



## 2024 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



*“Being part of a Learning Neighborhood means that learning just doesn’t take place in the classroom. It also takes place in the home and it takes place within the community.”*

- Jennifer Ford-Wagner, Guidance Counselor at Canon-McMillan School District

**WQED’s mission is to showcase the stories and voices that make our communities unique and remind us why we're proud to call southwestern Pennsylvania our home.**



WQED creates connections through stories and conversations.

WQED champions the communities we serve by telling stories & creating experiences that educate, entertain & inspire out neighbors.

WQED-TV began broadcasting in 1954, becoming America’s first community-sponsored television station – a forerunner to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

In 2024, WQED provided these vital local services:

WQED Multimedia operates WQED-TV (PBS), WQED World, WQED Create; WQED Showcase; WQED PBS KIDS Channel; WQED Classical FM 89.3/Pittsburgh; WQED Classical Johnstown 89.7; the Pittsburgh Concert Channel; [WQEDFM.ORG](http://WQEDFM.ORG); [WQED Interactive](#), and [streaming and apps](#).

WQED is a leader in broadcast and digital video production, showcasing the diverse tapestry of our neighbors in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

WQED’s Learning Neighborhoods initiative curates [educational resources](#) for schools, libraries and families so our youngest learners can thrive.

[The Creator Academy](#) engages high school students in the art of digital media production, providing valuable skills and encouraging career exploration.

In 2024, we evolved our storytelling philosophy to align with our strategic priorities. We're committed to ensuring all audiences see themselves reflected in our content, and making sure our programs uplift and showcase our unique communities.

### SIGNATURE DOCUMENTARIES

**Beyond the Canvass: The Carnegie International** – for more than a century, Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art has invited artists from around the world to bring their work to the Pittsburgh International. Held every four years, the International is the longest-running modern art exhibition in North America.

**Hope and Healing: The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh** – The Institute is internationally known and respected for its expert and compassionate care. They are at the leading edge of innovation for traumatic brain injuries as well as physical and autism therapies.

### REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES



**Pittsburgh's Soul Food** – Soul Food is a term used to describe delicious food that speaks to the body and the soul. But its origins are more than just tasty dishes. Learn about the history of Soul Food and its local roots. Visit Pittsburgh's "A Soulful Taste of the Burgh" Festival, learn about the cuisine's role in African American history and visit restaurants who are serving up delicious versions of these classics!

**33rd Annual Beaver Falls Car Cruise** – Join thousands of car enthusiasts at the 33rd Annual Beaver Falls Car Cruise! Discover over 2,500 unique and classic cars while exploring the local businesses of Beaver Falls. This must-see car cruise event offers the best in vintage automobiles. It's a fantastic day out for car lovers and families alike to enjoy the vibrant community!

**Senior Jazz Connection** – Organized and co-founded by retired Pittsburgh Police officer Brenda Tate, the Senior Jazz Connection is held regularly throughout venues in Pittsburgh's Hill District and Oakland neighborhoods. Seniors are welcomed to swing by for a hot meal, live jazz, community resources, and a good time!

**Salem's Market Comes to the Hill District** – For a neighborhood long in need of a reliable grocery store, the community-based market provides affordable groceries and produce, international fare, a full bakery, and a buzzing grill featuring locally raised Halal meals.

**Maestro Manfred Honeck Previews the PSO's 2024 European Festivals Tour** – Preview the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra's summer tour, August 22 through September 7. The journey begins at the prestigious Salzburg Festival in Mozart's birthplace. Maestro Honeck shares his personal connection to Salzburg, its unique atmosphere, and its role in shaping his musical journey.

**MEANINGFULLY ENGAGE MORE NEIGHBORS**

**Yoga in Market Square** – Throughout the summer months, Downtown Pittsburgh Partnership and local instructors offer two free yoga classes a week for the community. Located in Market Square, Yoga in the Square invites guests of all skill levels to enjoy the unique experience of practicing yoga outside in the city. Just bring your own mat, water and get ready to find your inner yogi.

**Community Farm in Garfield** – Over the past decade, Garfield Community Farm has been restoring nearly three acres of abandoned and degraded urban land to become one of Pittsburgh’s most productive and active urban farms. Through increasing the neighborhood’s access to fresh produce, they have become a core asset of the community.

**Morningside Women's Bocce League** – The John Del Signore bocce courts serve as home to the Morningside Women's Bocce League. Each Thursday evening from May to September, you will find members competing on the courts. The league has over fifty active players of all ages, some who travel from different parts of the city, while others still walk to the courts.

**Pittsburgh’s Foraging Community** – Community, curiosity, and cuisine! Pittsburgh’s local foraging scene is encouraging folks to step outside and explore our region’s rich and diverse ecosystem. From safe foraging practices and mushroom cultivation, to the world of locally sourced and foraged dining, there’s much to learn in this rapidly growing community.

**Badamo’s Pizza** –Anthony Badamo founded his great little pizza shop in 2010. He and his team make basically two kinds of pizza: traditional round pies and slightly thicker Sicilian square ones with a variety of toppings. Both kinds are often sold as “cuts” that are re-heated in the oven and then ready for dining in or taking out. In 2016 and 2017, Anthony also renovated and opened another location on Federal Street on Pittsburgh’s North Side, and as he says, “It’s been a smash ever since.”

**NEW EPISODES OF ORIGINAL SERIES****Authentic Lives**

The digital series showcases stories of queer joy and celebrate the vibrancy of our region's LGBTQIA+ community. Episodes produced this past year include:

**Community Care** – Access to safe and affirming healthcare has historically been a challenge for the LGBTQIA+ community. In this episode of Authentic Lives, we'll hear firsthand from community members about their experiences trying to gain access to much needed medical care, and from three amazing Pittsburgh healthcare organizations providing life-saving services and making care accessible. Their stories illustrate how affirming medical practices, inclusivity, and intracommunity support all play a role in providing the LGBTQIA+ community the medical care they deserve.

**Queer Owned Businesses** – LGBTQ+ owned businesses not only provide safe havens for queer people, but also play a role in developing community and culture. From creating inclusive spaces to providing valuable services to ensuring a compassionate experience, see the impact these queer professionals have on their local community. The human experience, diversity, equity, and inclusion is at the heart of each episode, with a focus on the people and organizations making an impact. The ongoing series features those whose work, careers, or everyday lives are leading to positive changes in the LGBTQIA+ community.

**Social Transition** – For much of the transgender community, the first steps in transitioning are relatively small. Those next important steps: "coming out" to friends and family, trying a new look, and building a support network can be some of the most important and self-affirming parts of a transition. In this episode, we'll explore the importance of community support and the interpersonal challenges transgender folks face during social transition.

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**Cartoon Academy Season Four** – Hosted by Pittsburgh-based cartoonist Joe Wos, each six-tonine-minute episode takes viewers of all ages through the creative steps of drawing cartoon characters while sharing tips on developing skill, artistic terms, and educational facts about the characters. Season four focused on social emotional learning. Resources, including lesson plans, extension activities and coloring sheets accompany each episode.

In 2024, WQED wrapped the first season of Rick Sebak's podcast, **Gumbands** that tells the story of Pittsburgh, its people, history, neighborhoods, small businesses, food, charms, stories and many of its surprises.

WQED is proud to have largest education department in Pennsylvania public media. WQED's programming leverages PBS and WQED assets to improve educational outcomes in collaboration with community partners.

### **LEARNING NEIGHBORHOODS**

WQED Education has developed a deep network of [Learning Neighborhoods](#), the flagship program of Education that brings together schools, libraries, families and community organizations to provide educational enrichment and opportunities for connection. WQED's vision is to create a foundation for sustaining and expanding the Learning Neighborhood throughout the region. What started in Washington County has now expanded to serve additional regions.

WQED Education collaborates with neighborhood libraries to create impactful, out-of-school time programming that is designed to encourage family engagement and a love of learning through hands-on, family-centered activities. Participating libraries have a PBS-themed program that supports learners by building a community that leads and sustains a new approach to educational media. Young learners gain STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) and early literacy skills. Collaborating libraries choose from a menu of science and math based content from PBS KIDS.

### **2024 WRITER'S CONTEST**

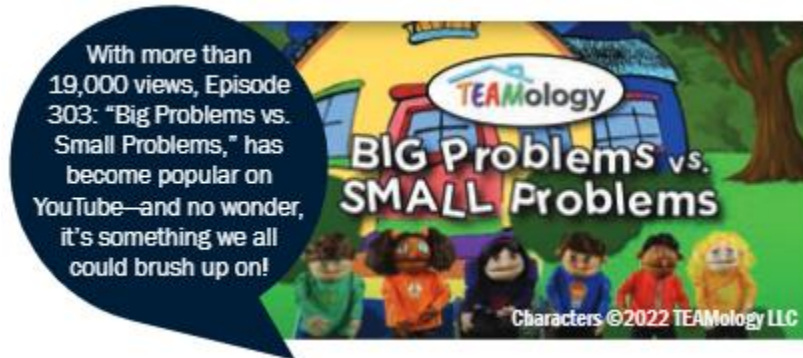
WQED's annual [Writer's Contest](#) continued in 2024, encouraging kids in grades K-3 to submit original stories with the theme "Write My Future." Over 450 entries were received from throughout Pennsylvania, and several states from throughout the country, including New York and California. WQED has been able to reach out directly to schools, libraries, and families across Pennsylvania to encourage children to write about their goals and submit their original stories and illustrations. The Contest provides a range of resources from a teacher guide to narrative writing tips, and a booklist to get the creativity moving.

### **DESIGN LIVES HERE**

[Design Lives Here](#) is a semester-long engineering initiative that equips teachers and students (grades 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>) to participate in engineering activities within their school or afterschool program. Professional engineers serve as mentors to students throughout the year. 2024 marked the fifteenth year of the wildly-popular program. More details are available in the Spotlight section of this report.



### TEAMOLOGY PARTNERSHIP



WQED Education is proud to partner with Teamology, whose mission is to understand and improve emotional health by giving every child access to the support they need to succeed, and Pittsburgh Puppet Works to create video vignettes and accompanying resources that promote emotional wellness and aim to grow kids' resilience. WQED has worked with Teamology for more than three years, creating [13 vignettes](#) featuring lovable characters that teach acceptance, leadership, problem-solving, and resiliency.

### THE CREATOR ACADEMY

[The Creator Academy](#), formerly known as the Steeltown Entertainment Project and WQED Film Academy, taught more than 800 students to art of media production. The Creator Academy offers local schools and community organizations custom in-school and after-school workshops. The program also offers semester-long classes where students learn the art of storytelling, camera operation, audio, lighting, and editing. The students work together to make a film that is shown at a special screening for students and their families.

Only the first level of the program is tuition-based. The Creator Academy offers all students in need a scholarship and every student who requests a scholarship is considered. Level 2 students incur no cost, and level 3 students become members of the Teen Film Crew and are paid for their time and expertise.

For students interested in continuing their media arts education, The Creator Academy has partnered with Point Park University in Pittsburgh who extends two scholarships to students who complete a semester of the Academy.

The Creator Academy also encourages and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities to participate. Staff works with students and their caregiver(s) to assess needs and provide accommodations, including aides. The program regularly works with students with IEPs and 504 plans. The Creator Academy also works with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to provide paid internship opportunities to young people with disabilities.

"Being a teaching artist is probably one the most fulfilling jobs I have ever had. The opportunity to help guide and mentor aspiring young artists is an awesome responsibility and an incredibly rewarding experience. It's cliché to say that I have learned so much from teaching them, but it's true. They push me to be a better artist and a more patient and compassionate person. Working with them makes me so optimistic for the future." – Ian Altenbaugh, Creator Academy Teaching Artist

**WQED CLASSICAL: THE “VOICE OF THE ARTS” IN SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

WQED Classical provides listeners with an immersive and engaging classical music experience. This is exemplified by our signature podcast, “Voice of the Arts,” featuring insights and anecdotes from musicians, dancers, artists, actors and directors. In 2024, WQED produced more than 390 episodes of “Voice of the Arts.” Additionally, WQED expanded VoA coverage to include video [interviews from Heinz Hall](#) with WQED Classical Artistic Director, Jim Cunningham, in conversation with artists and musicians.



In addition to continuing the popular “Voice of the Arts” podcast, WQED Classical is proud of our other 2024 accomplishments:

Simulcasts to WQEJ-FM 89.7 Johnstown

Produced and distributed [Pittsburgh Symphony Radio](#) to PRX stations nationwide.

Broadcast live concerts and performances from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. These complete two-hour concerts with Music Director Manfred Honeck and guest artists become Pittsburgh Symphony Radio podcasts.

Produced and aired [Pittsburgh Opera Previews](#), in addition to Pittsburgh Opera Concerts. Hosted by WQED Classical’s Anna Singer, these half-hour previews of each upcoming opera are broadcast twice before each production opens, giving listeners an in-depth introduction to the opera’s singers, music and production.

Broadcast “[Performances in Pittsburgh](#)” every Friday night, highlighting numerous arts organizations and artists.

Added GoPro cameras to the studio, enabling WQED to capture the amazing interviews and conversations from the “Voice of the Arts” podcast and share them on our YouTube channel.

Presented two WQED Nights at the Pittsburgh Symphony where supporters and members came together to celebrate WQED and classical music.

Hosted the popular Bach, Beethoven, and Brunch series at the Rose Garden Lawn in Mellon Park in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh. WQED Classical has been a sponsor of this favorite summertime series for more than two decades. Free to the public on Sundays, it is always a weekend favorite with listeners who bring picnic baskets for a delightful morning of classical music in the park by a variety of local music groups.

## Black Horizons

WQED's Emmy-winning and groundbreaking "Black Horizons," a pioneering and long-running public television program, is being digitized and preserved through funding from national endowments. The "Pittsburgh Black History and Black Horizons Preservation and Access Project" is an example of how we are making culturally significant archives accessible for generations to come. This project will make approximately 2,000 media assets, including local stories and interviews, accessible through the American Archive of Public Broadcasting and WQED.



## Gospel in our Region

In conjunction with the PBS docuseries, "GOSPEL: Where Song and Sermon Meet," WQED created a calendar of local gospel concerts, encouraging neighbors to watch the docuseries and attend performances in Pittsburgh. Our "Voice of the Arts" podcast featured conversations with several faith and community leaders, showcasing the brightest of Pittsburgh's contemporary gospel music scene. By building bridges between a national docuseries and choirs in our communities, WQED encouraged deeper, more personal engagements.



## Community Connections

WQED welcomed **Baratunde Thurston**, host of the PBS program "America Outdoors," for an evening of reflective conversation. WQED brought together seven non-profit organizations who were on hand to share resources and contribute to the dialogue.

WQED convened **Arts in the Park**, where more than 600 people enjoyed the community-centered event. Staff from the Creator Academy, Cartoon Academy and Classical led interactive demonstrations and workshops.





## Design Lives Here

Design Lives Here gives fifth through eighth grade students an opportunity to participate in hands-on engineering activities. 2024 marked the fifteenth year of the wildly-popular program that aims to inspire the next generation of inventors. It combines WQED's strengths of creating educational bridges between the classroom and community, while also promoting exploration of careers in science, technology, engineering and math.

### Reach in the Community:

In 2024, WQED reached a total of 2,543 students across 34 schools, with significant new participation from districts such as North Allegheny and Clarion Elementary, showing increased interest from educators and schools. The program plans to expand into community libraries with discussions on a summer camp format or grab-and-go kits, emphasizing accessibility to a broader audience beyond the school year.

### Partnerships:

The initiative partnered with the Engineering Society of Western Pennsylvania, providing professional engineers as mentors to work with students in person or via Zoom, ensuring expert guidance during the design challenges. The program culminated with event days at various locations, including WQED's in-person event on March 13th, involving 40+ volunteers and 140 students, as well as events at Clarion University and Laurel Highlands Middle School, which hosted over 120 and 150 students, respectively.

### Impact and Community Feedback:

Students engaged in hands-on engineering challenges, including the Glow Stick Challenge, Marshmallow Blaster, and Paper Table, all designed to inspire creativity and critical thinking in STEM disciplines. Students culminated their learning with an Invention Challenge, where their prototypes were evaluated by a panel of engineers and WQED staff.



***"I would like to thank you for the amazing opportunity that you provided the students of Redbank Valley with the Design Lives Here Challenge. Being from such a small, rural area our students are not afforded many opportunities, especially those involving science and technology. I appreciate your coming to our area and allowing our students to showcase their talents and giving them an opportunity they would not otherwise have."***

**- Sandra Shirey, Principal at Redbank Valley Primary School and Redbank Valley Intermediate School**



Sydney Kalafut leading a film project at Ohio University.

“As a creative and sensitive youth, my daughter often struggled with severe depression and anxiety. However, the program became a stabilizing, nurturing, and supportive outlet for her to grow not only her technique as a storyteller but also her self-confidence... Your program was the one activity that gave her hope and motivation to stay connected to the world and played a significant role in her recovery.”

– *Charlotte Kalafut, Sydney Kalafut’s mom*

### Notable FY24 Investments

Upgraded FM radio transmitter, ensuring more reliable broadcasts.

Installed a ‘failsafe’ switch to automatically detect program interruptions.

Improved member service procedures to more quickly respond to requests and inquiries.

Improved our television scheduling systems to ensure programming accuracy.

Switched from satellite to fiber-optic feeds for PBS programming.

WQED aspires to serve communities through education and storytelling. We are the vocal champion of the people and organizations that make us proud to live and work in southwestern Pennsylvania. WQED is a proud community connector, beginning together our diverse communities through enriching opportunities for engagement.



**Last fiscal year, WQED invested in creating more local content, with more than 100 features celebrating people making a positive impact in our communities. “Voice of the Arts” welcomed 390 unique guests, celebrating our region’s rich cultural offerings. WQED Education employed a dozen educators—more than any local media organization—to create and share trusted resources with educators, libraries and families.**