



news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Western Reserve PBS to Document Business Start-up Challenge

Ten Northeast Ohioans will participate in StartupBus national competition

KENT, OHIO — March 2, 2012 — Next week, 10 budding entrepreneurs from Northeast Ohio will participate in an exciting adventure, and Western Reserve PBS (WNEO/WEAO) will be there to document it. The entrepreneurs will be part of a national competition called StartupBus, where a team of strangers on each of 10 buses traveling to the South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive Festival in Austin, Texas, have 72 hours to conceive, build and launch a business.

Local participants selected to ride on the Cincinnati StartupBus, which is the bus whose progress will be documented by Western Reserve PBS, include the following:

- Chris Cutter of North Canton
- Jerry D'Antonio of Akron
- Radu Dragon of Westlake
- Fraser Hewson of Fairview Park
- Aaron Jack of Westlake
- Will Kesling of Westlake
- Zachary Linqvist of Akron
- Tara Sturm of Lakewood
- Greg Svitak of Cleveland
- Cole Worley of Chagrin Falls

Western Reserve PBS will carry live, three-minute updates from Monday, March 5, through Thursday, March 9, at 6:57 p.m. Additional updates via video streams, blogs, tweets and Facebook will be provided at NEOTropolis.org and CoolCleveland.com. Cool Cleveland's Thomas Mulready and Western Reserve PBS's **NEOTropolis** producer/host Luke Frazier will track the participants' progress.

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Western Reserve PBS took interest in the project because it closely matches the goals of the organization's weekly program **NEOtropolis**, which airs on Tuesdays at 9 p.m. "I'm on a quest to transform traditional broadcast television into a 21st century open-source, interactive, social-networking operation. I call it 'Operation Wiki-TV,'" said Trina Cutter, the organization's president and CEO. "Thanks to a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, we have been able to integrate Internet social networking concepts into our broadcast of **NEOtropolis**. So when I learned about StartupBus, it seemed like a cool and natural way to take **NEOtropolis** to the next 'Wiki-TV' level."

Cincinnati StartupBus will visit business incubators including TechColumbus, Youngstown Business Incubator and Cincinnati-based Brandery before heading to Austin. At the SXSW Interactive Festival, the StartupBus teams launch and promote their products to participating venture capitalists. Greg Svitak, "conductor" of the Cincinnati bus, said, "My goal is to show the entrepreneurs on my bus that you don't have to leave Ohio to start a company." He added that the StartupBus project strives to create an international network of entrepreneurially minded alumni. "If you decide to start your own company, you'll have a peer group in place of like-minded people to execute the idea."

Now in its third year, StartupBus is the brainchild of Elias Bizannes, an Australian now living in America. The original concept was for 12 strangers to board a bus in San Francisco and at 60 miles an hour and over 48 hours they were to conceive, build and launch three tech startups in time for the 2010 SXSW Interactive Festival. The project has since expanded, with competitions held in both the United State and Europe. This year's U.S. event, to take place from Tuesday, March 6, to Sunday, March 11, involves 10 buses representing nine U.S. cities and Mexico.

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. It serves the largest population (4.9 million people) of Ohio's eight PBS member stations.

Western Reserve PBS (WNEO 45.1/WEO 49.1), 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 4.9 million people in the Cleveland and Youngstown designated market areas. In an average month, more than 1 million people tune in. The organization also operates three standard definition channels, Fusion (WNEO45.2/WEO 49.2), MHz Worldview (WNEO 45.3/WEO 49.3) and V-me (WNEO 45.4/WEO 49.4).

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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