



## Dirk Koning Memorial Garden Walkway



The Grand Rapids Community Media Center staff mourns the loss of our Executive Director, founder and friend, Dirk Koning who passed away last year. Every day we aspire to be the kind of innovative, mission-oriented center that matches the picture that Dirk painted.

We are establishing the Dirk Koning Memorial Garden Walkway in his memory, and encourage all to “Buy a Bell” to support the Walkway. The Dirk Koning Memorial Garden Walkway is an approximately 15' x 100' garden and walkway on the west side of Wealthy Theatre, located at 1130 Wealthy Street near downtown in Grand Rapids. Constructed in 1911, the Theatre was restored by a group of community activists in 1998 and acquired by the GRCMC in 2005 for program expansion. 250 people joined us to remember Dirk Koning on January 31st at the Wealthy Theatre adjacent to the walkway that will soon become the Dirk Koning Memorial Garden and Walkway.

### Buy a bell

It is fitting that a memorial garden in Dirk's name be centered around the concept of bells.

Bells are an elemental medium of communication that has brought people together in communities for thousands of years. Bells serve us still today in myriad ways. It is an appropriate way to honor a man so solidly planted in peace, community and communications.

Find out more about the bell project at:

<http://www.grcmc.org/dirkkoning/bell.php>



# CHAIR CHAT

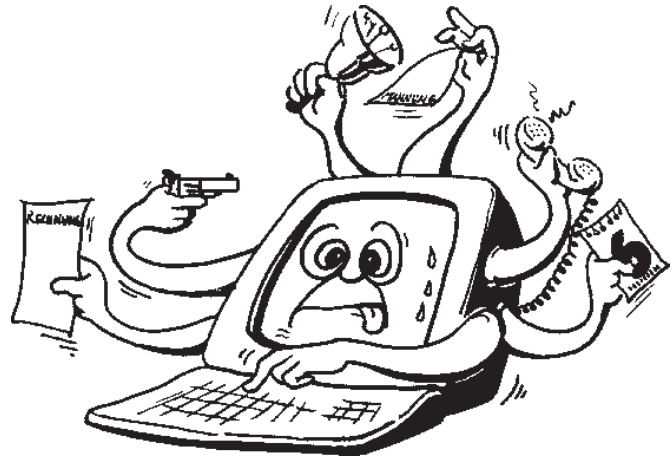
with  
Hap Haasch

## Multi-tasking Column

*Author's Note: In the spirit of full disclosure, I want to let all readers of this column know that I am composing it for both the Central States Alliance for Community Media newsletter and the Community Access Center newsletter. I'd like to tell you it is because the content is so profound that it needs to be shared with both audiences. Alas, the truth is I simply have run out of time, energy and ideas and have taken the "easy way out" on this. My apologies...*

For some time now I've been focusing a lot of my mental energy on various legislation issues and missing "quality time" on some critical issues at our PEG center. Things like strategic plan review, staff performance evaluations, marketing and public relations support, and financial planning have been relegated to small "windows of opportunity" that close quickly with each new phone call or e-mail about a legislation update. It's a frustrating and unsatisfying existence, and it's only begun.

In mid-March, I was honored to be a guest panelist for the Midland (MI) League of Women Voters community forum "The Future of PEG Access." Also featured were local representatives of the Midland PEG community (notably our own Ron Beacom), the Michigan Municipal League, Charter Communications, and legislative staff for Congressman Dave Camp. As always, the



League of Women Voters did good work for the community.

My presentation that evening was themed "Keeping It Real," with a long list of "Reality Check Points." I'd like to share a couple of these with you here:

**Reality Check #1:** No matter how gloomy the rest of this column sounds, there is definitely hope that PEG access will survive this legislative onslaught. There will be hardship for sure, but those centers that are innovative and "nimble" will have a good shot at sticking around and serving their respective community for years to come.

**Reality Check #2:** We're swimming with sharks. Make no mistake about this. SBC buys AT&T, then decides it wants to buy BellSouth too. For \$67 billion no less. I mention this because the entire cable television industry grosses about \$63 billion a year. AT&T and Verizon are really, really big companies, and franchise fees and PEG support payments are chump change to them. But, we're swimming in their ocean and I hope you're worried.

**Reality Check #3:** PEG access has never enjoyed an "easy" existence. Yes, we've become a little comfortable since the 1984 Cable Act, but anyone who has been in this business for any length of time knows that funding can be precarious, content can sink

you, and local politics are fraught with danger zones. But...PEG has survived for over thirty years, and its worth our best shot to keep it alive.

**Reality Check #4:** My advice to PEG centers is this: immediately look for “cost-containment” opportunities and implement them. If you aren’t already, you’ve got to become a “lean, mean, media machine.”

Next, start running financial projections based on classic best/worst case scenarios. Know how franchise fees are calculated under your current agreement, and do projections based on expected reductions contained in legislative proposals. Don’t forget to factor in the reduction of the “Gross Revenue” base

(home shopping, advertising, installation and equipment fees will be gone) and the impact of “competition” reducing the average price each customer pays per month (say by at least 10%). My guess is that PEG will see a 30%+ reduction in revenue over the next three years, and we’ll need to find other ways to make that up. Dirk Koning was right all along...

**Reality Check #5:** The process is going to wear you down and challenge your sanity for doing this kind of work. Buck up swimmers, this is not the time to panic. Nor is it time to put your head in the sand and simply hope for the best. Limber up those intellectual muscles, we’ve got work to do. *- Hap Haasch*

## The future of your PEG community television stations and your access to an open internet are being decided this week in Congress!

For more public policy information, [see page 9](#)

This week the Commerce Committee of the Congress voted on the Barton/COPE Act. The COPE Act will create new rules allowing the phone companies to enter the business of video delivery – but the legislation changes existing rules and protections in ways that will adversely impact on community media and democratic principles. In it’s present form the Act:

- 1) Fails to provide enough protection for the Public, Educational and Government Access (PEG) channels and facilities around the country. The current language could have a seriously negative impact on current centers and their future viability.
- 2) The Act fails to protect Net Neutrality (open internet) which means internet service providers could prioritize internet traffic based on a willingness to pay. This means commercial traffic could receive preferential treatment over non-commercial traffic.
- 3) The Act has very weak red-lining protections for low-income communities – even though it is evident that the Telcos plan to ‘build out’ their networks in more affluent and profitable areas.

Check out these websites for up-to-the-minute information:  
[SaveAccess.org](#) and [SaveTheInternet.org](#)

## Central States Financial Report

### SHOW ME THE MONEY!

by Norm Compton, Treasurer

Spring is a busy time for us financially. The Spring Regional Conference in Midland is looking great with many vendors and sponsors to check out. We are awarding scholarships for that conference and for the National Conference coming up in July. We have also supported the Central States and Alliance leadership in their work to advocate for Access in Washington D.C.

Currently the CS accounts total over \$40,000. It is diversified over three accounts, half is in a CD that matures in October, another \$13,540.00 is also earning interest, leaving \$6,500 in checking.

We sent in all of our 2005 paperwork to the National Treasurer for the annual audit, as well as the quarterly reports.

## Philo T. Farnsworth Video Competition

Spring is the time to get your Philo submissions ready!

Any non-commercial media presented for first time between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006 from ACM/Central States and Illinois. Entries must be postmarked by July 18<sup>th</sup>. Early bird entries must be postmarked by June 18<sup>th</sup> — \$15 for members/\$20 non-members. Fees after are \$17 members/\$22 non-members.

Submit your Philo  
tapes by:  
July 18

## Central States Region Board members

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### Sara Mahle, Grassroots Chair

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# Central States welcomes new board member

## *Sara Mahle*



### Greetings from Grassroots

Sara is the new Grassroots Chair of the Central States Board, and will be responsible for scholarships to local and national conferences. [See page 7](#) for information about scholarships to the national ACM conference - deadline May 5!

Sara Mahle has been involved in community access for only a short three years, but it sure seems like longer. She has presented at such venues as the 2004 CTCNet International Conference, the International CrimeStoppers Conference in 2004, and a few local and regional ACM Conferences as well. Sara has attended the New Mexico Media Literacy Project Catalyst Institute and has contributed to several publicized articles on the subject of media. Through her work as Education Coordinator at Media Bridges Cincinnati, she has led numerous workshops and training sessions for Greater Cincinnati teachers, youth, parents, and community leaders on the subjects of media literacy and technology. Also very active in the local film community, Sara is the director of Underneath Cincinnati, an independent film and video festival for

emerging media artists.

Now for the fun stuff! Sara is from Batesville, IN, home of the big Hill-Rom casket company. After college, she spent one year traveling the beautiful country of Thailand. She learned to cook a mean green curry, how to speak some Thai, and that the way the rest of the world reported news was VERY different from the way it was done in the U S of A. When she returned, she worked for a youth film camp at Ithaca College (where she got her undergrad) and fell in love with helping others create and send a message. After returning to the Midwest and bouncing around some "odd" jobs (like working in simulcasting for a race track - very strange culture), she settled in at Media Bridges. Between Media Bridges, the film festival, the ACM, and taking care of her two cats and two dogs, she stays very busy.

The Grassroots Committee of the Central States region raises money to send volunteers, producers, Board members and others associated with PEG access to regional and national Alliance for Community Media conferences.

# Lots going on in Michigan

by Ron Beacom

The Michigan state chapter held a meeting in Lansing, Tuesday, March 14. We had 23 persons at the afternoon workshop at the Radisson. Communities represented included Midland, Hartland, Battle Creek, Mt. Pleasant, Traverse City, Monroe, Farmington Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Canton, Okemos, Kalamazoo and Troy. Most attendees visited the Michigan Association of Broadcasters trade show at the Lansing Center in the morning and then many of us enjoyed lunch at the Nut House in downtown Lansing. No comments, please, on whether that restaurant is appropriately named for a gathering of our members. Leightronix started things off with an excellent presentation by Eric Bierstetel. Thanks again to Leightronix for underwriting the cost of our meeting room and snacks at the Radisson. Leightronix is headquartered in Holt, four miles down the road from downtown Lansing.

Hap Haasch, Central States region chair and the Executive Director at the Community Access Center in Kalamazoo, started the discussion about the legislative threats to PEG in Washington, D.C. and in Lansing. A

bill is expected to be introduced at any time in Lansing that will follow what was proposed in Texas. Michael Watzka, an attorney from Kitch Drutchas Wagner Valittuti & Sherbrook, working on behalf of PROTEC, the Michigan Coalition to Protect Public RightsofWay, told the group that our grassroots efforts are working. PROTEC plans to hold a news conference in Michigan in the next week or so. Plans are underway to have representatives of the Alliance in attendance and to also have the event videotaped and distributed for cablecasting by access centers around the state.

The Michigan chapter will next meet at the Central States Region conference here in Midland, May 4-6. A fall workshop will be held at SWOCC in Farmington, date and time to be determined, probably Friday afternoon, September 8. Lynn Meikle of HOM-TV in Meridian Township, located just outside of Lansing, announced her station will host the Central States Region fall conference, November 16-18. That event features the annual Philo T. Farnsworth regional video contest awards ceremony.

**"If we are to mobilize communities to take control of their own communications destiny, we must begin by entrusting them with the ability to understand fully the relationships between subject, camera, eye, mind and power,"**

*- Anthony Riddle, National Director, Alliance for Community Media*

# National Board Report

## Goals, scholarships and leadership changes

by Matt Schuster

The ACM National Board met face-to-face in March for our Spring board meeting. As part of the meeting, we reviewed the financial status of the ACM, reviewed strategic goals, and conducted routine business. A portion of the meeting was dedicated to training in fundraising as the National Board is beginning work to further increase the capacity of the ACM to continue moving the organization forward. More details will follow on these efforts as they are finalized and launched.

The ACM National Board also approved language related to the Brian Wilson Memorial Scholarship fund to provide academic scholarships to students majoring in telecommunications, journalism, video production or a related field, with a strong interest in community media. Watch for details as the scholarship program is formalized and launched.

At this meeting, Tom Bishop also stepped down from the Board of Directors due to personal and professional obligations. We thank Tom for his leadership on the board and many volunteer hours spent serving this organization. Tom has already volunteered to head up several projects, and continues to work effortlessly on public policy issues.

## Grassroots Scholarships – National Conference

The national ACM is offering two scholarships per region for a full conference scholarship to this year's national conference and trade show in Boston. The conference workshops and tracks are lining up to offer a great conference with one of the most lavish ACM parties to date on the Spirit of Boston, along with the Hometown Video Festival, National Award presentations, and an outstanding trade show. Conference details are available at [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org). Scholarship information is available in this newsletter.

### Grassroots Scholarship Information

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| May 5     | Scholarship Application deadline   |
| May 9     | Scholarship applications due to Region Representatives   |
| May 17    | Regions review and select recipients by this date.   |
| May 30    | Scholarship recipients complete registration forms, return to Regions  |
| June 5    | Regions Notify Grassroots Scholarship Workgroup Chair of any unused scholarships to <a href="mailto:nrichard@pactv.org">nrichard@pactv.org</a> . |
| June 12   | Regions forward completed registration forms to National Conference Planner  |
| June 16   | National Committee reviews and distributes any remaining scholarships  |
| June 25   | Remaining scholarship registration forms completed and forwarded to National Conference Planner  |
| July 2006 | Welcome and acknowledge recipients at Conference   |

*raise your voice \*\* raise your voice \*\* raise your voice \*\* raise y*

**"Raise Your Voice"  
Spring 2006  
Central States Regional Conference**

**May 4-6  
Midland, Michigan**

**MCTV Network & the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library**

Keynote Speaker: Melissa Davert, Executive Director-Center for Independent Living of Mid-Michigan, an advocacy group for people with disabilities and long-time producers of "Access MidMichigan," program on MCTV. Also, Tony Riddle, Executive Director of the Alliance, and Hap Haasch, Central States chair, will lead a discussion on the legislative threats to community media. For fun, we'll ride a London bus to tour Midland and visit a downtown restaurant and we'll see "The Resonators," an outstanding local percussion ensemble.

Many vendors are also lined up to show you their wares:

Tightrope Media Systems, Compix Media, UniSet,  
City Animation, Duncan Video, Leightronix,  
Princeton Server Group, Pro Video, Roscor,  
Thalner Electronic Labs, Full Compass

Fairview Inn - \$62 per night plus tax  
Call 1-800-422-2744 toll free  
or log onto their website at [www.fairviewinnmidland.com](http://www.fairviewinnmidland.com)  
Mention "MCTV"

For more information, contact Ron Beacom  
at 989-837-3475 or [rbeacom@midland-mi.org](mailto:rbeacom@midland-mi.org)





## Action Alert

# What's going on in Congress

by Matt Schuster

The *Communications Opportunity, Promotion, and Enhancement (COPE) Act of 2006* was introduced to the House Commerce and Energy Committee by Representatives Barton, Upton, Rush and Pickering at the end of March. The committee held a hearing on the bill on Thursday, March 30. ACM Executive Director Tony Riddle testified on behalf of the Alliance for Community Media at the hearing. Local government interests were represented by the honorable Ken Fellman, Mayor of the city of Arvada, Colorado.

The House Commerce Committee passed the COPE Bill with a vote of 42 to 12 on April 26. The Bill will now move to the full House for a vote. Representative Barton is expected to lobby fellow legislators to prevent any additional amendments in the full House version of the bill. The Anti-Discrimination Amendment, the Build-Out Amendment, the Baldwin Amendment to keep PEG funding whole, and the Markey Amendment on Net Neutrality were all defeated.

The Senate is expected to introduce companion legislation. Please be sure to continue to contact your state and federal representatives. It is important for them to understand how this bill and others will directly affect and impact their constituents. Remember, many states are fighting similar state legislation, including Michigan.

*Check the ACM website frequently for public policy updates, as well as other resources like NATOA, National League of Cities (NLC), National Association of Counties (NACo), and the US Conference of Mayors. Things are happening quickly and this information may be out of date by time you receive this newsletter.*

ACM members need to recognize the efforts to protect PEG in the bill, including the 1% PEG funding, and thank legislators for those efforts. While, the bill marks a significant step in the right direction by providing for federally mandated PEG funding, there is more work to do before PEG is fully protected.

The Alliance has urged its members to support those parts of COPE which adequately address PEG local community needs and to work hard for changes where needed. Alliance positions presented here are generally in sync with those of the municipal associations. Our members appreciate being included in this important dialogue and believe that our presence has been a necessary element in addressing the public communications interest. We remain involved in this process to effect positive changes where needed and to protect concepts important to us through to the end of the process.



### What we like about the COPE Act:

- Guarantees minimal PEG funding.
- Requires the new franchise holder to provide a connection for the PEG video feed.
- Acknowledges that PEG channel capacity is valuable to our community.
- Recognizes that the public presentation, accessibility and marketing of PEG channels must be on par with other channels in the system.
- Identifies a method for standardizing PEG capacity and funding in those communities which were not able to have them before.
- Protects valuable pre-existing I-Net resources.
- Provides a reasonable framework for municipal communications.

## Action Alert, continued

### What Concerns us about the COPE Act:

- 1% PEG funding may be adequate in some larger systems, but others — including many smaller suburban and rural systems — need a minimum standard to provide the most basic PEG services, such as playback.
- Many communities were encouraged to negotiate non-monetary support for PEG – support that would be lost under the 1% scheme. The value of existing PEG agreements may be severely understated if this type of support is not considered. Communities should not be penalized for having flexibility in making agreements with cable operators.
- COPE needs a mechanism to buffer the transition for PEG operations in the change-over between existing franchise provisions and national franchises. Prevent unintended closings—such as has already happened at San Antonio’s Public Access facility.
- PEG wants to serve the entire community—not just those parts seen as profitable. Some communities, even within larger communities, may not be served. From a PEG standpoint, this leaves them out of an important dialogue. There should be clearer means for prevention and remedy of inevitable market imbalances.
- COPE does not yet adequately protect revenues or channel capacity from being defined out of existence. Congress should protect its own hard work from being circumvented via the IPTV loophole. We know work is being done to correct this and would like to play a technical role in defining video channels under the Act.
- Some minor word and definitional changes are needed to allow PEG channels the flexibility other channels will have in adapting our capacity to the innovative technical improvements which will occur in systems over the course of new franchises.
- Local enforcement of PEG provisions should be strengthened. Large consolidated operations may be difficult to work with on local technical problems. The community must have a responsive means to address technical and compliance problems through the local authority.

In addition to the PEG provisions in the bill, we need to also provide support to local governments and support the following for inclusion: (taken from “Local Government: Partner in Promoting Video Competition” document)

- Local franchises are a core tool for local governments to manage streets and sidewalks, provide for public safety and homeland security, enhance competition, provide locally-originated programming, and collect compensation for private use of public land.
- While the legislation prohibits economic redlining, it fails to provide sufficient enforcement authority.
- The bill protects the current five percent gross revenue cap for franchise fees. However, the bill limits the revenues, which would reduce franchise fee payments to local governments.

## Action Alert, continued

### Public Policy Resources:

The Central States Region Board has been supporting public policy efforts throughout this process by providing resources for travel to D.C. for Central States Chair Hap Haasch to speak at hearings, and meet with legislators.

We need you to make your voices heard, please contact your legislators on these important issues.

Please contact the Alliance National Office with any questions:

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Listing of Subcommittee members is online here:

[http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/subcommittees/Telecommunications and the Internet Members.htm](http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/subcommittees/Telecommunications_and_the_Internet_Members.htm)

and Committee members list is here:

<http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/members/members.htm>

ACM testimony is available at [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org)

NATO documents and positions are available at [www.natoa.org](http://www.natoa.org)

This week's House hearing page for complete testimony from industry and public interest reps:

<http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/Hearings/03302006hearing1823/hearing.htm>

**The situation in the legislature is changing daily -  
please check the Alliance for Community Media website  
for important updates**

**[www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org)**



Make your reservations for the

# 2006 ACM CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW

Our conference Hotel is the Boston Park Plaza Hotel and Towers

Go to

[www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/alliance06](http://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/alliance06)

to make your reservations

For up to the minute info on the conference please go to [www.acmne.org](http://www.acmne.org)

or

[www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org)

and follow the link to the conference website

Look forward to  
seeing you all in July!