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.”

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

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

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**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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