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2024 Local Content and Service Report to the Community



WCMU Public Media is one of Central Michigan University's principal public service commitments. WCMU Public Media has provided television and radio programming and other outreach activities for more than 50 years to residents in central and northern Michigan and portions of Ontario. Our mission is to educate, inform, entertain, and engage our communities. It is our goal to improve the quality of life in our service areas, promote cultural understanding and facilitate civil discourse on issues of public interest and importance.

WCMU Public Television, with four full-power digital transmitters, reaches a potential audience of more than 2 million people in 42 counties in Michigan on 4 different channels including WCMU, Create, PBS KIDS, and Michigan Learning Channel with programs and services that engage, entertain, and enlighten. WCMU serves a predominantly rural geographic area. Many families in WCMU's coverage area don't have access to the internet or cable television. Viewers in these locations often turn to WCMU for content unavailable from other outlets, and we're often told improves their quality of life. Combining our high-definition studio production facilities with our talented staff that reaches out the communities we serve to craft stories, WCMU Public Television locally produces series content that informs viewers on issues of importance and programs that showcase the communities we serve.

WCMU Public Radio reaches a potential audience of nearly 3 million listeners in 46 Michigan counties through a network of eight transmitters, bringing the world to central and northern Michigan. On our main signal, WCMU broadcasts both locally and nationally produced news and talk programming on weekdays, and during the daytime on weekends. On weekend evenings, listeners hear folk, Americana, blues and jazz programming through a mix of local and nationally produced programs. Our HD-2 station, WCMU Classical, presents 24/7 classical music programming in the communities of Mount Pleasant, Bay City, Alpena and Harbor Springs. Both of our program feeds are available online, on our mobile app, and on smart speakers.

WCMU Public Media strives to reflect the communities we serve and provides a forum to better understand our rich heritage. We believe that education is essential to improving our future and that lifelong learning is desirable and necessary. We believe an informed public is better equipped to make decisions on the social issues that face our communities.

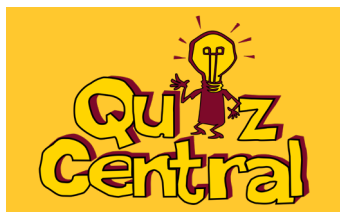
WCMU PUBLIC TELEVISION



DESTINATION MICHIGAN

WCMU Public Television's original series is now broadcast on stations throughout Michigan. It features the people and places across the state that define the Michigan experience. The Destination Michigan crew travels across the state to find creativity, beauty, and unique businesses to share with its viewers. Segments showcase a variety of topics including local artists and authors, unique collectibles, hometown businesses, community gathering places, natural beauty and landmarks, as well as historical towns, stories, and personalities. The series finished its fifteenth season in 2024 while continuing its tradition of showcasing what makes Michigan truly unique. Episodes air every Thursday evening on WCMU as part of the "MI Thursday" block of Michigan-themed programs.

Destination Michigan has been nominated for a regional Emmy Award in the category of Magazine Program and Art and Entertainment Program. The Arts and Entertainment nomination featured a wide variety of folks from our state. We traveled to Ada, just outside of Grand Rapids, where Stephanie Schlatter paints Michigan's beauty in plein-air style. Our next stop was at Jeff's Best's creative space in Clare where he creates intricate art out of barbed wire. Then, we made our way to Port Austin after dark where nighttime photographer, Adrian Bradley, shares his post-sunset stills. Finally, we danced our way down to Bloomfield Hills to meet choreographer Marc Brew who, from his wheelchair, teaches dancers more than technique.



QUIZ CENTRAL

Now in its 20th season, Quiz Central, WCMU's academic quiz show, features 16 teams from high schools across Michigan. At the finale of the competition, textbook stipends were awarded by Central Michigan University and the CMU Bookstore. Schools began the bracketed tournament by being placed in four divisions based on school enrollment. Last year, schools that participated had a wide variety of student populations. Our largest participating school had an enrollment of over 1,400 students while our smallest school had a total student population of 40. In the two-decade run of Quiz Central, teams from all four divisions have found a way to win the grand championship title. Quiz Central has welcomed thousands of Michigan's best and brightest students to compete on this academic quiz show.



ASK THE DNR

Ask the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) is a live call-in program that airs biannually on WCMU Public Television. Ask the DNR is one of the most popular WCMU programs and is scheduled for an hour in the spring and fall.



TOTAL ECLIPSE EXPLORATION

WCMU produced the half-hour documentary "Total Eclipse Exploration". "Words are wholly inadequate!" That's how Dr. Aaron LaCluyze from the Central Michigan University Physics Department described observing a solar eclipse from the path of totality. In this documentary, WCMU showcased a historical perspective of how folks responded to and learned from previous total eclipses. We explored high-tech and low-tech ways to experience and enjoy astrophotography. We learned how different cultural experiences may influence the meaning assigned to eclipses. Plus, we followed an all-girl BSA group as they prepared for eclipse viewing.



INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS

Michigan's independent producers have long been a valuable resource for engaging, entertaining and informational content. Recent topics include hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and Great Lakes environmental issues.

MICHIGAN LEARNING CHANNEL

The Michigan Learning Channel continued as a statewide public television partnership offering instructional content to support the education of students and to provide alternative resources for families and teachers. This has led to a new "era" and prioritization of Education for Northern Lower Michigan.

WCMU PUBLIC RADIO

WCMU Public Radio is dedicated to delivering fact-based news and information, giving voice to a broad spectrum of experiences and presenting a wide range of perspectives from listeners across central and northern Michigan. Many of the communities WCMU serves are in recognized "news deserts," where access to a local daily or weekly newspaper is limited or nonexistent. For some rural listeners, WCMU is a lifeline to the outside world, and is their only connection to news, educational and cultural programming.

WCMU takes the responsibility that comes with being one of the region's only sources of news seriously. Over the last year, WCMU's news team covered numerous critical issues including the economy, education, the environment, and the actions of local, state, and federal governments. WCMU produces 16 local newscasts each day, along with extended news segments that provide in-depth reporting, conversations with local leaders, and storytelling highlighting the people and places that are found in central and northern Michigan. These stories are available on-air, online at WCMU.org, and on the WCMU App.

On weekends, WCMU offers a rich variety of musical programming—including blues, jazz, Americana, folk, and new age—providing listeners in central and northern Michigan with access to genres that are often unavailable on commercial radio, especially in rural areas. This diverse selection not only enriches the cultural fabric of our communities but also serves as a vital connection to the broader world of music, offering both entertainment and a sense of companionship to listeners across our widespread region.

WCMU Classical, our HD-2 channel, brings high-quality classical music programming to central and northern Michigan, also offering listeners—especially in rural areas—access to a genre that is often underrepresented on traditional radio. By providing a dedicated space for classical music, WCMU Classical supports the arts, fosters cultural enrichment, and serves as an essential companion for audiences across the state of Michigan.

WCMU is a critical source of emergency information for central and northern Michigan. As part of Michigan's Statewide Emergency Alert System (EAS) Plan, WCMU is designated as a State Relay Station, meaning it monitors national and state-level emergency messages and ensures they reach listeners across the region. Broadcasters from mid-Michigan to the U.S.-Canada border rely on WCMU's network of stations to share these vital, often life-saving alerts with their audiences.

In addition, WCMU serves as a Local Primary Station for Central Michigan, making it the go-to source for emergency alerts in the area. Other radio and TV stations in Central Michigan are required to monitor WCMU for updates, and WCMU relays local alerts—including tornado, severe thunderstorm, and flash flood warnings, child abduction emergencies, and evacuation orders—to these stations.

Importantly, WCMU broadcasts emergency alerts for all 46 counties in its listening area, ensuring communities across central and northern Michigan receive critical information when it matters most. From July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, WCMU sent a total of 130 emergency alerts, including 108 Severe Thunderstorm Warnings, 14 Tornado Warnings, 6 Flash Flood Warnings and 2 Child Abduction Emergencies.

WCMU PUBLIC RADIO LOCAL PROGRAMS

WCMU produces several local programs that reflect the unique nature of central and northern Michigan, sharing the stories, voices, and issues that matter to our communities. Financial support from listeners and funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting play a crucial role in making these programs possible, ensuring that locally relevant content remains accessible to audiences across our region. This investment in local programming helps strengthen connections between residents, highlights regional culture and history, and provides essential news, information, and entertainment tailored to the needs of central and northern Michigan.



THE CHILDREN'S BOOKSHELF

The Children's Bookshelf is a locally produced, two-minute review of children's literature that airs twice weekly on WCMU and is available as a podcast on our website and major podcast platforms. Each episode includes a study guide and discussion questions to help engage young readers and educators. Hosted by Dr. Sue Ann Martin, founding Dean of the former College of Communication and Fine Arts at Central Michigan University, the series highlights a wide range of books for children and families. The Children's Bookshelf is also distributed nationally through the PRX Exchange, bringing thoughtful literary insights to audiences beyond Michigan.



FROM THE GROUND UP

From The Ground Up! is a weekly broadcast series and podcast on WCMU that educates and inspires home gardeners across central and northern Michigan. Hosted by Judy Wagley, the program features conversations with experts from across the state, covering topics such as invasive species, common garden pests, soil health, sunlight, and container gardening. Whether listeners are seasoned gardeners or just getting started, From The Ground Up! provides practical advice and insights to help them cultivate thriving gardens.



THE JUKE JOINT

Every Sunday night, The Juke Joint brings the rich sounds of blues, soul, R&B, gospel, and zydeco to WCMU listeners, with host Robert Barclay—fondly known as the “Duke of Juke”—at the helm. Since launching the program in April 1985, Robert has guided audiences through nearly a century of blues history, blending traditional and contemporary styles with deep knowledge and passion.



HOMESPUN

Airing weekly on WCMU, Homespun takes listeners on a journey through the rich traditions of folk, bluegrass, and Americana, blending classic recordings with contemporary sounds. Host Tom Ball curates each show with a simple philosophy—there are only two kinds of music: good music and bad music—and he's dedicated to sharing the best. From rare 78 rpm reissues to modern-day folk and roots artists, Homespun keeps the timeless spirit of traditional music alive for audiences across central and northern Michigan.



DESTINATION OUT

Destination Out is WCMU's weekly exploration of creative improvised music, traditional world music, and jazz, offering listeners a diverse and adventurous listening experience. Hosted by Mike Johnston, the program features a deep dive into unique musical styles and spotlights influential artists from across the globe. Whether showcasing avant-garde jazz, experimental compositions, or traditional sounds from different cultures, Destination Out pushes musical boundaries and invites audiences to discover something new each week.



LOCAL & REGIONAL NEWS COVERAGE

WCMU's news department is dedicated to delivering high-quality, fact-based journalism to central and northern Michigan. With a team of four full-time reporters and a rotating group of four to five student journalists from Central Michigan University, WCMU covers a broad range of topics, including local and state government, the economy, education, tourism, and the arts. One full-time reporter is specifically devoted to covering climate and environmental issues.



In many parts of the state, WCMU is the only source of local and regional news, providing vital coverage to counties without their own daily or weekly newspapers. The station produces 16 daily newscasts, along with extended segments that feature in-depth storytelling, interviews with newsmakers, and analysis of key issues affecting the region. WCMU follows the NPR Ethics Handbook, ensuring that every story is thoroughly researched, rigorously edited, and committed to presenting facts with fairness and accuracy.



WCMU also collaborates with NPR, regularly contributing stories that bring local perspectives to a national audience. As a member of the Michigan Public Radio Network, WCMU shares its reporting with other NPR stations in the state and benefits from access to statewide coverage, including reports from two journalists based at the State Capitol in Lansing.

Additionally, WCMU partners with area newspapers through an internship program, placing reporters in local communities to produce stories for both WCMU and the local press. Through these efforts, WCMU remains committed to informing the public, holding institutions accountable, and ensuring that important stories from central and northern Michigan are heard.

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

All student employees receive extensive training and are mentored by WCMU staff, helping them develop professional skills directly applicable to careers in journalism, broadcasting, and communications. Regular evaluations guide their growth as on-air personalities and improve their technical abilities. Some students also assist with music reporting and public file documentation. Many former WCMU student employees have gone on to work at prestigious media organizations, including NPR, The New York Times, Marketplace, MLive, and numerous other outlets.

Students play a crucial role in WCMU's daily operations, often serving as the trusted voices of our station during evening and weekend hours. Their work ensures that WCMU continues to provide high-quality programming to listeners across central and northern Michigan.

In WCMU's television operation, students help with our promotional effort to apprise viewers of the schedule of their favorite shows. With professional guidance, students use Adobe's Premiere Pro to help tell the promotional story. Students focus on balancing audio levels, graphic creation and placement in order to understand the entire process through to the exporting and uploading of completed promos to master control.

WCMU Public Radio continues its tradition of hiring and training students from Central Michigan University, providing them with hands-on experience in broadcasting and media production. Each year, 4 to 6 student broadcasters take on key roles as on-air hosts and production assistants, ensuring the smooth and accurate playback of national and local programming. They deliver weather reports and emergency alerts, air promos and sponsorship messages, prepare programs and news stories for broadcast, and update the WCMU website.

Summer Internship Program

The Michigan News Group Internship at WCMU Public Radio was launched in 2019 to train the next generation of journalists.

During the summer of 2023, six interns were placed at local newspapers, where they covered community news and produced content for both the newspapers and WCMU, as well as the websites of both organizations. Interns worked at the Cadillac News, Midland Daily News, Traverse City Record-Eagle, Alpena News, The Greenville Daily News, The Big Rapids Pioneer, and The Huron Daily Tribune.

Collectively, the interns produced 117 news stories over the summer, contributing valuable local coverage to their communities. These unique partnerships allow WCMU to expand its news offerings, provide coverage on critical issues, and help address growing news deserts in rural areas.

Support Staff Students

The students at the front desk are at the heart of WCMU. They are the first contact for many of our audience, assisting callers with a wide variety of questions, concerns, requests and problems. They assist with and learn basic office duties, such as maintaining supplies, mailing, developing and maintaining spreadsheets, daily acknowledgments, and operating fax and copy machines.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



WCMU FAMILY

WCMU family is a trusted resource for parents, children, classrooms, and communities, to guide childhood development throughout Michigan. With the use of content highlighting trusted PBS and MLC resources for parents and kids of all ages.



MICHIGAN LEARNING CHANNEL

The Michigan Learning Channel (MLC) continued in 2024 as a statewide public television partnership offering instructional content to support the education of students and to provide alternative resources for families and teachers. This has led to a new "era" and prioritization of Education for Northern Lower Michigan. WCMU partnered with the Michigan Learning Channel and the Chippewa River District Library on several special events throughout the month of June including our annual Summer Reading Club Kick-off Celebration which attracted more than 500 Michigan students. Due to our partnership with the Michigan Learning Channel, we were able to supply every child who attended with a Summer Activity Book suited to their grade level. We extended that reach this year and also gave Summer Activity books out to Good Samaritan Family Services, Strickler Center, and the community of the libraries listed below.



LIBRARY OUTREACH

A very important factor of education in Northern Lower Michigan is the presence of our local libraries. WCMU takes pride in its strong connection with local libraries, helping to expand our educational impact across Northern Lower Michigan through extensive outreach opportunities. Libraries are vital pillars of our communities, and WCMU is dedicated to fostering meaningful connections with them. In 2024, we were able to continue our work with the Chippewa River District Library, Traverse Area District Library, and LeRoy Library, along with new partnerships with Richland Township Library, Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library, and Grace A. Dow Memorial Library. Through the connections with our libraries, we are able to connect with families in smaller communities.



ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

WCMU's family e-newsletter, "Connecting with Families" has expanded its reach this year. We've grown our distribution list to over 2,000 families, up from around 1,600 at the start of 2024, making strides in fostering more meaningful connections. Our e-newsletter delivers timely updates and fun activities that keep children of all ages engaged in educational fun!

FOODRAISER

WCMU continued our partnership with the Feeding America food banks in 2024 serving our audience throughout central and northern Michigan. Our partners shared information about food insecurity and how much need there is in our communities for food assistance. Those partners included The Greater Lansing Food Bank, Food Bank of Eastern Michigan, Feeding America West Michigan and their partner distribution organization The Manna Food Project.

Our listeners could choose a Gift of Food as a thank you gift from the station for their support of WCMU. Their Gift of Food resulted in meals acquired and distributed by the Feeding America food bank serving their area. Eligible donors who chose the Gift of Food had an impact of more than 5,400 meals distributed into our communities to help those that needed them.



TERESA HOMSI TEACHES JOURNALISM

WCMU's commitment to community involvement and education was exemplified through Environmental Reporter Teresa Homsi's Report for America service project at Cheboygan Middle School. Beginning in early 2023, Homsi established a newspaper club for 4th to 7th graders, engaging 15-20 students in the fundamentals of journalism, ethics, and media literacy. Through weekly meetings, students explored the Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics, developed story ideas, and learned interviewing and writing skills. Their work resulted in three print editions featuring stories on topics such as bullying, screen time, and the school dress code. Some student pieces, including a story on the school's class sturgeon, were featured on WCMU's airwaves and website. Beyond storytelling, the project emphasized media literacy, equipping students with the tools to navigate misinformation and understand journalism's role in democracy. Several students have since expressed interest in pursuing journalism, demonstrating the project's lasting impact. This initiative reflects WCMU's dedication to public service, fostering the next generation of informed, engaged citizens.



GOSPEL LIVE!

In February our Marketing Team partnered with the Multicultural Academic Student Services on the campus of Central Michigan University to bring a screening for the PBS film Gospel to the students. Gospel, brought gospel and secular artists together for an incredibly inspiring celebration. It explores the rich history of Black spirituality through sermons and songs. From Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., executive producer, host, and writer.



GRANDPARENTS U at WCMU

WCMU hosted inquisitive grandparents and their grandchildren for a Grandparents U event on the campus of Central Michigan University. Grandparents and grandchildren explore the beautiful campus of Central Michigan University while also enjoying hands-on educational sessions conducted by faculty, staff, and community members.

In our session, Behind the Scenes with WCMU Public Media, guests are immersed in activities with both our radio and television staff. A group of 16 to 18 guests are divided into two groups, both having the same experience. A tour of our facility is conducted to give guests a general understanding of how our operation works. Then, our reporters guide grandparents and grandchildren through the process of cultivating questions to pose to an interviewee. In this case, the grandchildren prepare to interview their grandparents.

Once questions have been formulated grandparents and grandchildren arrive at our television studio where they'll be able to put their hard work into practice. We record the interviews and then distribute them to the families, making for a wonderful keepsake.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

NATAS MICHIGAN REGIONAL EMMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

Magazine Program: Destination Michigan

Human Interest: Destination Michigan

Historical and Cultural Documentary: 50 Years Later: The Impact of Title IX

MAB BROADCAST EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Best - Spot News: PFAS Contamination at Wurtsmith Air Force Base

Best - Community Involvement: Cheybogan Middle School Journalism Class

Merit - Sports-Outdoor or Recreation: 50 Years Later: The Impact of Title IX

Merit - Community Involvement: American Buffalo



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