

# PBS Western Reserve President's Report

Summer 2025

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**WESTERN  
RESERVE**

*The PBS Western Reserve President's Report is published for the Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio Inc. Board of Directors, major funders of the station and other community members interested in the organization's activities.*

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## Defunded but not defeated: public media including PBS Western Reserve defunded in July vote

On July 18, the U.S. House of Representatives gave final approval on a bill to rescind federal funding for public media. With an additional reduction in state funding, PBS Western Reserve must raise an additional \$600,000 to close resulting budget gaps. PBS Western Reserve is encouraging all supporters to increase their monthly donation, make an additional annual donation or spread the word to preserve PBS Western Reserve. Go to [PBSWesternReserve.org/preserve](http://PBSWesternReserve.org/preserve) to give today.



## PBS Western Reserve earns accolades at 2024 Central Great Lakes Emmy Awards

PBS Western Reserve won two 2024 Emmy awards from the Central Great Lakes chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. The series CITY CENTRIC and THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA each received an award on Saturday, June 21, at the Central Great Lakes Emmy Awards ceremony held in Indianapolis. Gary Manke, Senior Producer/Director, was also recognized for his more than 50 years of service in the media industry.

CITY CENTRIC received the Emmy award in the category of Magazine Program for its second season. Jacob Kouwe received his second award in the category Talent: Performer, Host, Narrator for his performance in season two of the fan-favorite series THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA. Gary Manke was awarded the prestigious Gold Circle Award for his contributions to the industry over his decades-spanning career in media.



## Programming & Content Production



### PBS Western Reserve airs documentary featuring local scientists

There won't be another total solar eclipse in Ohio until 2099, but the memory of last year's eclipse has been captured in the *GATHERED IN DARKNESS*, a documentary which premiered exclusively in Ohio on PBS Western Reserve on Saturday, June 14. The film documents the 2024 Citizen Continental-America Telescopic Eclipse (CATE 2024) project at multiple stops along the path of totality, including in Northeast Ohio.



### New music education series launches

Each year, the Broadcast Educational Media Commission – Ohio (BEMC) and the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) offer grants to Ohio's public television stations to produce educational multimedia series for students, teachers, parents and caregivers. In 2025, PBS Western Reserve produced "In Tune: Everyday Music," a ten-part music series designed for classroom and home instruction for students in grades K-3.

Hosted by THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA's Jake Kouwe and joined by Esther Fitz, two seasoned musicians with an extensive background in music performance, the series explores the world of music through live demonstrations and interviews with musicians from the Chardon Polka Band and members of Ohio youth orchestras and symphonies. Musical concepts are presented in a fun and engaging manner, with practical suggestions for making music accessible and enjoyable at home.

Episodes include "Sound and Vibration," "Woodwinds," "Strings," "Brass," "Percussion" and "Bands and Ensembles." Four educator videos are also included.

The series and accompanying teacher's guide may be viewed at [PBSWesternReserve.org/in-tune](https://PBSWesternReserve.org/in-tune).



### THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA to be distributed nationally through NETA

Season 2 of THE WORLD ACCORDING TO POLKA has been accepted for national distribution through the National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). It will be available to stations nationwide in the fall.



### Series celebrating America's semiquincentennial in the works

PBS Western Reserve is producing a series that will highlight Ohio and the American Revolution in celebration of America's 250th. Episodes will begin airing in September.



## Community Outreach



### Inaugural State of the Station events held to address federal funding loss

PBS Western Reserve held its first State of the Station events on July 23 and July 24. The events offered an update on our initiatives and budget from Natalie Pillsbury, president and CEO, and an opportunity for the community to ask questions. Light refreshments and tours of the station were offered. There were 80 community members in attendance over the two days.



### Lyla sparks joy at Lock 3 Park

As the exclusive media sponsor for the Akron Bicentennial, PBS Western Reserve participated in the city's Feature of the Future Exhibition held at Lock 3 Park on July 5. The booth saw over 100 visitors that were offered the opportunity to meet Lyla from LYLA IN THE LOOP and learn about PBS Western Reserve.



### 20 attend station tour

On June 4, PBS Western Reserve hosted a presentation and tour at its offices for 20 visitors interested in learning more about the organization's work.



### Children meet Olive at Dreamnight

Dreamnight is an international initiative that welcomes children living with chronic conditions and their families to visit local zoos and aquariums. PBS Western Reserve hosted Olive from ELINOR WONDERS WHY for this event at the Akron Zoo on June 6. Along with meet-and-greets, each child received a PBS KIDS goodie bag with activities, an elephant keychain and more. Over 250 guests visited PBS Western Reserve's table. The event is organized by the zoo and Akron Children's Hospital.





## Community Outreach

### Volunteer program kicks off

This summer, PBS Western Reserve officially launched its volunteer program to provide support at community events, help with office tasks and more. Volunteers have already made a difference by joining staff at screening events and volunteering for call time as part of PBS Western Reserve's federal funding advocacy efforts. All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age. More information at [PBSWesternReserve.org/volunteer](https://PBSWesternReserve.org/volunteer).

## Membership & Development

### PBS Western Reserve celebrates 18% increase in members

In fiscal year 2025, PBS Western Reserve saw an 18% increase in members, marking a highly successful year of growth.

## Educational Services

### Professional development for educators promotes practical tools

The Educational Services Department offered professional development to local educators and librarians, focusing on practical tools and ideas for the classroom and community programs.

On May 23, I Promise School educators explored how to use AI in teaching, including key ethical considerations, and walked away with tools and platforms to help them start or continue their journey with AI in education. Teachers also received hands-on training in Canva, learning how to create eye-catching newsletters, handouts, presentations, videos and more.

In addition to supporting classroom teachers, PBS Western Reserve works with area librarians. On June 23, PBS Western Reserve provided training in PBS resources specifically curated for library settings to Stark Library. These included materials on health topics, STEM and early learning.



### Out-of-school programming supports early learning

The Educational Services Department held a range of fun, out-of-school programs that introduced children and families to STEM and early learning concepts.

On June 3, Ramp and Roll at the Warren-Trumbull County Library gave young learners the chance to explore motion and problem-solving by experimenting with ramps and different materials.

In All About Air, children ages 5-10 learned about the power of air through simple, engaging experiments that sparked curiosity and encouraged them to ask questions. The event was held on June 3 at the Cuyahoga Falls Library.

Work It Out Wombats, a program for preschoolers and their caregivers held on July 9, focused on early computational thinking. Families worked together on activities that helped them practice breaking down tasks, understanding sequencing, and exploring cause and effect — all with hands-on learning and take-home kits to keep the fun going at home.



## Educational Services



### PBS Western Reserve attends Touch-a-Truck event

On June 21, PBS Western Reserve participated in the Touch-a-Truck event at Brimfield Lions Community Park, offering families a hands-on early learning experience that combined literacy, play and real-world connections. The Educational Services team distributed children's books and hosted an interactive sensory bin filled with miniature replicas of many of the trucks featured at the event.

### Explore and Play Kits launched

PBS Western Reserve's Educational Services team developed Explore and Play Kits to support children ages 1-8 in clinics, social service agencies, and other waiting room environments.

Each kit contains a durable bucket filled with books, toys and emotional development tools designed to keep children engaged, entertained, and learning during potentially long waits. By providing these resources, PBS Western Reserve fosters positive early learning experiences outside of traditional classrooms while strengthening connections with our community partners.

Mobile Kits have been delivered to places such as United Way of Portage County and Townhall II in Kent, Ohio.

### PBS Western Reserve supports I Promise School at Family Feast

Educational Services attended the Family Feast event for families of I Promise School children at Akron's House Three Thirty on May 21. Participants engaged in a hands-on STEM activity by building their own bristle bot, a small motorized "robot" created from common household materials. Families explored basic engineering concepts such as electrical circuits, vibration-powered movement, balance and design efficiency. Parents and guardians worked alongside their children — fostering teamwork, communication and shared learning experiences.

The bristle bot activity introduced participants to foundational robotics and engineering principles and empowered them to see themselves as creators and innovators. To extend the learning beyond the event, PBS Western Reserve provided each student with a book on engineering, encouraging continued exploration of similar STEM concepts at home.



## Staff News



### Internship concludes

Laura McCann completed her internship with the production team in May. She helped the department by completing the daily volume of promos and closed captions for the station. She also completed her final semester at Kent State University, earning a bachelor's degree in digital media production and a minor in advertising. She now works with PBS Western Reserve as a freelancer.



### Cassidy DeVol joins staff full-time

Cassidy DeVol stepped into a new full-time position as assistant producer for the Content Department on July 1. PBS Western Reserve is thrilled to have her on full-time as a reliable and hard-working team member with a great eye for production.



### Rachel Huntley joins staff

Rachel Huntley joins PBS Western Reserve in the new position of development operations manager. Rachel has several decades of membership experience and public media experience.



Summer interns include (L-R) Aidan Booker, Sophia Casa, Selena Frankos and Olivia Gallardo.

### Summer internships boost productivity, offer job experience

The Content Department hosted three internships this summer, while the Educational Services Department hosted another.

Selena Frankos from Warren, Ohio, supported production by completing promos and closed captions for the station. She is a recent graduate from Youngstown State University with a bachelor's degree in telecommunications studies and a minor in graphic design.

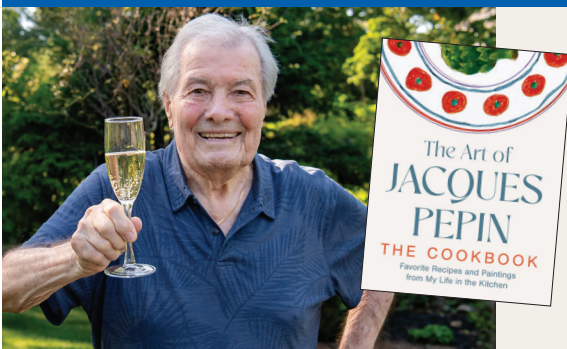
Sophia Casa and Aiden Booker supported the production of the LOCAL FOCUS digital series. Sophia is a current student at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, entering her junior year. She wrapped up her sophomore year majoring in journalism with minors in theatre and computer science.

Aidan Booker joined PBS Western Reserve with great experience, earning 20 Under 20 recognition in the PBS Student Reporting Lab program in 2023 and the Student Journalist of the Year Award from the Cleveland Chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists. Aidan is currently a student at Arizona State University in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Olivia Gallardo served as the Educational Services Department summer intern, where she helped develop and facilitate events, contributed to the Connected Educator newsletter and more. She will be continuing her art education degree at Kent State.

## MEET JACQUES PÉPIN

 VIRTUAL EVENT



On Friday, Nov. 7, at 1:30 PM, PBS Western Reserve presents a nationwide virtual event honoring renowned chef and culinary personality, Jacques Pépin. Jacques will sit down for a wide ranging discussion about his career and more, with allocated time for a Q&A.

The cost of attendance is \$106.37 per guest, for which you will receive the exclusive event link and a copy of his latest cookbook.

For tickets and more information, visit [PBSWesternReserve.org/cookbook](https://PBSWesternReserve.org/cookbook) or call us at 330-677-4549. Sign up by Thursday, Sept. 25, to reserve your spot.

