 223 Patrons attended the event where they were greeted by WKU Public Media student workers and staff. Special t-shirts were created for April's Autism Awareness Month, that say, "Lost River Sessions supports Autism Awareness." All proceeds from shirts, vendors and tickets were given to the Brinkley Student Fellowship—providing work experiences to WKU students on the autism spectrum.

Lost River Sessions continues to be a brand that WKU Public Media is proud to have created and is able to provide creative, local, and regional content, in various mediums, to people across the country via radio, television, live audience and streaming.



Community Engagement

Green Living Fair

WKU Public Media was well represented in Somerset, Kentucky at the Green Living Fair in April 2023. The fair's mission is one of sustainability and environmental consideration in all sorts of areas of life, letting people know that they can make a difference even by taking small, simple steps to do something different. Our staff promoted WDCL-FM 89.7 and provided opportunities for active engagement.

High School Career Shadow Days

WKU Public Media hosted high school students from Bowling Green and Warren County for a career shadow day with the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce and the SCK Launch Program. Students toured our studios and the mobile production truck, then spoke with our professionals about what life could look like should they choose a career in media.

Leadership Bowling Green Visit

Our studios annually host the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Bowling Green Media Days. Leadership Bowling Green is an exclusive opportunity for emerging area leaders to become immersed in our community. On their visit we highlighted the economic opportunities that WKU Public Media brings to our community. Learning more about our contribution and structure provides a baseline of knowledge to these leaders as they continue to grow professionally in our community.

PBS Kids Day at the Bowling Green Hot Rods

Through a continued relation with the Bowling Green Hot Rods, WKU Public Media hosted every Sunday home game of the 2023 baseball season. WKU PBS hosted a PBS Kids Day at the ballpark, bringing fun and entertainment to the whole family. Elinor and Olive from "Elinor Wonders Why" came to show the Hot Rods support, as well as interact with fans, on Sunday, April 16. On Sunday, July 30, special appearances from Alma from "Alma's Way" and Molly from "Molly of Denali" delighted all ages with autographs, photographs and high fives.



ROMP

WKU Public Media maintains a collaborative partnership with the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Owensboro, Kentucky. During the last week of June, our producers and students dedicate their time to live multicamera production of the ROMP Music Festival. Live music production offers our students a valuable opportunity to gain practical, resume-enhancing experience. This season of ROMP will result in nine hours of unique programming.

New Employees

Jessica Warren, Manager for Underwriting & Major Gifts

Jessica Warren, originally hailing from the picturesque landscapes of Southwestern New York, joined the staff in June 2023.

Jessica is a 1998 graduate of Western Kentucky University where she obtained a Bachelor of Science in Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management.

Armed with her degree, Jessica embarked on a remarkable 19-year journey as part of the sales and marketing team at a prestigious hotel and convention center. Her tenure was marked by a strategic understanding of business, where she was eventually the Sales Director. Driven by a desire to contribute meaningfully to her community, Jessica transitioned into the role of Development Officer for the Historic Rail Park and Train Museum, a nonprofit tourist attraction and museum. In this capacity, she played a pivotal role in preserving history, fostering cultural appreciation, and promoting tourism in the region.

However, Jessica's journey came full circle as she returned to her alma mater, Western Kentucky University, embracing a professional position with WKU Public Media. Jessica joined the development team to head Underwriting and Major Gifts for the station.

Celebrating 22 years of marriage to her husband, Richard, Jessica treasures the bonds of family and the unwavering support they provide. Together they are blessed with two remarkable daughters, Rachel and Veronica (one of which will be a freshman at WKU in fall 2024). An integral part of Jessica's life revolves around supporting her daughters in their respective pursuits—cheering for Veronica during her volleyball matches and celebrating Rachel's achievements in swim meets. The family would not be complete without excitement from their German shepherd, Chloe, whom you may find guarding the house from birds in the backyard or cuddled up next to whomever is closest to the couch.



Robin McCubbins

Robin McCubbins moved into the Operations Coordinator position at WKU Public Media in 2023 after working there part-time for many years. Robin works closely with Justin Davis, Programming Operations Manager, utilizing various traffic management systems for acquiring and verifying programming and fundraising content for WKU Public Media.

Ian Pierce

Ian Pierce joined WKU Public Media with a student fellowship in the summer of 2021. Following his graduation from WKU in Fall of 2022, Ian accepted his current position of Broadcast Facility Engineer. Ian works closely with Erik Costa, Director of Technology, in support of our broadcast operations for both radio and television.

Ethan Carlson

Ethan Carlson rejoined WKU Public Media in 2023 having previously being a member of the student production crew from 2015-2018. Ethan accepted his current position as Associate Producer/Director of Sports, returning to WKU Public Media after working professionally as a freelancer on sporting events such as the Stanley Cup Finals, NFL Draft, and Kentucky Derby, among others. Ethan helps to oversee the crew that works WKU Athletics events being broadcast on ESPN+.

WKU Pet Pledge Day

Each year we embark on several PBS and NPR pledge drives to educate our audience on the value we bring to our communities we serve and how they can support our mission. This year, one of the favorites was Pet Pledge Day! Several of our staff members brought in their pets to showcase online or talk about in the studio. Of course, all station pet activities are approved by our resident furry staff member: Sir Jude McTavish III.