



“State of the Station” Annual Summary July 2019 – June 2020

Programming

- We televised 1,288 new (“first run”) shows since the beginning of the fiscal year (July 1, 2018). This is the combined total between our 2 TV channels
- 520 (40%) of these were categorized as “local”, meaning they were A) produced by community members or organizations, B) produced by our staff or volunteers, C) produced by someone else but submitted to us by a local individual
- The volume of local content was comprised of local government meetings, church services, Innkeepers’ ski races, concerts, community events, a fishing series, Black River HS sports, as well as studio shows from the likes of various organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Ludlow Auditorium, Black River Good Neighbors, and the Cavendish Library, Ludlow Elementary School (we worked with the 6th grade and 3rd grade classes on projects), and many musical recordings from John Specker & Bunty Station.
- 679 (53%) of the shows were “regional” or statewide (much of which was programming produced through another community access TV station in Vermont and shared through our statewide video sharing network.
- The volume regional & statewide programming included legislative meetings, Governor Press Conferences, GMALL & Osher Lifelong Learning Series, UVM Community Medical series, and various other shows that are packaged together and showcased each week.
- There was a large increase in this volume of shared programming during the last few months of the pandemic & stay home order. We have been carrying all of the three-times-per-week Governor press conferences on COVID-19, and we were carrying Sen. President Tim Ashe’s daily video updates during the first 2 months of the crisis. In addition, we have carried a distance learning science & nature educational series from the Fairbanks Museum & Kindgom Access TV.

Staff Productions

- We provided “gavel-to-gavel” coverage of 163 local government meetings in the Towns of Andover, Cavendish, Ludlow, Mount Holly, & Plymouth throughout the past year. These include municipal as well as school boards. And over the past 3 months, much of these have been virtual meetings, held over Zoom teleconference. And many of those we have hosted with our own Zoom account, taking over the technical coordination and management of the virtual meetings. This has been a value added service to the Towns
- We covered 5 annual Town meetings, 1 Cavendish Annual Fire Department meeting, & the annual Ludlow Village meetings, as well as annual school district & supervisory union meetings.
- We continue to team up & collaborate with our colleagues at SAPA-TV in Springfield on some of the school board meetings, sharing the workload on the production & post-production of Green Mountain Union District meetings. SAPA also provides coverage of River Valley Technical Center Board meetings, which are shared with us.
- We teamed up with SAPA just last week on the Green Mountain Union HS graduation, which was done as a physically-distant drive-up event. It was streamed live on SAPA’s You Tube channel

and we will be televising it in the coming weeks. As with all graduations, it is also available for viewing online on okemovalley.tv/videos

- We recorded the 6th grade graduations for Ludlow Elementary School, Chester-Andover, and Cavendish. We actually streamed & broadcast Cavendish's live, using a brand new encoder & streaming server! We will be doing more & more of this.
- The final Black River High School graduation was done as a virtual event, live streamed by us. It was just our 2nd attempt with the new streaming equipment, and there were some technical difficulties, compounded by a last minute addition change in the program. As a result, unfortunately, there was delay in the start of the event, but once it started it went well, although we had to resort to a "Plan B" /. Rather than using our new streaming server, we used a camera connected to a laptop and used Zoom to stream it out to YouTube. We did record the event on 2 cameras and I was able to edit together a nice production of the event for televising and archiving online.
- We provided video production services for many different organizations over the past year (both in-person and, over the last few months, virtual), including Coolidge Foundation & the Coolidge State Historic Site, Okemo valley Chamber of Commerce, FOLA, Ludlow Rotary Club, and the Southern Windsor & Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District.

Volunteer Projects & Community Producers

- Thanks to Natasha Fortin, who just graduated from Black River, for volunteer coverage of school sporting and other events over the last several years. She has been an instrumental figure at our little station. This past school year, Natasha covered a combined total of 41 Black River High School & Middle School boys' & girls' games in each of the 3 seasons- soccer, basketball, & baseball / softball. She also recorded 5 other school & community-related events over the course of the school year.
- Natasha once again won 1st place for documentary at Vermont History Day. This year, she produced "Father of ROTC & Norwich University: How Alden Partridge Broke the Barrier of Education". We look forward to sharing that with the community. Congratulations, Natasha!
- Natasha's mother, Sherri Geimer, also recorded several Black River High School events, including concerts, History Day presentations, and awards show. Sherri has been a longtime volunteer and supporter of the station, for which we are grateful.
- Thanks to Pat Moore for providing coverage of the Innkeepers' ski race series again this past season, and for he & his wife Penny's travel videos (and the pandemic-related "no travel" video, with tips for keeping busy during the stay home order.
- Ludlow Baptist Church, whose volunteer video producer Kelly Kingsbury has continued the tradition her father, Fenwick, started 15 years ago. Kelly & Roger Crosswell team up to provide the coverage & editing of weekly church services, which they did again this year – not missing a week. Once the pandemic hit, the church moved its services virtual, using the video recordings. The Ludlow Baptist Church service is a longest continuously-running series of shows that we have.
- Sarah Devereux has continued to provide coverage of the St. James United Methodist Church services, until the pandemic shut down serviced there in March.
- Proctorsville-based Calvary Church, provided 12 church service productions over the past year.
- Board member Wendy Regier initiated a community project, bringing people into the studio to read the US Constitution. Each person reads a short section, which is then edited together. This project brought so many different people into the studio. We had 2 group events during a weekend in December, and otherwise worked with people as time allowed, by ones and twos. Thankfully, it

was all recorded before the shut down in March, but the editing did get delayed. It is now ready to be premiered in July.

- Longtime host and show producer Ralph Pace put together a number of different programs this past year. Several of them came under his series “Spotlight”. He also took advantage of the Zoom platform, using it to record shows related to the pandemic, including one on the Town of Ludlow’s Emergency Management, as well as one on the emerald ash borer threat.
- Ralph also helped coordinate, through FOLA (Friends of Ludlow Auditorium) a virtual concert with local actress and singer Susan Haefner singing old show tunes. Originally scheduled as a live in-person concert, it was changed to a virtual event, using Okemo Valley TV as a platform. We premiered as a You Tube stream last month & also broadcast live at the same time. It has been running regularly ever since and can be watched online both on our website and You Tube channel. It was a smash hit.
- Prior to the pandemic & stay home order, FOLA members came into the studio on a monthly basis to promote upcoming films & events happening in the Ludlow Town Hall auditorium,
- Local fiddle (and banjo) player John Specker has continued to record in our studio, We have a large collection of his recordings, which we regularly televise, dating back 6 years.
- The Ohio-based folk rock band Bunty Station, which has ties to Mount Holly, has been coming into the studio to record a session each Summer, which they did last August. We also have a growing collection of their recordings, now dating back a few years.
- Cavendish Librarian Kata Welch has continued to record monthly promotional videos highlighting what’s happening at the library. And once the pandemic hit, she started recording her Story Time readings on camera. We helped her put a series of readings together and have been televising them over the last few months (the collection of them is also available for viewing on our website and You Tube channel).
- When the pandemic hit, local hypnotherapist Dr. Linda Thomson jumped into action to do several readings of books for children & adults to offer guidance in coping with social distancing & COVID-19. One of these was an original book that she wrote herself, with illustrations from local artist Jane Hart. The recordings of these readings have been viewed many times over – by far, they were the most widely watched of the videos on our website and You Tube channel over the past year.
- Ludlow Rotary Club has been meeting virtually, over Zoom, and has been sending us recordings of the guest speakers, which we will begin televising as a regular series.

Improvements & Upgrades

- We are now transmitting in full high definition video (HD) on VTel. This is a big improvement. (we are still in standard definition on Comcast; we hope that they will finally upgrade our channels to HD in the near future, but it’s been a process getting to that point with them)
- Program Guide- our program schedules are now, at long last, on the cable TV electronic program guide on both Comcast & VTel. This has been a long process to get us to this point, but here we are – we’ve hit the big time.
- Comcast Channel move- in order to give us access to the electronic program guide on its system, Comcast changes our channels from the lower tier to the 4-digit tier. We sent out a lot of publicity about this, advertising in the papers, sending out email blasts, and doing a direct mailing postcard. But still, not everyone got the message. And finally, on May 28th, the lower tiered channels were no more (which were 8 & 10 in Ludlow, Plymouth, & Cavendish and 10 & 21 in Mt. Holly). The good news is that, no matter where you are, the channels on Comcast are the same. We are now on 1076 (Community Access) and 1086 (Education / Government Access)

- Streaming Equipment- we were able to recently purchase a live streaming encoder & server, which will enable us to broadcast remotely on TV from anywhere with a high-speed internet connection, while simultaneously streaming live to You Tube or Facebook. This equipment is all set up & ready to go. The demand for live remote broadcasting, and particularly streaming, has been increasing, and will only continue to do so. The current pandemic situation really drove home the need to do this now. It was made possible by using funds that were provided by Comcast as a result of last year's settlement (more on that below)
- Painting- we held several painting parties last Summer & Fall, with staff & Board members painting the walls, many of which were newly-built (as a result of the construction project last year). Thanks to all – but a special “hats off” goes to Board member George Thomson for putting in many, many hours.

Regulatory Work

- FCC rule change- last Fall, a new de-regulatory rule related to cable TV franchising (which was largely expected) was passed by the FCC. It allows for cable TV providers to reduce the amount of franchise fee payments it makes, by “charging back” for in-kind services that it may provide. This is an immediate funding threat, but it is still unclear how soon this could impact us and to what extent.
- Other funding threats- consumer trends continue to be the largest long-term threat to the cable franchise fee funding model for PEG Access TV.
- Comcast v Vermont settlement- As a result of a settlement between the State of Vermont and Comcast, related to Comcast suing the State over an appeal of stipulations in its Certificate of Public Good renewal (the statewide license for a utility to provide service), we – along with the other access TV stations on Comcast's system – received funding to help with the cost of finding a new way to do live remote broadcasting. In return, Comcast is no longer supporting remote broadcasts (which they used to do by providing old coaxial cable “drops” in Town buildings & schools). It is now on us. Hence, the recent purchase of live streaming equipment.
- Vermont Legislative work- Much ground work has been made over the last two years. And it is all coming to a head as I type this – there is likely some funding coming our way to help with COVID-related operating expenses, as well as for a study to find a new viable long-term broadband-based source of funding. This has all been done through the work of the Vermont Access Network and the consulting firm Action Circles. I have participated in the committee that has been spearheading this work. This is a very current and fluid situation, but it will have an impact on our budget for the coming year. A budget adjustment may very well be needed once this is all finalized.

Administrative / Personnel

- Our Board members this year have been: Francis DeVine (President); Noah Schmidt (V.P.), John Cama (Treasurer), George Thomson (Secretary), Sharon Bixby, Wendy Regier, & Don Richardson.
- Staffing: 3 positions remained consistent for the year. Those are: Executive Director- Patrick Cody (Full-time), Eric Chatterjee- Production & Digital Media Coordinator (Full-time), & Fred Marin- Programming Coordinator (.5 FTE). Last year, our part-time Production Associate & Field Producer, Ed McEneaney, left us to move South. Due to budget constraints related to the funding challenges, we were not able to re-hire for that position. Since Ed's departure, we have been sharing the workload of the production of government meetings & community events. Over the last few months, the vast majority of this production work has been virtual, over Zoom, so in that

sense it has been manageable. Looking ahead, as in-person meetings and events resume, I expect the staffing shortage to be felt.

Awards & Recognition

- In collaboration with the Weston Playhouse, we received a 2019 “Nor’easter” award in the documentary category for “Paleoindians at Jackson Gore”, a project that was 12 years in the making, produced in partnership with the State of Vermont Archaeologist, UVM’s Consulting Archaeology Program and several local volunteers. We are grateful for the contributions from the likes of Sydney Miele, Ralph Cameron, & Emma Vastola.
- We are pleased to announce the following 2020 Okemo Valley TV Producer Award recipients:
 - Outstanding Achievement Award: Susan Haefner
 - Community Service Award: Kata Welch, Cavendish Fletcher Community Library
 - Producer of the Year: Pat Moore
 - Youth Producer Award: Mount Holly After School Program, led by Ms. Julie Goraj
- We had one additional award this year, specific to COVID-related volunteerism – the “Volunteer Impact” award, which goes to Dr. Linda Thomson for her series of hypnotherapy sessions and book readings, including her original. All of the work was done with the aim of helping adults & kids cope with the pandemic, social distancing, and stay home orders.
- Sharon Bixby is leaving the Board, after serving for 20 consecutive years. She is a founding Board member who has served in numerous capacities over the years. Sharon has been instrumental in getting us to where we are now – in our facility in the Ludlow Community Center complex, with strong community support. We are recognizing her contributions to the organization by naming the new conference room / classroom (the “Digital Learning Lab” in her honor).
- Fra DeVine, our current Board President and past Treasurer, is also leaving the Board after serving 2 consecutive terms over 6 years. Since getting onto the Board, Fra helped instill some new financial practices which have led us to budgeting for and rebuilding a reserve fund and equipment fund. Prior to getting on the Board, Fra and his wife Carol provided major and much needed help with fundraising, to build out the new facility we now call home. Their matching contribution inspired Board members and others to contribute, no matter the amount. As such, we are adding the DeVines to the top of our donor list on a plaque on the wall of the studio.

Community Support

- Thank you to the Towns of Ludlow, Plymouth, Cavendish, and Mount Holly and the taxpayers for continued support through municipal budget appropriations. In total, \$3450 in revenue was generated through this support over the past year; and the taxpayers of each Town have voted in favor of modest increases to these appropriations. This is reflective of the increased support we are providing and also in recognition of the challenges we face with our main source of funding (the cable TV franchise fees), as mentioned above. In the coming year, the total municipal support will increase from \$3450 to \$4250.