



news release

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Press release image available at pbswesternreserve.org/press/photos

NOTE: High-resolution images of several of the featured interviewees are available upon request

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New PBS Western Reserve Series CITY CENTRIC Shines Light on Community Achievers

Kent, OH – Aug. 17, 2023 – PBS Western Reserve presents CITY CENTRIC, a new series that focuses on individuals who reflect the fabric of their community. The six-episode weekly series will premiere on Friday, Sept. 1, at 8:30 PM on PBS Western Reserve (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1). Following its premiere, the series will also be available on demand via the PBS Western Reserve website, PBS app and YouTube.

Each episode offers a look at one city in our region, focusing on notable community members. Episodes air on Fridays at 8:30 PM as follows:

- Friday, Sept. 1: Learn about a city with a rich history and a bright future in “Akron”
- Friday, Sept. 8: Delight in a small town with a big heart in “Alliance”
- Friday, Sept. 15: See a growing city as it maximizes its potential in “Canton”
- Friday, Sept. 22: Visit a cozy college town with a storybook sensibility in “Kent”
- Friday, Sept. 29: Gain insight into a city that runs on elbow grease in “Youngstown”
- Friday, Oct. 6: Explore a close-knit community on the shores of the Shenango River in “Sharon”

CITY CENTRIC showcases the talented, dedicated, caring and inspirational people who shape their communities, and explores how their communities have shaped them. Each city’s episode features individuals who have these unique characteristics: entrepreneur, revitalizer, entertainer, humanitarian, politician and future/youth, among others. They all contribute to what their city is and where it is heading.

“CITY CENTRIC is more than a new series for PBS Western Reserve,” said Ryan Donchess, program and production manager. “It’s a passion project for us that highlights the many great people in our vast viewing area who enthusiastically strive to make their communities better.”

Individuals spotlighted include Canton humanitarian Faith Barbato, who is motivated to serve those in need in her city; Youngstown's Derrick McDowell, who beams as he describes his city's potential; and Margo Sommerville, the first African American female president of Akron City Council, who has dedicated her life to improving her community.

CITY CENTRIC is the flagship series for PBS Western Reserve's "LuminUS: Stories About Us" collection. These programs are singularly focused on the Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania region.

James Waters II is the producer of CITY CENTRIC and Ryan Donchess is the executive producer. The program is hosted by Stephanie Marie, a native of San Juan, Puerto Rico, who later moved with her family to Campbell, Ohio. She was named Miss Ohio USA in 2020. Production support was provided by members of PBS Western Reserve.

Access the CITY CENTRIC website at <https://www.pbswesternreserve.org/luminus/city-centric/> for additional air dates and times and bonus content.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Akron

Revitalizer: Tony Troppe, economic developer

Entertainer: Jenn Kidd, executive director of The Nightlight

Entrepreneur: Tiffany Roper, CEO of Eat Speak Love and OH SNAP Photo Lab

Politician: Margo Sommerville, president of Akron City Council

Humanitarian: Curtis Minter Jr., operations director at The Well CDC

Future: Bronlynn Thurman, philanthropic developer and artist

Alliance

Humanitarian: Chas Mitchell, board member of Stuckey Family Interfaith Child Development Center

Politician: Joe Mazzola, director of planning and development, City of Alliance

Revitalizer: Ed Albert, co-owner, Pocket Change Thrift & Antiques and active revivalist of historical downtown Alliance

Entrepreneur: Raymont and Brenda Johnson, social entrepreneurs

Entertainer: John Hampu, retired music teacher and musician

Future: Chad Mercer, artistic shoe customizer

Canton

Entertainer: Elec Simon, emcee and musician

Entrepreneur: Ryan Miller, owner of Deli Ohio and other Canton businesses

Future: Kevonne Wright, author and poet

Politician: Kyle Stone, Stark County prosecuting attorney

Revitalizer: Steve Coon, Canton developer

Humanitarian: Faith Barbato, senior manager of institutional giving at the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank

Kent

Revitalizer: Heather Malarcik, executive director, Main Street Kent

Entrepreneur: Mike Beder, owner of four downtown Kent businesses

Entertainer: James Vaughan, artist and illustrator

Politician: Gwen Rosenberg, Kent City Council member-at-large and owner of Popped!

Future: Savanna Wills, fashion designer and owner of SWiLLS

Humanitarian: Candace Curtis, a founder and manager of corporate direction and strategy at Ben Curtis Family Foundation

Youngstown

Entertainer: Jackie Popovec, lead singer of the Vindys

Politician: Samantha Turner, 3rd Ward city councilperson

Humanitarian: Patricia Stokes, neighborhood steward for Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation

Revitalizer: Sharon Letson, executive director of Youngstown Cityscape

Entrepreneur, Aspasia Lyras-Bernacki, co-owner of Penguin City Brewing Company

Future: Derrick McDowell, founder of Youngstown Flea

Sharon

Politician: Molly Bundrant, president, Sharon City Council

Humanitarian: Michael Kotyk, member, Sharon Recreation Commission and Mercer County Trails Association

Future: Taylor Galaska, president, Sharon Historical Society

Revitalizers: Jim Landino and Jen Krezeczowski, owners of JCL Development

Entrepreneur: Alane Jewel, artist and owner of A2B

Entertainer: Tom Roberts, former president and executive director at The Hope Center for Arts and Technology

About PBS Western Reserve

PBS Western Reserve is the brand name of Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. A trusted community resource, PBS Western Reserve 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 of Ohio's eight PBS member stations. PBS Western Reserve (WNEO 45.1 / WEAO 49.1), a service of the organization, is the only broadcast television service that reaches all of Northeast Ohio. It is available to 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 two standard definition channels: Fusion (WNEO 45.2 / WEAO 49.2) and FNX (WNEO 45.3 / WEAO 49.3).

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