



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Western Reserve Public Media puts expense-reducing measures in place to weather economic downturn

KENT — March 2, 2009 — Like many nonprofit organizations across the country tightening their belts, Western Reserve Public Media is also making adjustments to its 2009 fiscal year budget to ensure continued financial solvency.

Due to the economic recession, cuts in state and federal funding and shortfalls in membership and other private support revenue, Western Reserve Public Media is enacting expense-reducing measures to ensure that its fiscal year ends in the black on June 30.

“We hope the measures we’re taking are temporary,” said Trina Cutter, president and CEO. “As we look ahead to the coming year and predictions of a furthering recession, we want to be proactive and guarantee that Western Reserve Public Media continues to serve northeast Ohio with high-quality programming and services.”

Effective March 1, 2009, Western Reserve Public Media is putting into place a 10 percent salary reduction for its full-time salaried employees and a 10 percent reduction in weekly work hours as well as a freeze on overtime for its full-time hourly employees. One employee has been laid off. The station’s monthly program guide for members, *The Alternative*, has been reduced in size from 20 pages to 12 pages. The organization has also suspended production of three of its print publications — *TechKnowledgey Newsletter*, *The Ones to Grow On* and *Aging Smart* — through June. The organization will provide free e-newsletter versions of these three publications, available at www.WesternReservePublicMedia.org.

“As we determined which projects to put on hiatus, I was very aware of the impact our decisions would have on the companies we do business with,” explained Cutter. “Nearly half of our \$6 million operating budget is spent with northeast Ohio businesses. When we cut back, there’s a domino effect — we’re impacting their budgets, too.”

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Fund-raising efforts in membership, underwriting and other private support will continue as planned. The next on-air pledge campaign of the fiscal year will take place Feb. 28 through March 22 on Western Reserve PBS (a service of Western Reserve Public Media).

“March is the biggest membership fund-raising month of the year for us,” said Cutter. “We know these are challenging times, but we also know our viewers recognize the importance of continuing to support organizations that bring education, entertainment and enlightenment to us all. Western Reserve PBS is an essential community resource for hundreds of thousands of people in northeast Ohio. We trust our viewers to continue to value and support us.”

The station hopes to offset any unforeseen additional shortfalls in private sector support by scheduling extra on-air pledge events in April, May and June, which are projected to raise \$50,000 more.

Weathering economic challenges is nothing new to the staff of Western Reserve Public Media. The organization has successfully navigated through financial challenges over the last several years without having to compromise its major programs and services or its overall fiscal health:

- The station’s FY09 costs for the PBS National Program Service increased by \$293,519, or 24 percent, over FY08.
- Funding from the state of Ohio has declined almost \$800,000 since 2002.
- The organization has successfully made the digital television transition of two broadcast stations at a cost of roughly \$7 million without incurring any debt.
- Required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to operate both analog and digital transmitters simultaneously, Western Reserve PBS was incurring dual electricity costs at its transmitter sites since 2004. In November 2008, the station was granted permission by the FCC for an early shut-off of the WNEO/Salem analog service, but the WEAO/Copley site continues to transmit both. The national analog shut-off date, originally scheduled for Feb. 17, 2009, was recently moved to June 12, 2009.

Navigating these economic challenges has been made possible because support from the private sector has increased substantially over the last six years:

- The station has seen a 9 percent revenue increase in membership between FY03 and FY08 – one of only two stations in the state to have increased membership revenue in this time period and among a relative handful nationwide.
- Underwriting and foundation support more than doubled from FY03 to FY08.
- Regional production funding from area foundations and corporations has grown significantly in the last 18 months to over \$300,000, allowing Western Reserve Public Media to increase its local programming.

“This is not a picture of doom and gloom,” said Cutter. “We have to be smart about how we manage our budget. The public’s trust rests on our responsible financial stewardship and on our ability to deliver the best possible programming and services to viewers, to the educators with whom we work and to the many other constituents we serve.

“Most of all,” she added, “we greatly appreciate the support of our members and underwriters, our education and nonprofit partners, and the foundations that will stand behind us through times like these.”

About Western Reserve Public Media

Western Reserve Public Media (formerly PBS 45 & 49) is owned and operated by Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a private, nonprofit corporation and consortium of Kent State University, The University of Akron and Youngstown State University. A trusted community resource, Western Reserve Public Media uses the power of commercial-free television and related services to enrich the lives of people through high-quality programming and educational services that teach, illuminate and inspire. Western Reserve PBS, a service of the organization, is the only broadcast television service that reaches all of northeast Ohio. It is available to 1.8 million households and 4.4 million people in the Cleveland and Youngstown designated market areas. In an average week, over 500,000 households tune in. Through funding from eTech Ohio, Western Reserve Public Media provides K-12 educational technology training and instructional television programming to 21,500 educators and 256,700 students in eight Ohio counties. For more information about the organization, visit www.WesternReservePublicMedia.org or call 1-800-554-4549.

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