

# 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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## PBS Western Reserve receives six regional Emmy nominations

PBS Western Reserve has earned six regional Emmy nominations from the Central Great Lakes Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. The nominations are genre-spanning with one thing in common: they all capture local stories.

The PBS Western Reserve nominees are:

- "Icon in the Sky: 100 Years of the Goodyear Blimp" in the category Documentary – Historical
- "By Nature's Design: Exploring Our Native Wildlife" in the category Documentary – Topical
- "Western Reserve and the American Revolution" in the category Historical/Cultural – Short Form or Long Form
- "Cleveland Treasures" and "Restoring Forgotten Films" in the categories Historical/Cultural – Short Form or Long Form and Writer – Short or Long Form Content
- "Gathered in Darkness" in the category Special Event Coverage Live or Edited

Thanks to the generosity of the community, the production team was able to upgrade filming equipment, hire interns, and showcase their work at more community screenings. It is this growth that enabled PBS Western Reserve to set a record for most nominations under the leadership of Chief Content Officer Ryan Donchess — topping last year's five nominations.

"As a small but mighty production team, we've prioritized quality over quantity in our programming strategy, and these nominations are a testament to that payoff and to the efforts of our producing staff and the independent producers we collaborate with," said Donchess.

All nominated productions are available for free, on-demand streaming on the [PBS Western Reserve website](#) and [the free PBS App](#). Winners will be announced at the 2026 Central Great Lakes ceremony in Cleveland on Saturday, June 27.

## Programming & Content Production



### PBS Western Reserve joins Black Media Week at the University of Akron

PBS Western Reserve was a proud partner of Black Media Week at the University of Akron. The partnership featured an inspiring panel discussion held on March 16, highlighting journalism, broadcasting, and Black storytelling in Ohio. The team gained valuable insights into the state of Black media. The esteemed panel featured:

- Leon Bibb, ten-time Emmy Award-winning newscaster and respected voice in Cleveland journalism
- Tawney Beans, reporter for the Akron Beacon Journal
- Marlene Harris-Taylor, community engagement leader and veteran journalist
- Abdallah Ndume, emerging media professional and live sports production director
- CeeJay Scott, cinematographer and visual storyteller



### Special on Akron's jazz history to premiere June 13

PBS Western Reserve producers were attending "The History of Jazz in Akron, 1920–Present," a panel discussion and musical performance at the Akron Civic Theater in March, when they realized that what they were capturing had the potential to be more than a digital short — the smooth song of a saxophone, the persuasive allure of piano and the awe-inspiring look at Akron's involvement in the evolution of jazz was made for something bigger.

The full event special will premiere on Saturday, June 13, at 9 PM. Don't miss THE HISTORY OF JAZZ IN AKRON: 1920 – PRESENT: A LOCAL FOCUS FEATURE, available on demand using the free PBS App following its television debut.

### Production team advises future media professionals at Kent State

Chief Content Officer Ryan Donchess, Associate Producer Sophia Gillespie, and Assistant Producer Cassidy DeVol were invited to speak at a journalism and digital media production class at Kent State University on March 3.

The Emmy-nominated team offered insight and industry advice to the students as they embark on a documentary assignment, guiding the next generation of media professionals along the road to success.



### LOCAL FOCUS connects viewers to their community

Fred Barrett, senior producer of digital content, has been busy documenting regional stories on LOCAL FOCUS, connecting viewers to their community and providing valuable information on voting and more.

Recent episodes include "Curling 101 with Cleveland Skate Club," "Ballet Excel Ohio: Building Beautiful People with Ballet," and "Modernizing Icons: Why These Historic Trains Are Going Green."

All episodes are available to stream on demand using the free [PBS App](#), [YouTube](#) or the [PBS Western Reserve website](#).



### Region's forests take the spotlight in upcoming season of BY NATURE'S DESIGN

Season 2 of PBS Western Reserve's award-winning nature series, BY NATURE'S DESIGN, is in the works. The new season will pull the curtain back on the mysteries of forest ecosystems. Through interviews with local experts and scenic visits to beautiful regional forests, viewers will discover the fascinating science behind these ecosystems. Stay tuned for the season premiere this fall!

## Educational Services



### Writing contest celebrates the next generation's storytellers

The second annual Writing Contest with Coach Write made a splash with over 130 submissions from K–3 authors located across eight counties. The 16 winners and their families came to the station for a special celebration of their work on Friday, April 17.

During the event, the authors had the opportunity to read their stories aloud, participate in interactive games, and connect with others who share a love for storytelling. The contest is an inspiring look at the next generation of storytellers, showcasing the ways PBS Western Reserve connects literacy with creativity to lay the groundwork for a lifetime of learning!



### Be My Neighbor Day brings hundreds to House Three Thirty

Nearly 500 attendees piled into Akron's House Three Thirty on Saturday, Feb. 21, to join Daniel Tiger at PBS Western Reserve's annual Be My Neighbor Day.

The community celebration and resource fair connected families with 16 community partners, 250+ ice cream scoops, 250+ books and backpacks to take home, and 300+ keepsake pictures with Daniel Tiger to save the memory.

While there, attendees learned what it means to be a good neighbor through hands-on learning activities and the opportunity to assemble over 100 hygiene kits for Project Rise, an Akron Public Schools program that supports students experiencing homelessness.

This year's event was the first held at House Three Thirty. Through their focus on education, workforce development and essential support services, House Three Thirty shares PBS Western Reserve's commitment to helping families thrive — reflecting a mutual goal of building stronger, more connected communities.



### Local Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter partners with PBS Western Reserve for STEM education programs

PBS Western Reserve was proud to partner with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Summit, Medina and Stark Counties to provide engaging, hands-on STEM programming for youth in Brunswick across three events in February and March. Elementary and middle school students, paired with their high school "Bigs," participated in interactive sessions designed to spark curiosity and strengthen mentor-mentee connections through shared learning experiences.

The pairs participated in Look Again!, a session exploring the science of optical illusions, and Chip Kids, which teaches participants about the flow of electricity and microchips. These hands-on activities encouraged critical thinking, collaboration and problem-solving, while creating meaningful opportunities for youth and mentors to learn and grow together.



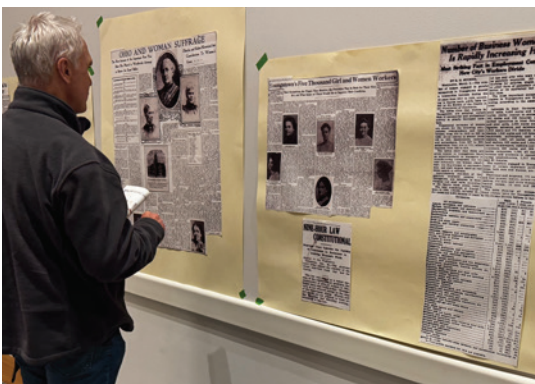
## Community Outreach



### Volunteers help PBS Western Reserve take community outreach to new heights

PBS Western Reserve's more than 60 volunteers devoted their time at over 20 events in the last year, racking up 200+ volunteer hours of service to the community.

In recognition of their significant contributions, PBS Western Reserve welcomed them to the station on April 22 for a volunteer appreciation day, where they enjoyed refreshments, screened previews of upcoming programs, and mingled with each other and the staff.



### Events celebrating America's 250th bring history to life

PBS Western Reserve has embarked on a run of free dynamic screening events in partnership with like-minded organizations to celebrate 250 years of American history through interactive displays, community discussions and more thought-provoking activities, along with abbreviated screenings of Ken Burns' hit series THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

In partnership with the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, PBS Western Reserve highlighted the impact of women on the Revolutionary era through an expert-led panel discussion and digital exhibition of archival materials held on Thursday, March 19.

On April 16, in partnership with the Fine Arts Association in Willoughby, PBS Western Reserve brought history to life through a unique historical interpretation. Three gifted actors took the stage as George and Martha Washington and Benjamin Franklin, each offering a stirring soliloquy before engaging in a spirited, in-character exchange about their experiences during America's fight for independence and participating in an audience Q&A.

The events were well-attended and garnered earned media across multiple local news outlets, showcasing PBS Western Reserve's mission of fostering lifelong learning and connection at no cost to the community.

## Operations

### Equipment and building upgrades keep PBS Western Reserve's service reliable

PBS Western Reserve's operations team has been hard at work over the past year, coordinating upgrades to the station and improving broadcast equipment to make PBS Western Reserve the reliable community resource it is today.

From maintaining Emergency Alert Systems (EAS) equipment to keep pace with modern-day standards to updating the broadcast automation system for improved audio and visual quality on satellite recordings and much more, PBS Western Reserve continues to thrive thanks to the behind-the-scenes work of Chief Technology Officer Ryan Wheele and Chief Engineer Blake Thompson.

## Membership & Development

### Members share their passion for PBS Western Reserve in text campaign

With updated communications software, PBS Western Reserve was able to launch an initial text campaign in April, soliciting feedback from members on their experience with the station. More than a dozen replies came in with words of appreciation.

"As a senior who has always supported PBS for over 50 years, I look to you for joy, laughter and sound news. Thanks for being there," said Linda Kanoti.

Dawn and David Burke wrote in to say, "We would be lost without the quality programs you provide."

Many viewers cited their favorite programs, ranging from the classic regional favorite LAWRENCE WELK to newer dramas like POLDARK and trusted news from AMANPOUR & COMPANY, PBS NEWS HOUR and more.



### PBS Western Reserve members receive VIP experience

Becoming a PBS Western Reserve member is more than a donation — it's an invitation into a community that comes together in celebration of the arts, in support of educators and children alike, and dedicates itself to values of lifelong learning, accessibility and uplift.

On March 15, a dozen PBS Western Reserve members attended a VIP experience at the Gregorian choir concert, turning their support of PBS Western Reserve into a memorable communal experience.