Survival Mode!

Pictured above, Gloria Tristani, of Speigel & McDiarmid, former FCC Commissioner and Keynote speaker for the Fall Conference in Ft. Wayne, Anthony Riddle, Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media, and Matt Schuster, Chair of the ACM. Pictured below, members of the OK Chapter.

“Look for the Opportunities through these Challenges”
In one of the rare quiet moments at the 2007 Fall Regional Conference, I reflected on how lucky I’ve been to do what I do with the people I do it with. It is always good to see colleagues when we come together, even better when we support each other in the face of a monumental challenge.

Although there was a generous amount of “positive energy” permeating the conference, I sensed we all had the same, mostly unspoken, question lingering in our minds...”what now?” I’ve been pondering that question from the moment federal cable franchising legislation died in Congress in 2006. I knew then that the battles in state legislatures would be coming, and that the viability of public, education, and government access centers would be pulverized under AT&T’s “blitzkrieg”. As much as I wish this wasn’t true, ignoring reality will not serve any productive purpose.

Comcast and other cable providers are closing PEG centers they manage in Michigan and Indiana...with Ohio soon to follow. The harsh truth is that PEG centers not already managed by a community-based entity (city, library, non-profit, school etc.) are the first, but probably not the last, casualties since AT&T re-wrote the cable franchising rulebook. Even PEG centers who have long histories, deep community roots, and “relatively stable” funding will find themselves fighting for their organizational lives.

As I think about how to respond this challenge, I sense that the PEG centers that survive this initial “kill-off” will need to band together more tightly than ever before...leveraging whatever public policy resources (people and money) they can muster. The ACM, and the PEG access movement, will shrink significantly in numbers...but can we be stronger by getting smaller? I believe we can, but it will be excruciating painful.

Three ideas emerge immediately in my mind, none of them new:

1. PEG centers are immediately in “survival mode”. To put yourself in the mood for what’s coming, perform a budget exercise based on 60% of your current funding. Find a way for your organization to survive. Change.

(continued on next page)
2. Maybe some PEG centers will be able to continue with the same business plan/service package for the foreseeable future, although technology and budget pressures will almost certainly force PEG/community media centers must make themselves invaluable...with services and content that resonate with their community.

3. We’ll almost certainly need help...with our eyes trained on a post-election Congress. I think we’ll only have one last shot at a relatively minor re-write of the federal Telecommunications Act, and we need to have PEG issues understood and included in that process. If ever there was a time to nurture relationships with your Congressional Representatives and Senators...now is that time. The leadership of the Michigan, Ohio-Kentucky, and Indiana Chapter of the ACM have been through the legislative wringer. The New Year will bring even more challenges...and I look forward to facing them with you.

Please accept my best wishes for a safe and joyous holiday season!

Hap Haasch
Chair – Central States Alliance for Community Media

Pictured above: Andy Valeri, Hap Haasch, and Tom Bishop. To the right is a photo from one of the sessions during the Fall Conference.
Three of the four states in our region now have statewide franchising and many of our centers are dealing with the intended and non-intended consequences.

In Michigan and Indiana, Comcast has announced the closure of many cable-operated public access studios. While this cable industry effort is not favorable, we must look to the advantages it provides. Many cities will now have to look towards establishing either city-run or non-profit run community media centers. Those of us working in surrounding communities, need to be providing assistance and advice to those municipalities struggling with how to replace these centers.

Comcast is also moving PEG channels in Michigan to the 900 block of channels. While this move is being challenged, we need to start thinking of how to make this work for community programming. So how do we prepare? Comcast has stated that this will allow for all PEG channels in the state to be on the same channel numbers. Maybe we can work together to create some promotional materials that can be customized in each community to promote this block of channels. By pooling our resources, we should be able to find some cost-savings in developing marketing materials and promotions. This will force all of us to start higher levels of branding, and channel and program promotion in our communities.

The bills also have significant impacts on funding. We need to continue our discussions on how to broaden our funding bases beyond franchise fees and develop our business models.

At the same time, we need to continue to work on gaining changes in the legislation both nationally and locally to our advantage. Over the past several years, we have made significant progress in increasing the awareness of PEG in these discussions. We can’t afford to lose that momentum.

We must continue to look for the opportunities in these challenges, rather than look at the difficulties in the problems. This will allow us to find those new business models and modes of operation to ensure that our communities can continue to communicate effectively through electronic media.

We also have to be willing to embrace new technologies and figure out how they can best be used for community-building. After all, that is what brings us to the heart of our mission – building community through media.

Public Policy Update:

Oral Arguments on the FCC’s Video Franchising Order (1st Report and Order) have been set for February 6 in the 6th Circuit. These oral arguments are on the appeal that was filed by the ACM, ACD, NATOA, NLC, USCM, and NACo.

DATV has filed petition on behalf of the ACM leading to the appeal of the 2nd Report and Order in the 6th Circuit and on behalf of Montgomery County in the 4th Circuit. The 2nd Report and Order is the explanation the 1st Order applies to incumbent cable operators. (Continued on next page)

At this moment – you can access the full meeting at C-SPAN’s website [http://c-span.org/VideoArchives.asp?CatCodePairs=,&ArchiveDays=100&Page=2]

AT&T’s handling of PEG channels on U-Verse continues to be inadequate. A key point to note to elected officials and residents is AT&T’s inability to provide closed-captioning on the channels. If your operation is currently providing some form of closed-captioning, this will be another problem for any residents using that service.

Ross Braver and the city government channel for San Jose, CA has put together an interesting and useful demonstration related to PEG channels on AT&T U-Verse. (You need RealPlayer on your computer to view the video.) [http://sanjose.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=134]

Indiana Chapter Report

by Erik Mollberg

The Indiana Chapter continues to work on assisting the PEG access centers in the northwest part of Indiana after Comcast Cablevision’s move to close facilities in a variety of cities within the state. We have partnered with the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns (IACT) to offer language to be introduced in the state legislature to remedy the vague language in the previous bill that both Comcast and AT&T have used to bow out of their commitments to PEG access TV. It is hoped that this language can be introduced at the next legislative session beginning in January of 2008. IACT has expressed interest in partnering with us since they have also found deficiencies in the bill that work against LFA’s. We are also working with a few cities that have no PEG access TV and are trying to negotiate these facilities under the new bill.

The Chapter is planning their next meeting in March, which will most likely be held in Richmond Indiana, and John Dalton of Whitewater TV in Richmond has been gracious to host the meeting.
Greetings from Grassroots
by Sara Mahle

Now Accepting Nominations for the 2008 Roxie Cole Award!

It is time to honor those who do so much for community media. Please take this opportunity to spotlight members at your center, recognizing all that they do, and nominate them for the Roxie L. Cole Leadership Award!

The award is given to the person who exemplifies the spirit of access television in the community. This person is a leader who has effectiveness, initiative, energy, skill, authority and vision and who have made contributions in their community. This person can be a Volunteer, Producer, Board Member, Staff Member, or Community Activist.

Roxie L. Cole was very dedicated to PEG Access in the Central State Region as well as on the national level. She started public access in Dayton, Ohio in 1978, and is known to many as the Mother of public access. She was a vital part of the Alliance for Community Media. Roxie passed away in 1994 leaving us with fond memories of her drive and vision to keep community media alive and well in our respective communities.

In order to nominate a person; You must submit a letter with the following information: your name, mailing address, phone number, fax number and email address along with the name of the nominee, mailing address, phone number, fax number and email address and submit it to Sara Mahle, 1100 Race Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202 or email Sara@mediabridges.org

Deadline is February 28, 2008

Nominations are now being accepted. Please limit applications to no more than two pages.

1. How has this person served the community in relation to Community Media?

2. What leadership role(s) have they taken in their community?

3. How does this person handle challenging issues?

4. What has been this person's best contribution to the Community Media movement?

More information, forms, and a link to a video on Roxie Cole, visit the Central States website.
 Michigan Chapter Report

by Mark Monk

The Top 10 Things That Are Wrong With Michigan in the post State Wide Franchise Agreement Environment

10) Two pending bills that would address two small problems with PA 480 have been shelved until fall of 2008.

9) Community members are sending in hundreds of voice mails complaining to local governments about cable companies.

8) Cable companies are charging customers an administration fee beyond franchise fees and PEG support fees.

7) In some communities you will need a digital set top box converter to get any PEG channels.

6) The only Michigan PEG channel on AT&T U-Verse only works some of the time. AT&T is quoted as ‘We are still in the testing phase.”

5) Communities are having to drive 60+ miles to drop off programming just to keep their PEG channels on the cable.

4) Some cable companies are sending back the uniform video service agreement (State wide franchise agreement) to the local governmental unit stating that the form’s not complete so the blank form the cable company sent is the contract. These blank forms have no amount for PEG support for those communities.

3) PEG channels are being moved to channels 900+ through out the state. This would include channel 911.

2) All cable run PEG centers are closing. Not all of these will come back.

1) There will be no more new PEG channels in Michigan.
Alliance for Community Media Central States Regional Conference & Trade Show

Live to Serve
Serve to Live

Conference Site
Media Bridges Cincinnati

May 1st - 3rd, 2008
Cincinnati, Ohio

Accommodations
Garfield Suites Hotel

Media Bridges 1100 Race Street Cincinnati, Ohio 45202 (513)651-417 www.mediabridges.org
By Tom Shubert

At the Fall Conference in Fort Wayne, we raised another $250 for the Public Policy Fund. That brings our total to $2,900 raised since the fall conference of 2006.

For those of you who did not have your check books in Fort Wayne and wanted to donate (or anyone else who would like to donate), we are offering premium items at the following levels: $10 (baseball hat); $15 (lunch bag); $50 (padfolio); $100 (briefcase). These would be great for holiday gifts. Please send a check made out to ACM-Central States to Norm Compton, Access Fort Wayne, Allen county Public Library, 900 Library Plaza, Fort Wayne, IN 46802 and let him know which premium or premiums you would like.

We currently have 97 Central States Members in the National Alliance for Community Media. We have identified 81 access center in Ohio, 74 in Michigan, 18 in Indiana and 15 in Kentucky. So we will need to do some work in the upcoming year to bring more of these centers into the family. Anything you could do to help your state chapter chair would be helpful. As basic an action as making certain that you and/or your center has renewed your membership for 2008 would be helpful.

Our strength is in our membership numbers. Have a great 2008.

Tom Shubert
The Central States Board met before the start of the Conference and passed the 2008 budget. That was distributed at the membership meeting held on Saturday Nov. 10th. For those who were not there, here is the 2008 budget:

Projected Income:
Spring Conference (Cincinnati) $ 3,000
Fall Conference (Mount Pleasant) $ 2,500
Philo T. Farnsworth Awards $ 3,000
Interest income $ 1,000
National Membership Sharing $1,000
Grass Roots Fundraising $ 600
Premium Items Income $ 600
Total projected income $ 11,700

Budgeted Admin. Expense
Regional Chair Office Expense $ 200
Regional Treasurer Expenses $ 200
Board Meeting Expenses $ 400
Election Expenses $ 200
Committee Expenses $ 500
Miscellaneous Expenses $ 100
Total Administrative Expenses $ 1,600

Membership Services Expenses
Regional Chair Travel Expense $ 3,000
National Board Participation Fund $ 2,000
Advertising in CMR (Alliance publication) $ 300
Grassroots National Dues $ 200
National Conference Attendance Fund $ 3,000
Regional Conference Attendance Fund $ 3,000
Equal Opportunity Fund $ 800
Web Site Maintenance $ 200
Web Site Development $ 3,000
Total Membership Services $ 15,500

Public Policy Fund $ 5,000

Total Budgeted Expenses $ 22,100

I realize this budget projects us spending almost twice as much as we will be bringing in, historically this is not the case. We budget to cover many expectation of the regions needs and anticipated activities, while we conservatively project our income. Historically the budget comes a lot closer to balancing.

Respectfully submitted,
Norm
Central States Region Board members

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Ohio Kentucky Chapter

by Steve Sobel

The OK state chapter held a meeting in Fort Wayne IN, 11/9/07. As Part of the ACM Central States Fall conference.

Please join me in congratulating the OK Chapter Board elected during this meeting

- Steve Sobel elected President
- Jennifer Tiepel elected Vice President
- Chip Bergquist elected Treasurer
- Jeff Weinkam elected Secretary
- Tom Bishop elected Ohio Chairman of Public Policy
- Matt Schuster elected Kentucky Chairman of Public Policy
- Kevin Smith elected Chair of Information Services Committee
- Rick Hayes elected State Legislative Auditor

With over 16 members present we had a good discussion on legislative issues in Ohio and what could happen in Ky. Along these lines Ric Hayes from DATV Rick@datv.org is collecting information on how Ohio SB-117 is effecting your center. Please contact him with changes to your center because of this bill. The OK Chapter will be using this info to take back to our state representatives asking if harm to PEG is what they really wanted to do.

We need Members. OK Chapter 2008 sign-up is in progress please become a member.
Many thanks to Allen Co. Public Library and Access Ft. Wayne for all the work in making the conference a success!
Mark your calendars everyone! The Spring 2008 Central States Regional Conference will be held in Cincinnati, OH, May 1st-3rd!! In the spirit of the conference theme, we here at Media Bridges Cincinnati would like to know how to better serve you at this conference. Specifically, we are asking for each center to send us the 5 BIGGEST CHALLENGES that your center faces (and please, only list “funding” once). We will assemble the top five from all submissions for one of our many amazing sessions. Send them to sara@mediabridges.org by March 1st. In fact, go ahead and send it now, just so you won’t forget!

Photos from Fall Conference