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## news release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# PBS Western Reserve Earns Accolades at 2024 Central Great Lakes Emmy Awards

Kent, Ohio — June 24, 2025 — PBS Western Reserve (WNEO/WEAO) has won two 2024 Emmy awards from the Central Great Lakes chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. The series “[City Centric](#)” and “[The World According to Polka](#)” each received awards on Saturday, June 21, at the Central Great Lakes Emmy Awards ceremony held in Indianapolis. Gary Manke, Senior Producer/Director of Content, was also recognized for his more than 50 years of service in the media industry.

“City Centric” received the Emmy award in the category of Magazine Program for its second season. The series explores cities and towns across the PBS Western Reserve viewing area through the lens of local changemakers and leaders. It is executive produced by Ryan Donchess, Director of Content; produced by Sophia Gillespie, Associate Producer of Content; and co-produced by Youngstown creatives [Skully Media Co.](#)

“I want to say thank you to all of the 36 interviewees that we interviewed for the show. Without them, this wouldn’t be possible,” said Gillespie in her acceptance speech, adding that the series is her first production since her graduation from Kent State in 2023.

Jacob Kouwe received his second award in the category Talent: Performer, Host, Narrator for his performance in season two of the fan-favorite series “The World According to Polka.” The series follows the zany Chardon Polka Band across Northeast Ohio and beyond to explore the rich history and lively culture surrounding polka.

“We are honored that PBS Western Reserve’s skill and commitment to local content production and programming has been recognized through these Emmy wins,” said President and CEO Natalie Pillsbury. “Our priority is always to tell the stories that are most important to our region and reflect the experiences of our communities in Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania.”

Gary Manke was awarded the prestigious Gold Circle Award for his contributions to the industry over his decades-spanning career in media.

“I’m honored beyond words,” said Manke, “It’s been an amazing 50 years.” Manke gave thanks to his colleagues and his wife for supporting his career during his acceptance speech.

PBS Western Reserve productions are made possible by the support of individual donors, local foundations and corporate supporters. “City Centric” and “The World According to Polka” are available for on-demand streaming using the free [PBS App](#), [YouTube](#), and at [PBSWesternReserve.org](#).

## **About PBS Western Reserve**

PBS Western Reserve is the brand name of Northeastern Educational Television of Ohio, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. PBS Western Reserve empowers Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania through the impact of accessible public media and educational services to foster connection and lifelong learning, presenting to the region cultural, scientific and artistic programming for awareness and enjoyment; local storytelling and access to trusted regional, state and national public affairs; experiential opportunities and community outreach for people of all ages; and educational initiatives that support the healthy development of our youth.

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