



KASU Station Activity Summary for 2016. Submitted to CPB on 2/13/17.

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.

2016 was a year of transformation and growth in the news department of KASU. News Director Johnathan Reaves has shown tremendous dedication and leadership since his promotion to that position in the fall of 2015, following the death of long-time News Director Greg Chance. In his time as News Director, Johnathan has provided training and guidance to Morning Edition producer/host Brandon Tabor, who was hired in November, 2015. Throughout 2016, Johnathan and Brandon have worked as a team to plan and coordinate their coverage of local and regional events and issues.

There was no shortage of issues and events to cover during 2016 in Jonesboro and the surrounding area. One of the two major hospitals in the city began an extensive renovation and expansion project and announced the addition of a cancer care center. The city saw movement on two competing proposals for a Hotel and Convention Center. The culmination of years of upgrading work finally resulted in a bypass being officially designated as Interstate 555. Some industries expanded, while others laid off workers or closed altogether. Jonesboro dealt with controversy over a proposed Property Maintenance Code, suffered severe flooding from torrential rains, and debated pay raises for police officers and other city employees. Arkansas State University partnered with the New York Institute of Technology to open a College of Osteopathic Medicine. A-State moved forward with plans for a campus in Mexico. The university's chancellor resigned amid scandal and an interim chancellor was named. These are just a few of the stories KASU covered in 2016. We also provided election coverage of the May primary election and the coinciding special election on Jonesboro's proposed Property Maintenance Code.

Over the past year, the KASU news team has also worked to increase local news content on the KASU website and to share stories with a wider audience via social media. Increased use of images and video on social media have added new dimensions to the station's news outreach. Johnathan began experimenting with the use of Facebook Live in 2016 and has garnered considerable attention to KASU Public Radio on Facebook as a result of reporting he has done using that medium. The station's Facebook page has had hundreds of new followers added as a result of these live video feeds. Seeing the potential of this new platform, Johnathan spearheaded efforts to purchase the equipment needed to improve KASU's ability to offer high quality reports from the field via Facebook Live. This is just one more avenue for expanding the reach and increasing the audience for KASU's news coverage.

In May, Johnathan went to Associated Press headquarters in Washington, D.C., to be trained on the AP's new ENPS news-gathering software, which the university has purchased. He then conducted training sessions and overviews of the new system for Brandon and other members of the KASU staff. Johnathan attended the Public Radio News Director Incorporated annual conference in June, returning with fresh ideas for our growing news initiative.

Also in 2016, Johnathan and Brandon consulted with engineering staff in the construction and equipping of a new office/newsroom area, which is now an active workspace housing Brandon and another reporter. That reporter, Ann Kenda, began work at KASU in January, 2017, as part of our Regional Journalism Collaboration with other public radio stations in the state, now called Arkansas Public Media. Throughout 2016, Johnathan, along with KASU station manager Mike Doyle, served on various committees charged with hiring the management and staff for Arkansas Public Media. That organization is now established, fully staffed, and producing excellent feature stories to share with NPR and among all of the partnered stations.

The year also saw a continuation of periodic interviews with the two U.S. Senators from Arkansas, and the U.S. Representative from the First Congressional District of Arkansas. These live interviews run 10-15 minutes in length and cover a wide variety of topics. Each interview is recorded and then put on the KASU website for on-demand listening, shared on social media, and often shared and promoted by the Congressional staffs in Washington, reaching people far outside the broadcast region.

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.

As previously mentioned, KASU has worked with other public radio stations in the state to gain approval from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to form a Regional Journalism Collaboration now operating as Arkansas Public Media. This organization, administered from the offices of KUAR in Little Rock, supports one reporter at each station in the partnership, tasked with providing long-form and multi-platform stories in key topics that are important in each station's broadcast region. The development of this organization suffered a serious blow when one of the key figures in its planning, KUAR station manager Ben Fry, died suddenly and unexpectedly in March. Despite this tragic setback, work continued on the partnership, and Arkansas Public Media began producing stories to be shared among its participating stations and with NPR. When Ann Kenda started work at KASU in January of 2017, the staff of Arkansas Public Media was complete.

In addition to the radio news collaboration, KASU continued partnerships with several arts organizations in the region to present or promote several 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 airs on Saturday and again on Monday, as part of KASU's "Arkansas Roots" program.

During the past year, KASU has continued a long tradition of offering live music performances throughout the region. We pride ourselves in helping to kick-start the downtown revitalization effort in Jonesboro in the 1990s, by starting a live, monthly blues concert in a downtown restaurant that was one of the few struggling businesses remaining on a largely shuttered Main Street. Today, thanks in large part to a change in state law regarding liquor licenses for private clubs, Jonesboro's Main Street is a thriving arts and entertainment area, with restaurants offering live music almost every night of the week. Although KASU is not currently sponsoring live music in Jonesboro, we are proud to have set the trend in motion and to have been a part of it for many years. KASU's Coffeehouse Concert series ended in 2016 when The ArtsAt311, a privately-owned venue in downtown Jonesboro, closed its doors. KASU wrapped up this successful series of concerts with an outstanding performance by guitarist and folk singer Jim Hurst in March, the father-daughter folk/alt-country duo of Pierce and Grace Pettis in April, and the final concert by Vikki McGee and Friends in June. The station is exploring other possible Jonesboro venues for future concerts, but our small, intimate concert series concept is on hiatus for now.

Finding and keeping good venues for small concerts has been an ongoing challenge for KASU through uncertain economic times. The station had a concert series in past years in the nearby town of Newport. We were forced to end that series due to a lack of viable venue options. But in the past year, we were approached by city officials about a new venue they were constructing in downtown Newport. The city is planning regular and ongoing events for the new public space, and requested that KASU consider sponsoring a monthly concert again in Newport. The station began negotiating the details for another concert series there, starting in 2017.

The station has continued its long-time collaboration with the Collins Theater in the nearby town of Paragould, with our highly successful Bluegrass Monday concert. The fourth Monday night of each month is Bluegrass Monday at the Collins. KASU Program Director Marty Scarbrough, the host of Down Home Harmonies, books outstanding, nationally-known bluegrass bands and emcees this concert, which has a regular attendance of about 350-500 bluegrass fans each month.

For the eighth consecutive year, KASU partnered with the Delta Symposium at Arkansas State University to help fund and promote the speakers, film exhibitions, and musical performances that highlight the scholarship and research into the culture and traditions of the Mississippi River Delta region in which we are located. The Delta Flix Film Fest, which debuted the previous year, was again a part of the symposium. As part of this film festival, KASU sponsored the screening of the 2007 biographical drama, "I'm Not There," a film inspired by the life and music of Bob Dylan. KASU conducted interviews about various aspects of the symposium in the days leading up to it.

The Roots Music Fest on the final day of the Symposium is a Saturday-in-the-Park outdoor event that KASU helps to sponsor in conjunction with the ASU Department of English. The April 2016 concert showcased a variety of musical styles, with performances by the Zyndall Rainey Band, Runaway Planet, the Last Chance Jug Band, The Salty Dogs, Grace Pettis with Wilkinson James (an outstanding impromptu mini-concert which kept the crowd entertained during a long break between acts), and the Lucious Spiller Blues Band. The festival is well-attended, with people of all ages out in the park enjoying a full day of great music, and KASU is proud to help make it possible.

KASU has also worked with CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates for children. This non-profit organization recruits and trains volunteers to advocate for children and youth in the court system, many of whom have suffered abuse or neglect. There is a critical shortage of CASA advocates to deal with the number of cases in which they are needed. KASU news has interviewed the CASA director about the work of the organization and its impact in the community, and the station has publicized its recruitment and training events.

KASU maintains memberships in three area Chambers of Commerce - Jonesboro, Paragould, and Batesville. In 2016, we participated in each chamber's annual Business Expo event. KASU's Director of Underwriting and Corporate Relations, Doreen Selden, helped with the planning for the Jonesboro Business Expo, serving on the Chamber's business network committee. This committee also organized several Lunch & Learn events for area businesspeople. Doreen also often attends the Jonesboro Chamber's Business After Hours events and ribbon-cuttings for new businesses. In addition to these Chamber of Commerce activities, Doreen also served on a publicity committee for the Downtown Jonesboro Association, helping to get the word out about special events in the downtown area. KASU's news team has covered some of the newsworthy downtown events, such as the annual Hispanic Celebration held around Cinco de Mayo.

Attempting to open up a new potential source of revenue for the station, KASU decided to try offering travel opportunities for our listeners. In late 2015, we began a partnership with Premiere Travel to offer a trip to Cuba in 2016. Although the trip occurred in FY17, the planning, promotion, and sign-up period all fell within FY16. We had nine participants, and they all enjoyed the trip very much. We will have more details about the trip and our future travel initiatives in the 2017 Station Activity Summary.

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.

The chairperson of The Delta Symposium Committee at Arkansas State University, Dr. Greg Hansen, a professor of folklore and English, says, "KASU is indispensable to the success of the Symposium." The station's financial contribution for the Symposium started at \$1000 in 2009 and has now grown to approximately \$5000. These funds come from our Foundation account. We feel that they are a worthy investment in presenting and preserving the culture of our area. This support also builds bridges of friendship here on the campus. Hansen adds, "We appreciate the contribution KASU makes toward it, and we're excited to continue the success of this event for years to come."

The Collins Theater in Paragould, Arkansas was built in 1925 as a movie theater, but it has also been the home of many notable live stage performances over the years. Will Rogers, Mae West and others have graced its stage in the past. The community has done a remarkable job of preserving and maintaining it, and today the theater remains a busy place with community theater productions, country and pop music concerts, and other events including KASU's Bluegrass Monday concert.

Every month, KASU books nationally known, award-winning bluegrass bands that perform there. Monroe Crossing, the Tennessee Mafia Jug Band, David Davis and the Warrior River Boys, and many more have traveled to Paragould from out-of-state to perform there. 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. Joe Wessell, head of the non-profit board that operates the Collins, has called the concert "one of the best things we have going here." Rick Lane, who manages operations at the theater, says people really look forward to the bluegrass concert each month. He reports that people all around the state have heard about the concert and sometimes driven several hours to attend. Lane says he even heard from a woman in Wisconsin who had heard about the concert and booked advance tickets for it while making travel plans through Arkansas. Lane says of the concert, "It's really had a positive influence on the community here. Terry's Cafe, just up the

street, is full of people on concert nights.” KASU also has a partnership with this local restaurant to provide a meal for the band prior to the performance. Bluegrass Monday is by far the longest running and most successful concert series that KASU has offered, and the local partnerships that make it possible are good for everyone involved.

Although Bluegrass Monday is our most well-attended concert, all of these community events that we produce and promote help KASU maintain its reputation for supporting local arts. KASU’s noon-hour program, “Arkansas Roots” continues to attract the attention of local and regional musicians whose recordings we play on the broadcast. Most of these part-time performers work at other full time jobs and they thank KASU for supporting local music. No other station in our area does anything like this. Within the past year, the program has attracted even greater attention as we began regularly pre-promoting some of the daily shows on the Arkansas Roots Facebook page, and cross-promoting those shows by tagging the pages of some of the bands being featured that day. This clever bit of marketing lets these bands and their fans know that they’re being played that day, and gets those fans listening. We hope those fans get hooked on the program and share it with others. New listeners may eventually become new donors to the station; in fact, some members of bands we have booked have sent us contributions. Several of the musicians have either commented on our Facebook posts, or sent private messages or email, thanking us for playing their music and for offering the opportunity to have their music heard by a wider and more diverse audience.

Each Thursday, “Arkansas Roots” offers a “hill country” edition of the show, which is exclusively underwritten by the Advertising and Promotion Committee of Hardy, Arkansas - a resort town about an hour from Jonesboro in the Ozark foothills. All music on the Thursday program originates from the Ozark region of the KASU broadcast area. The region is rich in musical heritage and incredible talent. As you might expect, much of the music falls into the Classic Country or Hillbilly genres, but there are also jazz, blues, and rock-and-roll musicians in “them thar hills.”

“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. Also in 2016, the Arkansas Roots Facebook page began posting regular listings of upcoming concerts in venues throughout the region. This is another service that has been widely appreciated by the venues and the musicians in the area.

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 2016, and any plans you have made to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2017. If you regularly broadcast in a language other than English, please note the language broadcast.

The KASU news team covered Martin Luther King Day events in Jonesboro, as well as Black History Month events on the Arkansas State University campus. Stories leading up to these events let listeners know what was being planned, then KASU’s news director and reporter offered coverage of several of the events, including the annual MLK Day march and various speeches, lectures, and panel discussions held in conjunction with these observances. In addition to broadcast features, the news team added photos to the stories presented on the website and shared on social media.

KASU news covered the Hispanic Celebration in downtown Jonesboro, held each year on the weekend closest to Cinco de Mayo. The news team has also produced features highlighting the

local Hispanic Center and its services, and promoting special events such as volunteer recruitment for ESL tutors and other needs for the center.

In June, KASU News Director Johnathan Reaves covered a meeting and vigil held at Arkansas State for members of the LGBTQ community and their Allies following the tragic shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. He produced a feature, with photos for the website and social media, which gave voice to the pain felt by this part of our community and expressed their search for a way forward following this tragedy. KASU's coverage of this event was appreciated by the LGBTQ community and it provided additional sources for Johnathan to contact in telling the LGBTQ story going forward.

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 "Rhythm and Grooves," "We Wanna Boogie," 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 historical and cultural information.

KASU Development Director Mark Smith has presented a concept to the station's management and staff for a new local program, which would be a roundtable discussion of major issues facing our nation, offering diverse local perspectives on these issues. Topics could include racism, sexism, LGBTQ issues, gun violence, abortion, income inequality, etc. The program would feature guests with diverse viewpoints engaging in civil discourse, exchanging views and exploring their differences in a peaceful way, and in a relaxed atmosphere. The idea is to record the discussion, which would be held in a local coffee shop, and offer it on-air, by podcast, or both, with only minimal editing. This program was discussed at length throughout the year. A pilot program was recorded in the fall of 2016, which became an opportunity for troubleshooting the project. There are still a number of issues to be worked out to bring this program to fruition, and it needs a host with adequate time and energy to devote to it, but there is still a desire to bring such a program to the schedule.

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?

Small stations like KASU are the ones most greatly impacted by CPB funding. KASU is the only public radio station serving this region, and 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.

CPB funding has been essential in enabling KASU to expand and improve our local and regional news operation. Additional support from the CPB had made possible the addition of another reporter at KASU through the establishment of the Arkansas Public Media collaborative. KASU's staff includes five on-air personnel and seven volunteers who produced an estimated 838 hours of music programs, 45 hours of news and public affairs, and 38 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 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 continue to be The Best of Car Talk, Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me, Morning Edition, Weekend Edition, and the recently ended Diane Rehm Show. KASU is able to provide these and other national programs, such as the new show, 1A, because of the CSG. Without the grant funding, the quality of our music offerings would go down because it is practically impossible to find competent local hosts for classical and jazz music in this area.

Performance Today and Concert Hall have listeners throughout the area and are a great service to listeners in northeast Arkansas, southeast Missouri and northwestern Tennessee.

We continue to fund one staff position from the Community Service Grant: Doreen Selden's position is paid for with CPB funds and continues to be a well-justified addition to our staff.

Through her efforts, along with those of Development Director Mark Smith, 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 has worked the phones during our fundraising drives, attended business related functions in the community, and helped with special events and projects. She spearheaded and managed KASU's first foray into travel, expertly coordinating our sponsored trip to Cuba, and going 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.