



## 2015 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



*"We strive to support programs and charities that make contributions to the Lansing area and WKAR fits the bill. The station is a positive way for us to make an impact."*

-Lisa B. Rentz  
Director of Marketing and Patient Relations  
Lansing Ophthalmology

**WKAR: We connect people to powerful ideas that inspire personal growth, exploration of our world and positive change.**



**WKAR is a valuable part of the mid-Michigan area's advancement.**

The station provides public broadcasting service on three WKAR television stations (as well as WKAR Radio).

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

**In 2015, WKAR provided these vital local services:**

- Two Radio Stations
  - WKAR-AM 870kHz
  - WKAR-FM/HD 90.5
- One Television Station with 3 channels
  - WKAR-HD
  - WKAR-Create
  - WKAR-World
- Online streaming of TV and Radio programming
- Ready To Learn educational workshops
- Community Cinema screenings/dialogues
- National and local programming including news, public affairs, arts, health, education
- 60+ hours of children's programming per week.

**WKAR's local services had deep impact in the mid-Michigan area.**

Through the station's partnerships with local schools and agencies, Ready To Learn has reached over 100,000 children and their families who have learned to develop more positive learning skills through workshop participation.

Locally produced programs target issues of importance to the community, and our free public screenings feature panels of local experts and faculty from MSU who lead dynamic discussions with participants.

## **WKAR Offers Local Value on Air, Online and On the Ground**

Thank you for taking the time to read through our report. In 2015, the roster of WKAR original series and specials continued to expand both in number and in reach, with new local offerings being picked up by stations around the state.

In addition to reaching new audiences in Mid-Michigan and across the state, WKAR developed new partnerships and collaborations that allowed for deeper engagement and stronger impact. We are eager to share our story with you!

### **WKAR Originals**

Building on the success of **Forte's** 2014 debut, season two was expanded from 6 to 10 episodes in the series, which showcases the heartwarming stories of Michigan high school band and orchestra programs as students prepare for elite competition. New in 2015 was the addition of jazz ensembles, and travel to Michigan schools as far as **Jackson, Ann Arbor and New Baltimore** on the northern shore of Lake St. Clair.

Also in 2015, episodes of the debut season were broadcast on WNMU Marquette, WGVU Grand Rapids, WCMU Mt. Pleasant and WDCQ University Center.

On-demand viewing of the series again topped the viewing lists of WKAR originals within the PBS video portal, with over **13,000 views** across episodes and web extras.

2015 also brought a second-season expansion of **Curious Crew** from 8 to 10 episodes, featuring award-winning educator **Rob Stephenson** and a cast of inquisitive kids as they take a hands-on approach to scientific exploration.

**Curious Crew** cast members are 8- to 14-year-old explorers from across mid-Michigan, selected from an open casting call that drew over 100 young actors to audition at the WKAR studios in May 2015. Program segments were recorded on location at **Impression 5 Science Center** in Lansing.

2015 saw the online publication of CuriosityGuides for each 'Investigation' featured in all episodes. Authored by series host Rob Stephenson, the CuriosityGuides provide step-by-step instructions to help kids, educators and caregivers conduct their own investigations at home and in school.

Also in 2015, episodes of the debut season of **Curious Crew** were broadcast on WNMU Marquette, WGVU Grand Rapids, WCMU Mt. Pleasant and WDCQ University Center.

In the 26th season of **QuizBusters** over sixty teams competed for Division Champion and Grand Champion titles, and prizes that include offers of tuition scholarships from Michigan State University.

Two season-opening **Celebrity QuizBusters** episodes featured 16 community leaders and personalities from mid-Michigan trying to prove they are as smart as the high schoolers!

In 2015, a new twist was added with an additional celebrity episode focusing on classical music and featuring mid-Michigan's biggest names in music, including Lansing Symphony Orchestra Music Director **Timothy Muffitt** and MSU College of Music Professor **Melanie Helton**.

Political coverage in 2015 kicked off with **Gubernatorial Inauguration 2015** on New Year's Day and included **Michigan State of The State 2015** later in the month. This marked the 42<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year of State of the State coverage by WKAR political anchor Tim Skubick. Given WKAR's proximity to the state capitol, the station takes the lead on distributing the special to stations across Michigan.

**Off the Record with Tim Skubick** continued its run as Michigan's only statewide political talk show, with 52 weekly episodes. Celebrating 45 years in 2015, highlights included the broadcast with former Rep. Todd Courser following his resignation from the Michigan House, examination of the refugee situation in Michigan with Sen. David Knezek and Skubick's one-on-one interview with Frank Kelley, the nation's longest serving state attorney general.

Also featured in 2015 were two episodes of **An Evening with the Governor**, with January presenting a look back at 2014 and December reviewing 2015 with Governor Rick Snyder and First Lady Sue Snyder.

**Spotlight on the News**, moderated by hall of fame broadcaster Chuck Stokes, continued its second year being available to mid-Michigan viewers as part of a block of news/talk television airing each Sunday from noon through 6pm. **Spotlight** has been on the air in Detroit from WXYZ-TV/Channel 7 since 1965, and comes to WKAR through a rare partnership between a local public broadcast station and a commercial network affiliate.

WKAR also serves mid-Michigan as a key partner in production and connectivity services, including uplinks for PBS NewsHour, CBS Sports, NFL Productions, ESPN, MSNBC, CNBC, CNN, ABC World News, Bloomberg Television, CCTV – America, Eurovision Americas, Rachel Maddow among others.

WKAR's live music series, **BackStage Pass**, featured debut broadcasts of 20 episodes recorded at Lansing JazzFest and the Michigan BluesFest, showcasing internationally known touring acts such as **Harper and Midwest Kind** and jazz keyboardist **Jim Alfredson**. **BackStage Pass** is distributed by NETA and since its debut in 2006 has been seen in over half the TV markets across the country, including 8 of the top 10 markets.

**Current Sports TV with Al Martin** goes beyond the Xs and Os with in-depth interviews of sports figures from the college, professional and high school ranks. Highlights in 2015 included Martin's coverage of MSU Men's Basketball at the NCAA Final Four and MSU Football Spartans battling their way to the College Football Playoff finals.

WKAR also produced annual local specials including the **31<sup>st</sup> Annual Silver Bells in the City**, a two-hour live production featuring an electric light parade and the lighting of the state Christmas tree; **MSU's Home for the Holidays**, a one-hour special highlighting performers from MSU's College of Music; and aired the ABC 12 production of **Holiday Pops with the Flint Symphony**.

## Community Engagement

WKAR-TV community engagement projects in 2015 included special efforts addressing cancer, consumer economics and science exploration. Ongoing projects including free film screenings and partnering with open air arts and music festivals, with a highlight being the Downtown Abbey screenings, which drew more than 540 fans to our studios on the MSU campus.

WKAR launched a community engagement project in conjunction with the groundbreaking series from Ken Burns, **Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies**. The project in mid-Michigan extended the reach and power of the TV broadcast of the six-hour series with partners including: American Cancer Society/Lakeshore Division, Karmanos Cancer Institute at McLaren Greater Lansing, MSU Breslin Cancer Center, MSU College of Nursing, and Sparrow Cancer Center.

WKAR's free screening of "**Thinking Money: The Psychology Behind Our Best and Worst Financial Decisions**" brought community members together with area financial advisors for conversation about why we spend, why we save, and how we think about money. Partners for the event and live webcast included Comerica Bank, M3 Group, MSU Federal Credit Union, Siena Wealth Advisors, and University Club of MSU. Made possible by a grant from Maryland Public Television.

**WKAR Community Cinema** events feature screenings of new independent documentaries followed by community conversation around each film's theme. In 2015, Community Cinema events were presented in partnership with **MSU Project 60/50**, a project focusing on civil and human rights. Six screenings were held in 2015, including **American Denial** and **A Path Appears**. WKAR was also a promotional partner with Carnegie Library in Jackson, MI., for a screening of **180 Days: Hartsville**.

Fall 2015 introduced **Indie Lens Pop-Up**, featuring the Independent Lens films **Stray Dog** and **Autism in Love**.

**Masterpiece Preview Screenings** continue to be extremely popular. The final season preview screening of **Downton Abbey** drew over 540 enthusiastic fans to WKAR Studio A across multiple sold-out showings.

MSU Museum Curator of History Shirley Wajda delighted audiences with an entertaining and educational look at the costumes in the series and the cultural significance of the fashions of the period.

Original series episodes and specials are available online and engagement is fostered across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

## Education

WKAR-TV education projects in 2015 addressed bullying prevention; science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education; and enhanced ongoing partnerships with area literacy and child development groups.

In March 2015, students, parents, teachers and local leaders gathered at WKAR for a community forum as part of the **Bully Prevention Project**. Now in its third year, the project is designed to educate parents, teachers and our community about the physical and psychological dangers of bullying, and to showcase efforts to inspire students to take a stand against bullying. Partners in the project include the **Lansing School District**, the **City of Lansing** and the **Capital Region Community Foundation Youth Action Committee**.

**Curious Crew in Your Community** is a new education outreach effort launched in 2015 in partnership with Capital Area District Libraries. Host Rob Stephenson and the Curious Crew visited neighborhood libraries to guide hands-on science investigations connected to the everyday world around us. The pilot effort brought Rob and the Crew to Haslett, Holt and East Lansing in 2015.

**WKAR Ready To Learn** continues to offer “**Raising Readers Family Workshops**,” designed to help parents learn how to work with their children to increase literacy skills. Through an ongoing relationship with the **Capital Area Head Start** program, WKAR Ready To Learn has reached over 80,000 children and teachers since the program began.

WKAR also joined forces with **Fenner Nature Center** to create a series of videos for their **Go Wild!** Campaign, which encourages kids to play outside and explore our natural world.



### WKAR Engages Community through Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies

In 2015, WKAR launched a community engagement project in conjunction with the groundbreaking series from Ken Burns, **Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies**.

WKAR's project included the production of a print guide to mid-Michigan resources, radio interviews with local experts on 90.5 Current State and a special preview screening.

More than 140 members of the community came out to the screening to see the preview and engage in discussion with a panel of area experts. The event was also streamed online.



### Curious Crew takes STEM Investigations on the Road to Libraries and the MSU Science Festival

WKAR's popular series, **Curious Crew**, launched a new education outreach effort in 2015, visiting neighborhood libraries to guide hands-on science investigations connected to the everyday world around us.

Host Rob Stephenson and the Curious Crew also partnered with the MSU Science Festival to welcome Dr. Scott Sampson, paleontologist and host of PBS' *Dinosaur Train*, and lead hands-on explorations following Sampson's standing-room-only presentation, "Dr. Scott Talks Dinosaurs."



### WKAR and MSU offer Tuition Scholarships to QuizBusters Champs

**QuizBusters** features over 60 high school teams competing for bragging rights and tuition scholarship offers to Michigan State University.

Fall 2015 brought **QuizBusters' 27<sup>th</sup>** season and an updated set and lighting design optimized for HD production.

This series is so popular that over one-third of the competing schools come from outside WKAR's coverage area.



### WKAR Celebrates Student Performances with Forte

#### Concept

From the rigor of the rehearsal room, to the bright lights of the stage, **Forte** presents heartwarming stories of Michigan high school band and orchestra programs as students prepare for competition at State Festival.

#### Reach in the Community

For its second season, **Forte** grew to ten episodes, added jazz ensembles into the mix with concert and symphonic bands and orchestras, and traveled to Michigan schools as far as Jackson, Ann Arbor and New Baltimore on the northern shore of Lake St. Clair.

Also in 2015, episodes of the debut season were broadcast on WNMU Marquette, WGVU Grand Rapids, WCMU Mt. Pleasant and WDCQ University Center.

#### Impact and Community Feedback

On-demand viewing of the series again topped the viewing lists of WKAR originals within the PBS video portal, with over 13,000 views across episodes and web extras.

*"We at MSBOA have had numerous positive comments from directors, administrators, parents and the general viewing public about the (Forte) broadcasts. The fact that many members of the public, that were not aware of the total value of instrumental music education, can now support the school music programs is invaluable."*

**Paul Lichau**  
Executive Director  
Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association





*"I want to express the importance WKAR-TV had in my educational experience at Michigan State University and ultimately in my television career. The skills, experience and contacts that I made working at WKAR as a student built the foundation that supported my success within the broadcast industry."*

**Todd Golebiewski**  
ESPN Monday Night Football

In 2015, WKAR helped children learn to read and be ready for school.

We expanded original series and specials showcasing mid-Michigan musicians, students, local businesses and timely issues.

We increased awareness around local issues, convened panels and discussions, and provided access to local leaders, world-class researchers, and MSU faculty.

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



WKAR Public Media in our community – on air, online and on the ground.

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**WKAR plays an essential role in mid-Michigan as a key source for quality children's educational programming, showcasing local artists, musicians, and nonprofit community organizations, and offering a variety of engaging forums for community members to share their talents, interests, concerns and cultural backgrounds.**

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