



2023 Local Content and Service Report to the Community



Explore Your World. Experience WCTE Central Tennessee PBS.

For more than 45 years, the Emmy award-winning WCTE PBS has enriched the lives of its viewers in Central Tennessee, stimulating educational, civic and personal development through informational and innovative programming and services that address local and regional needs.



WCTE PBS is an essential resource for the people we serve.

On air, online, in print and in the community, WCTE PBS is central Tennessee’s premiere storyteller. WCTE PBS is the **ONLY** full-power television station, public or commercial, in a 75-mile radius of Cookeville, TN, making it a strategic partner with education, health services, government, arts and music.

In 2023, WCTE PBS provided these vital local services.

Seventy-six hours of original, locally produced content covering a variety of topics such as sustainable agriculture and environmental living, health, history, public affairs, education, music, art, and sports.

Featured live coverage of the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives as part of a continued collaborative initiative with all Tennessee PBS stations.

WCTE PBS local services had deep impact.

WCTE PBS’s signal reaches 1.3 million people throughout middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky with over the air broadcast, cable, streaming and satellite services.

WCTE partners with leaders in local education, business, agriculture, economic development, public safety, music, art, theatre, athletics and tourism to provide much needed resources to the citizens we serve.

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The mission of WCTE PBS is to give voice to the people and places of the region we serve. We strive to engage our citizens through distinctive programs and services that inform, educate, entertain and inspire. Since 1978, WCTE PBS has been a leader in celebrating the stories and people of this region. We continue this tradition today through multiple platforms of engagement that extend beyond the broadcast. Below are brief highlights of some of our initiatives and series from 2023.

1. Local Cultural History Programming and Initiatives

Capturing the essence of local culture and the history of a region in a way that entertains, educates and inspires is part of the fabric of WCTE PBS's storytelling and community engagement as evidenced in many of the activities of the past year.

***Where Stories Live** is currently on its second season at WCTE PBS, an original series that took a unique deep dive look into the rich, historic and modern stories of Central Tennessee, and the daily lives of the people who've lived there. These stories reach back to the early 1900's to present day, all told by the show host, Avery Hutchins. Through interviews with local historians, family members and experts we uncover awe-inspiring stories across the Upper Cumberland.

***Cookeville-Putnam County Christmas Parade** featured the annual coverage of this long-standing parade. The 2023 parade theme was, "In Awe of Christmas." WCTE PBS broadcast the parade live and featured a one-hour edited special that aired Christmas week.

"I wanted to take a moment to tell your staff that the WHERE STORIES LIVE episode featuring Shane Langford was one of the best-produced shows I've seen. It was stunning from start to finish. We have had so many Playhouse patrons comment on the piece and how beautiful it was."

Bryce McDonald, Producing Director / CEO of the Cumberland County Playhouse

2. Local Engagement

Indie Lens Pop-Up (ILPU) Screenings is a neighborhood series that brings people together monthly for public film screenings and community-driven conversations. The Independent Lens film series is the winner of several awards including 27 Emmy Awards, 23 Peabody Awards, eight DuPont-Columbia University Awards, and 10 Academy Award nominations. The subject matters of these films are deeply personal yet speak to universal challenges that we face in the Upper Cumberland region. This year WCTE PBS participated in ILPU screenings and partnered with local organizations to bring a local perspective on the subject matter. In total, WCTE PBS hosted seven ILPU screenings with a total attendance of approximately 134 and six other screenings with about 350 in attendance.

Back to School Bash at the Gilley Pool in McMinnville, TN. This event offered free entry to the pool, and approximately 400 children participated in PBS KIDS-themed booths that provided a variety of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) activities.

High School Academic Bowl at Tennessee Tech University, with 11 schools entering and 140 students competing.

WCTE PBS partnered with Cookeville's Cityscape for Stations of Imagination (Stations). *Stations* is an event that fills the important role of providing engaging and free activities for children who visit the annual Fall Fun Festival. Kids aged 2-12 years old find a wide range of fun and educational opportunities with an emphasis on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) activities that align with PBS's Ready to Learn educational initiatives. This year at *Stations*, WCTE PBS partnered with up to 25 non-profit organizations, businesses and other groups to offer activity booths with themes based on various PBS KIDS shows and characters. Approximately 1,500 people attended the event.



3. Community Engagement and Education

WCTE PBS has been a dedicated public media organization serving the Upper Cumberland region of Tennessee for many years. With a mission to educate, inspire, and provide opportunities for lifelong learning, WCTE PBS offers a range of educational resources and services to support the success of educators and learners in Pre-K through 12th grades. Through partnerships with local schools, strategic collaborations with community organizations, and participation in events and screenings, WCTE PBS is committed to providing access to high-quality educational resources and supporting the development of critical skills for students in the Upper Cumberland region.



We also provide weekly visits to classes to offer support to teachers and students, expert guest speakers for students, and experts to train teachers and students on equipment usage. We organize field trips and provide internship and volunteer opportunities to students in broadcast, media education and content production.

In addition, we engage with Pre-K classrooms monthly, offering story times, book giveaways and crafts. WCTE PBS also offered free screenings of films and PBS KIDS shows such as Harriet Tubman: Visions of Freedom, Becoming Frederick Douglass, Molly of Denali, and Alma’s Way.

4. Grants

To fund educational initiatives, WCTE PBS applied and received grants from Dollar General Youth Literacy Foundation, Maryland Public Television, and First Horizon Foundation, among others. We used these grants to purchase children’s books to give away at outreach events, organize screenings with panel discussions, host an art contest for middle school students, set up educational booths for children at Stations of Imagination, and fund the High School Academic Bowl.

“Thank you so much for hosting the WCTE PBS High School Academic Bowl for our students this week! We are so thankful for the opportunity you gave some of our brightest kids to compete and shine in a unique way. You are helping our students in Central Tennessee grow in academics, confidence and sportsmanship when you provide opportunities like these for them. We are already looking forward to next year!”

Britney Gulley, Josh Gulley, and Brian Cadle, DCHS Academic Team Coaches

WCTE PBS received the Southern Storytellers grant from Arkansas PBS. The three-part series, which aired from July to August, showcased a vibrant and diverse American story that celebrated the resilience and happiness of Southern people. Before broadcasting the series on WCTE PBS, we conducted an extensive marketing campaign targeting our Upper Cumberland viewing audience. We utilized various platforms such as social media, print, digital, on-air promotions, Google Ad Words, and even Facebook Mirror ads to execute the campaign. The results of our efforts were extremely positive, surpassing our expectations in some areas. Facebook alone reached over 60,000 accounts, while Instagram gained 60 new followers. The paid Facebook ads reached an impressive 380,000 users. The social mirror ads received over 267,000 impressions and achieved click rates over 10 times the national average. The artwork for the series was featured on the cover of WCTE PBS's members' magazine and in the digital newsletter. Additionally, we promoted the series on-air with a 20-second spot and made it available for on-demand viewing on our website, where Google Ad Word promotion helped drive visitors back to our site. Overall, we consider the event to be highly successful and eagerly look forward to participating in future opportunities.

WCTE PBS also received the Indie Lens Pop-Ups Grant. The film screening series allowed WCTE PBS to receive funding to enhance the publicity efforts and produce interstitials for all the screening events which featured the panelists and community partners.

5. At-Home Learning and Partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education

In collaboration with Tennessee Department of Education, WCTE PBS broadcasts Academic Instructional Videos focused on K-2 Literacy and Math Monday through Friday for two hours per day. While most standards-based lessons focus on instructions for literacy and math for K-2 grades, programming also includes Pre-K lessons and science lessons for grades 3-5.

"We've enjoyed the viewings on the big screen at Cumberland County Playhouse. It's a nice, local "treat" for members. The additional Q & A was very informative. Would definitely be interested in future opportunities."

Bonnie Smith, Crossville, TN

6. Local Programming

WCTE PBS has always been recognized as a leader in the creation of local content. As the region's premier storyteller, WCTE PBS continues to capture important community content on a daily basis. The following are just representative of that emphasis.

***Live Green Tennessee: Holiday Cooking Edition** featured Live Green Tennessee's host, Melinda Keifer, and co-host Grada Casey. During the half-hour show the hosts explore traditional and non-traditional dishes from across the nation, the origin and significance behind these dishes and family traditions during the holiday season.

***Spirit of Holiday Traditions** hosted by Cephias Ablakwa, he explored a variety of holiday traditions from locals across Central Tennessee. Cephias spent time speaking with Caroling Bell Ringers raising funds for charity; spent time with a 99 year old couple enjoying their continued holiday traditions; and spent time with a family-owned catering company, experiencing how they celebrate their Christmas holiday.

***Wish You Were Here, Season Two**, is a show aimed at both visitors and locals, featuring the 14 counties of Tennessee's Upper Cumberland. A number of partners are involved with the program, including the Upper Cumberland Development District and the Upper Cumberland Tourism Association. The show explores places, events, activities, and adventures, divided into a number of short, often lighthearted and informative segments hosted by an on-the-spot correspondent.

7. Local Business Programming and Engagement

WCTE PBS recognizes the need to feature local business and industry to be supportive of economic development within our region. The following series and outreach opportunities strengthen those partnerships and regional growth.

***WCTE's Great TV Virtual Auction** is a station fundraiser in its 40th year, which also showcases more than 300 businesses throughout the 12-day virtual event and five-night live broadcast.

***It's Your Business with Michael Aikens**, produced by WCTE PBS in partnership with the Tennessee Tech Center for Rural Innovation with funding provided by the Rural Reimagined Grand Challenge, supported in part by the state of Tennessee and the Economic Development Administration University Challenge. Dr. Michael Aikens, Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Tennessee Tech, visited with regional business leaders and entrepreneurs to hear their stories and to discuss resources and strategies.

8. Collaborative Initiatives with all Tennessee PBS stations

WCTE PBS continues to collaborate with the other five PBS stations in the state of Tennessee through the use of the Iris fiber system. This connection has been used to broadcast statewide various TTU Live Basketball coverage, the Governor's State of the State, Live Legislative Coverage and Tennessee Capital Report.

***The Tennessee Channel** collectively airs on Saturdays and Sundays and continues to grow in popularity with WCTE PBS shows like Wish You Were Here, Where Stories Live and shows of interest to all Tennesseans, produced locally by Nashville, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Memphis and Martin PBS stations.

***Live Legislative Coverage of the Tennessee Senate and House** is a service and a wonderful opportunity to inform our citizens.

***Live statewide Coverage of Governor Bill Lee's State of the State Address.**

***Over-the-Air-Study** - WCTE PBS spearheaded a Tennessee Public Television Council initiative to undertake a ground study of Tennessee's public television signal, with the end goal of providing free, over-the-air public television to 100 percent of the geography and population of the state.

9. Local Programming currently in distribution nationally

It's hard to believe that a station as rural and as small as WCTE PBS (only 18 full-time employees) could produce relevant, quality programming that gets distributed to a national audience. Much of this is possible through a collaboration with independent producers.

***Cavern's Sessions**, formerly Bluegrass Underground, is a music series that features performances by well-established musicians and emerging artists as they performed at The Caverns in Pelham, TN.

***Ray Stevens Cabaray**, presented by WCTE PBS, is a music-based series from songwriter and artist Ray Stevens, and features a variety of multi-talented guests and personalities in a half hour show based in Nashville.

***Discover the Upper Cumberland** began airing nationally on the Create Channel in 2022. This series from WCTE PBS's archives explores the unique, culturally rich region of Tennessee and was funded by the USDA.

10. Collaborative Partnerships & Events

***WCTE PBS's Great TV Auction, June 3 - 11** - Since 2020, the Great TV auction has been operating under the hybrid model by doing an online auction with a live broadcast component. The live broadcast was held June 7-11, 2023. The Great TV Auction continues to be one of WCTE PBS's most successful fundraisers and continues to bring sponsors, partners, donors, and volunteers together. WCTE PBS grossed \$65,000 in revenue from this event.

***Day of Giving, August 21, 2023** - WCTE PBS's Day of Giving celebrated the day WCTE PBS went on the air 45 years ago. The all-day broadcast campaign with virtual and digital components raised \$20,000. The money raised on this one day goes to support the Education Endowment fund that was established in 2018 during WCTE's 40th Anniversary.

***Craft Beer Festival, October 21, 2023** - In 2014, WCTE PBS premiered an outdoor craft beer festival and live blues music in a local park as a fundraiser for the PBS station. The popular event featured over 100 craft beers from local breweries and home brewers along with blues music and more. The event hosted over 450 ticket holders in 2023 and has become one of our fastest growing fundraisers to-date. With an ever changing format, the event continues to be a fan favorite and is featured in a number of state and local publications as "The Event" to attend in the fall. The event raised approximately \$37,000 dollars in 2023 and has shown a 75% increase in gross profit from 2022 to 2023.

***Haunted Half Marathon, October 21, 2023** - After a virtual race in 2020, WCTE PBS offered both in-person and a virtual options for this year's race participants. The WCTE PBS early morning race, held the third weekend in October, welcomes costume-wearing runners to run 13.1 miles in support of public television. WCTE PBS raised \$32,000 from race registrations and sponsorships. The 2023 race had record participation with close to 500 runners. A 5k race was also added to the event.

In addition, WCTE PBS supported lifelong learning in the Upper Cumberland region and provided access to the rural community by collaborating with strategic partners to leverage local and national resources. The team attended and offered PBS research-based resources and activities at a variety of community events across the region, including Tennessee Tech University's Window on the World Festival, Family Resource nights for El Puente Hispanic Community Center, and Putnam County Clean Commission's Earth Day in the Park. In 2023, we participated in 29 such events to further support educational efforts in the region.

The At-Home Learning initiative entered its fourth year with the collaboration between WCTE PBS and other Tennessee PBS stations, along with the Tennessee Department of Education (TN DOE). The objective was to continue offering in-classroom instruction to students in Tennessee, particularly in remote areas facing limited learning and accessibility.

The education team at WCTE PBS worked diligently to provide supplementary resources for a daily two-hour PBS education programming block, aimed at assisting parents and teachers in reinforcing grades K-2 students learning.



In addition to the over-the-air broadcast, PBS Learning Media resources, and curriculum related to over-the-air programming, the education team also made available additional educational content through the At-Home Learning and Connection Zone pages.

This year marked the end of the datacasting pilot for the state of Tennessee, led by WCTE PBS.

Through the first part of this fiscal year, WCTE PBS created content relevant to our community and our region with an emphasis on the PBS Ready to Learn initiative, as well as PBS Learning Media.

WCTE PBS provided two educational channels for viewers: WCTE Main HD and 24/7 PBS Kids. We also provided channels with content aimed at lifelong learning with WCTE World and WCTE Create.

Upper Cumberland Public Safety

Commitment to Safety

WCTE PBS's relationship with the Upper Cumberland's public safety community has always been strong. It continues to grow as the station continues to find new ways to work with law enforcement personnel, firefighters, first responders and others to ensure the Upper Cumberland is a safe place to live and work.

Partnerships

Many of the station's partnerships are based on shared infrastructure. WCTE PBS's broadcast tower property, for instance, is also home to a second tower, owned by WCTE PBS but primarily operated by Putnam County Emergency Services for antennas from various public safety agencies. Power for the site is hardened by WCTE PBS's backup generator, and WCTE PBS's fiber connection can and has been used to back up the county's microwave internet. The county has also included the cost of servicing and maintaining WCTE PBS's main generator in the county's budget. The county also handles road and grounds maintenance at the entire transmitter site.

Putnam County provides WCTE PBS with space inside its Emergency Services headquarters for a small television studio that allows remote broadcast from that facility. In the aftermath of an F4 tornado that occurred on March 3, 2020, the city and county mayors, along with various other public safety and emergency management personnel, were able to reach viewers with special live emergency messaging within an hour or two of the devastating touch down. In 2021, the studio was expanded to provide more room for cameras and lights, to provide viewers with a more professional-looking and trustworthy presentation in times of crisis. In 2022, Putnam County paid for an encoder/decoder pair that gives the studio a 24/7 link to WCTE PBS's Master Control.

The use of SpectraRep datacasting, a service that allows public safety agencies across the region to use a portion of WCTE PBS's broadcast bandwidth to reach responders in remote locations with video, audio or data transmissions, installed in 2020, has not been adopted as eagerly as anticipated by local public safety agencies. Invisible to TV viewers, agencies with the dashboard software and an internet connection can send encrypted information, such as helicopter video, school blueprints, maps and messaging to any place within WCTE PBS's mostly rural coverage area.

Planning for the Future of Broadcast Television

Through a partnership with Public Media Venture Group, WCTE PBS is now the physical host of W35DZ, a low-power television station currently rebroadcasting WCTE's four program streams on channel 35 from WCTE's tower in Monterey. Though technically a low-power station, W35DZ currently covers a large portion of Cookeville, along with areas to the east and north, with WCTE's free, over-the-air programming.

The ultimate plan for W35DZ is to carry WCTE's signal in ATSC 3.0 (NextGenTV). The station's new ATSC 3.0 transmitter is set to arrive in 2024, and a power boost will allow the station to reach viewers with the latest in broadcast technology in an area that will come close to WCTE's current ATSC 1.0 footprint.

Without this partnership with PMVG and W35DZ, it's unlikely that WCTE PBS would have been able to add NextGenTV for many more years. To keep from losing viewers, stations must continue to broadcast in ATSC 1.0 while making the change, and, as the only broadcast television station within a 75-mile radius, there was no way for WCTE PBS to do that. This partnership will allow WCTE PBS to begin serving viewers who purchase NextGen TV sets while continuing to serve those who choose not to upgrade for a while.

Broadening the Ready to Learn Initiative

In partnership with the Empower Upper Cumberland Initiative, WCTE PBS provides the Ready to Learn (RTL) to families with children ages 2-8 in all 14 counties in the Upper Cumberland region. In the 2023 fiscal year, we served approximately 25 families and 90 participants. RTL is an evidence-based educational resource that helps teachers, caregivers, and parents build early science and literacy skills for children, especially those from low-income communities.

"I was thrilled to witness the transformation in our parents' engagement with their children. Initially, parents kept their distance, but by the end of the program, all parents were actively participating in projects not only with their own kids, but also with other families."

Mark Farley, Executive Director of UCDD / UCHRA

