

PBS Western Reserve President's Report

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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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A live premiere of ICON IN THE SKY showcases community support

PBS Western Reserve is celebrating the success of the live pledge event on Wednesday, Dec. 3, showcasing ICON IN THE SKY: 100 YEARS OF THE GOODYEAR BLIMP.

ICON IN THE SKY is a local documentary that tells the story of the beloved airship, the Goodyear Blimp. The live premiere pledge event featured a studio audience, an interview with the documentary's producer, a conversation with a Goodyear pilot, and an opportunity for one lucky viewer to win a ride on the blimp, among other themed thank-you gifts.

The event surpassed the night's \$30,000 fundraising goal, a great contribution to PBS Western Reserve's overall goal.

Programming & Content Production



Akron bicentennial series comes to a close

The final episode of AKRON 200: FORGOTTEN HISTORY FORUM SERIES, "The History of the Black American Church," will air on PBS Western Reserve on Sunday, Feb. 22, at noon.

The series was a thought-provoking exploration of Akron's 200-year history, celebrating the city's bicentennial with educational panels, speakers and stories.

PBS Western Reserve was proud to partner with Akron 200 to bring the celebration from city to screen. See all episodes at PBSWesternReserve.org/akron-200-forgotten-history-forum-series.



AKRON ROUNDTABLE to continue

PBS Western Reserve's partnership with the Akron Roundtable continues into a new season, following a year of successful collaboration with the Roundtable, Ideastream Public Media and the University of Akron's ZTV.

The series will continue airing on PBS Western Reserve's second channel, Fusion (WNEO 45.2 / WEO 49.2).

Upcoming scheduled speakers include trailblazers with local ties, including award-winning costume designer Paul Tazewell and artist Leandra Drumm of Don Drumm Studios in Akron.

See past episodes and more at PBSWesternReserve.org/akron-roundtable.



BY NATURE'S DESIGN season finale tackles climate change

Season 1 of PBS Western Reserve's original series BY NATURE'S DESIGN: EXPLORING OUR NATIVE WILDLIFE came to a close with "Wetlands: Seasons of Change," the third and final episode focused on wetlands. Premiering on Friday, Jan. 16, the episode explored wetlands throughout the seasons and how they adapt to changing climates.

Four experts from organizations including EnviroScience, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and Ohio State University were featured in the episode.

Following a strong reception from PBS Western Reserve viewers, the series will continue in 2026 with a new season exploring the forest ecosystem.

Educational Services



Celebrating Thanksgiving with Project RISE in Akron

The Educational Services team has fostered new relationships at Project RISE in Akron after serving as a resource provider for the Project RISE family-style Thanksgiving dinner on Nov. 13.

Project RISE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing critical services to Akron Public School students experiencing homelessness and their families, helping to remove barriers to learning and stability.

During the event, PBS Western Reserve provided families with backpacks, children's books and resources focused on kindergarten readiness and early literacy development. Attendees also learned about PBS KIDS apps and digital tools available to families at no cost and without the need for internet access, ensuring equitable learning opportunities at home.

This outreach opportunity reinforced a shared commitment to supporting early learners and empowering families with accessible, trusted educational resources that meet them where they are.



PBS Western Reserve brings music education to Wooster

On Jan. 2, Educational Services facilitated their first In Tune: Everyday Music program at the Wayne County Public Library in Wooster, Ohio. The out-of-school-time program pairs PBS Western Reserve's locally produced IN TUNE series with hands-on activities to help families explore the idea that music can be found everywhere.

Participants worked together to create a multifunctional musical instrument using recycled everyday materials, reinforcing the concept that ordinary objects can produce sound. This hands-on activity encouraged creativity while helping children understand how vibrations and movement create music.

Children also had the opportunity to see sound in action through a salt-and-bowl experiment, where vibrations made sound waves visible in an exciting and memorable way. To extend learning, families explored PBS KIDS digital games focused on music and listening skills.

Together, these experiences blended hands-on discovery with digital exploration, helping learners connect science, creativity, and music in meaningful ways.



Community Outreach

Annual community survey shows a strong foundation of local connection

In the fall, PBS Western Reserve launched a community survey to better understand public sentiment and measure awareness and perceptions of the organization.

The survey explored how audiences view PBS Western Reserve's role in the region; what they believe it contributes to the community; their programming preferences; and how well the updated mission, vision, and values align with their expectations.

The results reveal a dedicated core audience with leading interests in local history and documentary programming. They also reaffirm the organization's new mission, vision and values, as open-ended responses often emphasize that PBS Western Reserve is trusted, locally focused, educational, accessible and noncommercial.

PBS Western Reserve unites with Kent State to highlight National Squirrel Appreciation Day

A collaboration with Kent State University produced a fun video for social media channels to highlight National Squirrel Appreciation Day on Jan. 21, celebrating the iconic black squirrel known to Kent Staters and other Portage County locals.



The earned online exposure emphasizes the benefits of community partnership. The post on Facebook received 26,000 views, over 450 reactions and 150 shares. Meanwhile, Instagram received 1,300 views and more than 130 interactions.

See the full video at Facebook.com/PBSWesternReserve.

Membership & Development

PBS Western Reserve accomplishes a critical budget goal

PBS Western Reserve is proud to announce that the fiscal year goal in underwriting dollars has been met!

Sincere gratitude is extended to those that have provided financial support for PBS Western Reserve's strategic initiatives. These partnerships help realize the PBS Western Reserve mission of fostering regional connection and lifelong learning.

Find the current list of program sponsors at PBSWesternReserve.org/corporate-support/program-sponsors.

Staff News

Congratulations, Gary Manke!



Gary Manke, senior producer/director, officially retired from PBS Western Reserve at the end of December. Gary was a devoted and valuable employee with over 50 years in the industry. From 2006–2015, he served as a freelance videographer and editor. He was

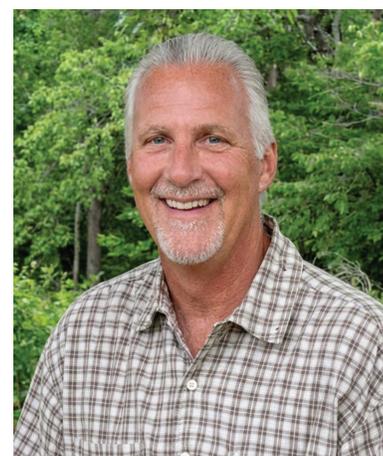
hired part-time as senior producer/director from 2015–2025. He was recently honored with the prestigious Gold Circle Award at the Central Great Lakes Emmy Awards ceremony in June 2025 for his decade-spanning career of service to the public media industry.

Gary leaves behind a humble and hardworking legacy at the station. His talents enhanced many productions for PBS Western Reserve through the years, including his own documentary FLYING TURNS: RESURRECTING A LEGEND.



Kent State interns join staff

PBS Western Reserve is proud to welcome the talents of Kent State students Avery Drapp and Colin Gruver as they join the team as spring-semester interns. Drapp will support the Educational Services team in their community engagement work, while Gruver becomes the first Marketing and Communications intern in several years.



In memory of Ricky Patterson

The PBS Western Reserve community grieves the loss of Ricky Patterson, a former PBS Western Reserve engineer who retired in 2015 after 30 years of service.

An obituary is available at SandersFuneralHomes.com.