

2024 Local Content and Service Report to the Community



At the end of the 2024 calendar year, a WNET Classical Live on Stage free performance provided an event that packed our studio with attendees eager to learn more about music.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media is a trusted public media resource that enriches its audiences by providing educational, entertaining programming and services, as well as engaging the Western New York community through cultural and civic involvement.



Buffalo Toronto Public Media and its television (WNET PBS, WNET PBS KIDS, and WNET Create) and radio stations (WBFO, WNET Classical, WBFO The Bridge, and new HD station BTPM Radio Bilingüe) are a valuable part of Western New York's advancement. The stations' partnerships in the community are symbiotic and essential to the health and vitality of the entire region. We engage with our community in a variety of ways, including through broadcasted programming, in-person and virtual events at the station and out in the community, and lively discussions about the state of our region.

In 2024, Buffalo Toronto Public Media provided these vital local services:

- BTPM provides in-depth and trusted local reporting through its WBFO news team. In particular, it provided critical reporting on continued inequities for our Black and Disabled communities and highlighted the vibrant cultures of our indigenous and Latino populations.
- Collaborative community-focused and educational events were hosted by our Learning & Engagement team such as Carl the Collector Family Screening Night that offered a celebratory safe space for neurodiverse children.
- Free performances, from orchestras to quartets, were held for listeners of all ages at least once a month held by WNET Classical.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media's local services had deep impact:

- The award-winning daily WBFO radio show What's Next? welcomed community members as revolving hosts.
- BTPM created two new digital series – Let's Go! which takes children on virtual fields trips across WNY and Compact History which helps children understand the relevance of historical moments.
- BTPM also participated in a statewide public media effort to combat the opioid epidemic which included harm reduction events, coordinated programming, and an original documentary series, which helped one featured organization receive needed funding.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media seeks to enrich its local community through education, entertainment, engagement, culture, and civic involvement. Our projects always include elements of two or more of these in combination and are very successful when we partner with organizations in the community.

Education

Underlying all our local initiatives is the goal of helping to educate and inspire our audience. Our Learning & Engagement team created and coordinated more than a dozen learning resources to accompany the NY Emmy-award-winning BTPM digital series, Compact History, that were made available for free to educators through the PBS LearningMedia website. For the second year in a row, BTPM held the Writers Contest for children in kindergarten to third grade, encouraging children's imagination, creativity, and insight while flexing their storytelling skills.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of Reading Rainbow, the Learning & Engagement team held a celebration event at the BTPM studios as well as temporarily re-released episodes of the series on YouTube. In addition, the team lifted book segments from the series and made them available on YouTube and on PBS LearningMedia, as well as updated lesson plans and curriculum materials.

Entertainment

Our audiences can trust our entertainment to be cultural, educational, inspirational, and enriching, whether it's Masterpiece on WNED PBS, Sacred Classics on WNED Classical, Fresh Air on WBFO or in-person events like our Hear Us Out performance series for children. This year, we added a new weekly pop culture radio show and podcast called Group Chat, which is hosted by WBFO The Bridge Program Director Bentley and a revolving panel of community members who know a lot about film and music, theatre and video games, food, sports, social media and what's trending in Western New York and around the country.

BTPM partnered with sports marketing veteran John Cimperman and seasoned Buffalo News sports business journalist Tim O'Shei to launch Skin in the Game, to create a new radio show and podcast that takes listeners behind the scenes of the sports world, from professional to amateur and high school sports.

Engagement

BTPM continued its efforts to celebrate young scholar-athletes with Friday Night Lights, showcasing high school football as well as boys and girls basketball. The series, partnered with Western New York Athletics, was broadcast on the radio station WBFO and, new this year, on the television station WNED Create.

"BTPM is excited to be Western New York's source for high school football," said President & CEO of Buffalo Toronto Public Media Tom Calderone, "and to provide a visual platform for our community to enjoy the games in real time."

One of BTPM's most popular free events, Senior Prom, was held in November to another "sold out" crowd of older adults. The Boys of Summer, a local cover band, played to the crowd, many of whom spent much of the night dancing, while BTPM provided dinner and dessert to all. The event began in 2023 as part of a larger effort to combat senior isolation due to the pandemic and has continued due to its popularity.

Culture

The WNED Classical Live! on Stage monthly free performances Buffalo Toronto Public Media launched a monthly series of free concerts in its intimate performance space in the WNED Classical music library. Each month, these performances "sell out" and allow the community free access to live music and education. BTPM also uses the space for a live performance series called Hear Us Out aimed at promoting awareness and appreciation of musical diversity among youth ages 8 to 12 years old, targeting children living in underserved communities within Buffalo and Erie County.

BTPM partnered with the theater community to celebrate the region's talent with the 33rd annual Artie Awards. The awards were started in 1991 by Anthony Chase, who co-hosts Theater Talk on WBFO, and the event raises funds for HIV/AIDS services in the community. Over its three decades, it has raised over \$500,000.

BTPM is currently piloting a Spanish-language service on WBFO HD3, using a feed from Radio Bilingüe out of California. The service is being coordinated with partners at the Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York and aims to add local programming as it evolves.

BTPM celebrated cultural months throughout the year with programming on each of our stations, highlighting contributions throughout history. We also participated in Juneteenth celebrations, the Pride Parade, Disabilities Pride festival, and the Puerto Rican & Hispanic Heritage Parade. Like last year, we continued to broadcast Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra concerts on WNED Classical, and on WBFO The Bridge features a weekly show highlighting original local music.

Civic Involvement

BTPM launched a new effort to help our community understand our government and their role in it. Compact Civics airs on WBFO and aims to demystify governance. WBFO's newsroom layered its coverage of the 2024 primaries and general election over that series to help voters make educated choices.

Partnering with American Experience, BTPM held a community screening and panel discussion of "On Poisoned Ground: The Tragedy at Love Canal," a tragedy that occurred in our region. The discussion, held before a capacity crowd, featured Emmy Award-winning Executive Producer Cameo George, the film's Director, Jamila Ephron, and RIT professor of history and author, Richard Newman. Joe Chille, the Morning Host of the BIG WECK and host of "Buffalo on the Rise" WBBZ-TV, moderated the panel.

Carl the Collector Inclusive Event

In conjunction with the launch of the new PBS KIDS show Carl the Collector, BTM held a family event to introduce the show and invite the young attendees to bring their own treasured collections to share.

Carl is a warm-hearted raccoon who loves collecting things and is autistic. His attention to detail, distinctive way of looking at the world, and extensive collections help him solve problems around Fuzzytown with his friends, Sheldon, Lotta, Arugula, and Forrest. Nine young collectors showed off their collections to about 70 attendees who also got a sneak peek at the new series and participated in activities and ate snacks.

WBFO's Disabilities Beat reporter Emyle Watkins emceed the event and introduced the collectors.



Compact Civics

Compact Civics is a 20-part series of non-partisan audio shorts that help citizens gain a better understanding of how government works. Host Cory McCants, who also hosts Compact History, explains broad civics concepts in a fun and entertaining way. With just the right dose of humor, levity, and visual intrigue, the series explores topics related to voting, branches of governance, and local civic responsibility.

The series, produced in partnership with the Buffalo Presidential Center, has been broadcasting on WBFO since July and is available for on-demand listening on wbfo.org.

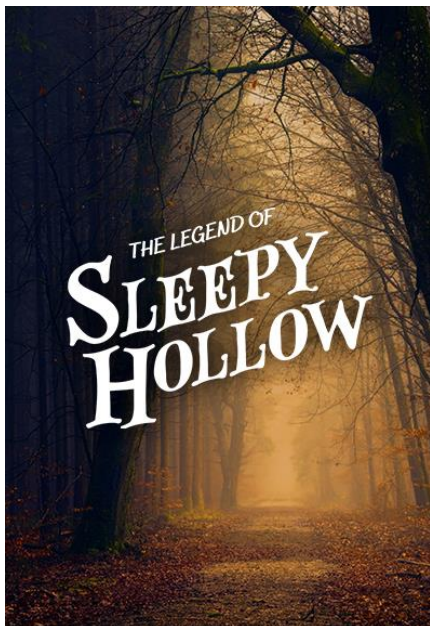
Each part of the series is about 90 seconds and explores complicated topics such as gerrymandering, the structure of New York state government, elected vs. appointed judges, what a comptroller is, and the role of a public works department.

Buffalo Historia

To celebrate the national PBS documentary series, “American Historia,” BTPM created a series of three documentary shorts about WNY’s Latino History and held a large community event to celebrate Latino culture held in partnership with the Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York.



The documentary series highlighted the surprising origin of the Mexican National Anthem, the powerful storytelling of Raíces Theatre Company, and the story of one resident’s journey from Puerto Rico to Buffalo. The free all-ages celebration on Oct. 19, 2024, featured performances by Amor & Heritage, Fanny Salsa Dance, Saranaide, Salsa for the Soul Dance & Yoga, and music from BTPM’s pilot Spanish language radio station. HHCWNY’s mobile Hispanic history exhibit was part of the celebration as was a screening of the “Buffalo Historia” vignettes produced by Buffalo Toronto Public Media.



***The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* Radio Play**

Collaborating with the talented students in the University at Buffalo Theater and Dance Department, BTPM put on its second radio play with an original adaptation of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Recorded in front of a live audience at the historic Katharine Cornell Theater at UB, it transported listeners into the eerie world of Sleepy Hollow. As a nostalgic twist, satirical “commercials” were performed during the show’s breaks, paying homage to the golden age of radio dramas.

The immersive auditory experience where sounds – dialogue, sound effects, and music – were performed live and broadcast on WBFO. It is available for on-demand listening on wbfo.org and on podcast platforms.

Buffalo Toronto Public Media is deeply engaged with our community at every opportunity – attending community events, creating community events, providing services to our community, and supporting students, educators, and families

