

Report to the Board of Trustees of WVIA Public Media

from the Community Advisory Board

Given by Jo-Ann Reif, Ph.D., Chair

at the Sordoni Theatre at the WVIA Studios

June 8, 2018

I am happy to greet you today. In answer to the question, which is the province of the Community Advisory Board, that is, “Has WVIA fulfilled the requirement as stated by the CPB to meet the “specialized educational and cultural needs of the community served by the station”? I offer the following remarks. In this past year, WVIA has launched new local programs related to PBS national programs, is collaborating with other public media in a “Battling Opioids” initiative, and has aired the documentary *Broken: Women. Families. Opioids*. It has produced and will screen *Peoples of the Susquehanna River* at the Dietrich Theater in Tunkhannock, has begun an “ArtScene Treasures of Our Region” campaign to have listeners tape a spot to nominate a work, and is working with public libraries to institute programs to increase reading. In the fall, it gathered together Viet Nam veterans in a program devoted to their accounts of their service in the war. These programs here listed have been created to coincide, respectively, with the PBS *American Creed*, *Understanding the Opioid Epidemic*, *Civilizations*, *The Great American Read*, and Ken Burns’s *The Viet Nam War*. To honor the PBS series *Victoria*, WVIA organized a preview party on the Sunday before the series began. The event drew many members. The station continues its *Our Town* series, now to include Old Forge and Lehigh. It continues its *Scholastic Scrimmage*, *Artist of the Week*, *Poetry Out Loud*, and *PBS Kids in the Classroom*, all showing increasing success. *Homegrown Music* as well as *Simply Grand* concerts continue

to flourish in the Sordoni Theatre. Radio specialties have ranged from the Delaware Water Gap Celebration of the Arts Jazz Festival to holiday observances, such as the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from St. Stephen's, Wilkes-Barre. WVIA, most generously, helped the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic Orchestra to keep going during its year of reorganization by opening the Sordoni space to its musicians for them to play in small-ensemble chamber music concerts.

I have given you a list of programs here, content and output that you have been listening for, but what constitutes the success of WVIA fulfilling its obligation to reach the educational and cultural needs of the community is that all the station personnel are inventive in finding ways for this public media enterprise to connect with educational needs, social concerns, and cultural expansion. In December, Chris Norton heard that Joe Maddon, manager of the Chicago Cubs and Hazleton native, was going to be in Hazleton at the Community One Center in connection with the *American Creed* documentary project. Chris put together a television program very quickly featuring Maddon and was able to make such a success of it, I believe, because of his inventiveness, his contacts in the community, and also because of the support of a well-prepared, adaptable staff. Chris further developed the documentary project into two screening events in February at Bloomsburg University, one, a civic engagement fair for 125 high school students—bused to Bloomsburg for the purpose—to hear discussions of themes inspired by the documentary, and the second, a screening and community conversation cum panel discussion taped for TV broadcast. Chris and WVIA took advantage of an unusual opportunity of building a film around Joe Maddon. More importantly, Chris and WVIA expanded the opportunity into a means for bringing together many people, differing in age and experience, to gain from the documentary. These efforts make for a prime example of the kind of presence in the community that WVIA seeks to

expand. As the impresario of the day, for his good sense and timing, our members applauded Chris roundly.

“ArtScene” continues to reign as the most direct connection to the arts community. It is a program of a breadth and quality not found on radio, whether public or commercial, here or in other parts of our state. Erika Funke has built up an astounding range of contacts among writers, poets, actors, dancers, musicians, visual artists, scholars of the arts, critics, and arts organizations. I cannot emphasize enough how invaluable the program is to these people as a free outlet for informing the public about their work. With her inviting voice and understated tone, Erika is known in the arts community as a gracious interviewer who puts her guests at ease allowing them to speak about their work as comes most naturally to them, whether on an intellectual level, on one of personal experience, or as speakers for community goals in the arts.

To my mind, one program more than any other this year that has fulfilled the requirement of meeting “the specialized educational and cultural needs of the community served by the station” is the WVIA-FM broadcast of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*. The performance, one of two, was given on April 29th at Marywood University and aired on May 27th. One of the most important works of the classical choral repertoire, *Missa Solemnis* had never been heard in concert in northeastern Pennsylvania. The musical enterprise to perform the work brought together four distinct groups: the Choral Society of Northeastern Pennsylvania, which was prepared by Dr. Alan Baker of Bloomsburg University; the Marywood University Concert Choir (of which board member Carol Tome and I are members), prepared by Dr. Rick Hoffenberg of Marywood University; the Wyoming Seminary Civic Orchestra with violin soloist John Michael Vaida, Artist-in-Residence at Wyoming Seminary; and invited soloists from Boston and

New York. Dr. Hoffenberg conducted. Larry Vojtko produced an excellent broadcast of this historic event beginning with Dr. Hoffenberg's opening remarks on Beethoven at the time of *Missa Solemnis* through the hour-and-a-half performance to the audience's spirited applause at the end. Can you think of a better, more productive and more satisfying way of joining community with community, or a more ideal way for WVIA to bring together the public as performers and as listeners?

The chair of the Community Advisory Board has been busy as well. In April, I gave an interview on "ArtScene" about the eighteenth-century painter Antonio Canaletto in advance of the film "Canaletto and the Art of Venice," to be shown at the Dietrich Theater in Tunkhannock during its Spring Film Festival. I went out to the Dietrich to give an introduction to the film, which WVIA helped promote. Chris Norton journeyed out as well to talk about PBS *Civilizations*, the Dietrich as a treasure of our region, and to introduce me as art historian and chair of the Community Advisory Board. Our audience of about thirty people, very engaged, asked good questions in the discussion that I led afterwards. All parties concerned—Margie Young and Erica Rogler of the Dietrich, Chris Norton, and I—were delighted with the success. I believe as well that it was a good thing for the people assembled to find out that a Community Advisory Board, a body that represents them, exists.

In May, I taped a spot for "ArtScene Treasures of Our Region" and include the text here, as follows:

When I was in college, I had a professor of art history who advised us to remember one thing: to see the work of art in the original. Later, my students and I couldn't actually see an English parish church, but we could visit St. Luke's in Scranton. We weren't able to go to the Pont-du-Gard to see a

Roman aqueduct, but we could see the Nicholson Viaduct, or for Italian ceiling painting, the Marywood Rotunda, or classical sculpture, the Dunmore Cemetery. So, when it's gray in northeastern Pennsylvania, we might think of visiting these places and enjoying the treasures of our region.

The spot is exactly what we need for our area, a listener told me; to look at what is here and to recognize the quality and abundance of work that we have here. Others have told me that the spot has made them see their surroundings differently, as interesting, more connected to other places in the world, and more a reminder of the civic pride that once reigned here and that we would do well to rediscover. Such is the success of "ArtScene Treasures of Our Region."

Our Community Advisory Board is made up of fourteen people who come from a variety of backgrounds—university, engineering, business, civic life, and law. We live in various parts of northeastern Pennsylvania and meet three times a year to hear about the projects WVIA has underway and proposes for the future. We enjoy a collegial atmosphere of listening, raising questions, expressing our views, and making suggestions and as such give invaluable service to WVIA.