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ANNUAL REPORT 2017
An Annual Letter to the Lower Cape Community
2017 ANNUAL LETTER
TO THE LOWER CAPE TV COMMUNITY

Dear Community members,

Welcome to the Lower Cape Community Access Television annual letter from the Executive Director. This letter shares results from the calendar year 2017 and is presented at the annual meeting on May 17, 2018.

Lower Cape TV is organized as a 501(c)3 corporation. It runs TV stations Channel 99 and Channel 22 for the Lower Cape communities of Brewster, Eastham, Orleans, Wellfleet, and Truro, as well as for the Nauset Regional and Truro Central school districts. It serves as a nonprofit hub for connection, creativity, and community voice.

As part of that mission, it maintains a professional production studio and a fleet of video equipment for public use. It also provides training, coaching, workshops, and classes to make creation accessible to all. Its production arm includes Lower Cape News, which delivers local and regional coverage of events and issues that matter to our communities, as well as Lower Cape Live, which delivers live events such as Brewster Whitecaps games, for the community.

It has an 11-member board of directors. The selectboards from the towns of Brewster, Eastham, Orleans, Wellfleet, and Truro each appoint one member. The board votes for an additional member from each of those five towns. The eleventh board member is selected at-large and voted in by voting members of the organization. This annual meeting includes an election for the member-at-large.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

During the year 2017, the organization transitioned from two years of rebuilding and investment in physical infrastructure to a mode of production growth, community outreach, and beginning the ongoing capacity building to better serve the needs of the Lower Cape region.

The theme for calendar year 2017 was “Relationships and Growth.” As the year began we had operationalized the stability work of 2015 and completed the major infrastructure projects of 2016 -- and were ready to pivot and focus outward on community relationships, responding to community needs, and continuing to incrementally strengthen and grow our capacity for production.
AMONG THE 2017 HIGHLIGHTS:
• Equipment cards, routine equipment maintenance, and equipment training processes fell firmly into place and the number of equipment card holders increased to more than 60 community members.
• Viewership in all delivery channels increased.
• We added production capacity with audio recording and remote production infrastructure.
• We built professional capacity with quality staff, leading to stronger operations and more local content.
• We began education partnerships, working with libraries to teach storytelling and media skills to upper elementary school students.
• We began regular operations of Lower Cape News reporting.
• We developed and strengthened relationships across the community, including PSA Days with nonprofits and other content collaborations.

EQUIPMENT EQUILIBRIUM
In 2016 we established equipment management procedures. In 2017 we operationalized these processes for active equipment management. First, we established a process for regularly updating circulating gear, phasing out older equipment and bringing in standardized components. This helped both maintenance and training by creating a standard baseline that all could share.

In 2016 we introduced the initial Lower Cape TV equipment card. The equipment card is a bit like a library card; it provides the agreement under which people can check out gear. In 2017 we continued this process and rolled out the equipment card training available on a by-appointment process, set up at a mutually agreeable time with our equipment manager. We run this by-appointment session for individuals and have also learned that it works especially well for small groups from community organizations. The customized small group appointments help community organizations get the best results for their particular applications.

We also rolled out an online equipment booking tool, RueShare, on a broad basis. When someone receives their equipment card, they also receive a login for this web-based tool. Using the tool both simplifies the check out process and enables us to track equipment use and maintenance. It also provides future capacity for connecting volunteers to crew opportunities and connecting equipment card holders to each other.

By the end of 2017 we had more than 60 equipment card holders, who had completed the training and were able to check out gear to create content for Ch 99 and Ch 22. The processes built strong mutual relationships and clearer mutual understanding between Lower Cape TV and members of the community. In addition, the check in and out of that gear now happens in a managed process, with usage and maintenance factored into ongoing operations.

VIEWERSHIP GROWTH
During 2017, one of our goals was to deliver regular, fresh, locally produced content that adds value, is relevant, and gets noticed. We also worked pro-actively to continue to build and strengthen relationships and collaborations within the community, weaving those important links that help our regional share and sustain. The increases in viewership reflect our initial efforts in these areas. In short, as more compelling content appeared on the TV channels and in online channels, people began watching.

We do not have data from Comcast for channel viewership, but anecdotal stories...
give us feedback that awareness and viewing are increasing. In the online area, which we can track, we saw views increase 45% from 2016 to 2017. Two elements of note in this growth line: First, the growth has been steady and continual, showing month to month increases. Second, when looked at more closely, the growth can be attributed to overall incremental increases, rather than enhanced viewership from a few high performing “hit” videos. These two factors suggest a healthy trend, not a flash-in-the-pan moment of online interest. They suggest that viewers are returning and the crowd is growing steadily. In 2017 we focused our limited resources on content and did only minimal marketing, so this also suggests a word-of-mouth growth that would typically be solid, organic, and natural.

GROWING CAPACITY WITH INVESTMENT IN TOOLS AND FACILITIES

In 2016, we invested heavily in the studio, bringing in professional lighting systems and light sets, professional cameras, and enhanced audio. We began a process of upgrading circulating field gear and began developing plans for remote production capacity. In 2017 we continued this investment in infrastructure. In addition to incremental growth in studio and field gear, we made three focused areas of investment: distribution, studio production, and remote field production.

DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE. In January 2017 we made a significant investment in a new Cablecast system from Tightrope. The Flex system brought us current cable distribution technologies and also gave us the capacity to “flip the switch” to high definition cable casting when Comcast makes that option available for the stations. This investment both brought us current in our cable distribution systems and also positioned us for near-future growth.

ONLINE VIEWERSHIP

2016 22k views
2017 32k views
2018 20k views as of May

45% growth in online viewership.

STUDIO AND PRODUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE.

We continued on the process of enhancing our studio and production workflow tools as well. In the studio, we added a small audio recording booth, along with enhanced audio recording tools for voice overs, podcasts, and other audio elements. The quality difference in voice overs in our videos brings the production quality to a new level. This gear can be used by members of the community, by appointment, for content being produced for Channel 99 and 22.

REMOTE PRODUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE

The third area of ongoing infrastructure investment has been in the remote production area. We purchased a Dodge ProMaster van to serve as the mobile production unit. We branded the van to support station visibility and it appeared in public for the first time at the September 2017 Windmill Weekend parade. It will serve as base of operations for Lower Cape Live productions, including baseball and other community events. The build-out of the van is ongoing and will be completed in 2018.

The addition of a mobile base of operations enables Lower Cape TV to be responsive to community events and create content that is immediate and directly connected to the region.

20k views as of May
STRENGTHENING OPERATIONS

Another key goal during 2017 was to strengthen ongoing operations. In 2015 and 2016 we stabilized the core business functions. In 2017 we began an ongoing process of developing talent and formalizing processes to create a sustainable operating backend. While not externally visible, these investments are essential for the long-term health of the organization and are the backbone upon which future growth can happen.

WORKING WITH EDUCATION PARTNERS

Another effort which Lower Cape TV began in 2017 involves partnering with libraries and others to bring media and storytelling skills to upper elementary students. During the summer of 2017 two initial programs, one with Truro Public Library and one with the Ladies Library in Brewster, offered a week-long workshop in which students experienced a hands-on introduction to the basics of video storytelling. Each group produced its own videos; the projects ranged from a hands-on introduction to the basics of technical production skills.

ESTABLISHING LOWER CAPE NEWS

One topic we have heard about again and again from our community is the hunger for local news and local features. In 2017 we launched the first step in a local news operation, Lower Cape News. Over the course of 2017 we routinely produced weekly news and feature shorts about issues and events on the Lower Cape. This routine production is the first baby step in a longer-term process of developing a true editorial presence within our communities.

The news pieces aired at 6 am, noon, and 7 pm, on Channel 99. Viewers could also subscribe to a weekly newsletter, which sends links to that week’s stories every Friday afternoon. Stories were shared via social media as well.

As part of this effort, we are focused on creating both strong content and content which can be consumed in the myriad of ways people look for news information in the 21st century. In other words, we are not trying to create a 1990s type of “TV news.” Instead, we are building a nonprofit news model that happens to use video as its storytelling tool, and from that we are creating a path that will take us into the future of news reporting and delivery.

This effort came with a great deal of ongoing collaboration with a variety of educational partners to engage young people as they are first emerging as storytellers. With these efforts, students learn visual storytelling, writing, planning, group collaboration, research, presentation, critical viewing, and an array of technical production skills.

GROWING RELATIONSHIPS

Building, growing, and strengthening relationships with our communities and other organizations within them formed a core element of our 2017 work. We truly believe that Lower Cape TV is part of the community and we have a responsibility to act in a manner that reflects that role, bringing value and serving as a point of connection.

nonprofit news organization.

Another part of this effort incorporates staff and community reporting talent. The Executive Director has an extensive background in editorial, from reporting to editorial leadership; she was formerly with Knight-Ridder corporate. We hired a community reporter with a degree in Journalism from Boston University to be part of the launch team this year. We also began recruiting, training, and working with citizen journalists to provide ongoing coverage of topics and towns. As with other new functions, this process took its first small exploratory step in 2017. Based on the positive feedback, it is a process which will be continuing in 2018 and beyond and we embrace the development of locally based citizen journalists who bring many different voices to news and feature reporting.

EDITORIAL VALUES STATEMENT

In our editorial efforts, Lower Cape TV and Lower Cape News strive to reflect core enduring editorial values:

Fairness, Accuracy, Balance.

• We strive for a broad agenda reflecting the needs of all sectors of our community. We value community voice, community driven content, and community inclusiveness.

• We look to report the under-reported stories that matter for our local places, bringing the questions, the celebrations, the concerns, and the discussions to an open and public place.

• We look to bring the national local, not merely parroting news but placing it within the regional and local context and exploring what it means here.

• We’ll state facts as fact. We’ll call opinions opinions, and let people be the judge of them. We’ll strive to be accessible to everyone and to acknowledge that every community has many different truths.

In all our actions we show respect for and civility to others, regardless of their roles or viewpoints. We strive to live these values every day and in every interaction.
Our PSA Days, begun in 2016, continued on a quarterly basis throughout 2017. Dozens of mission-based organizations came into the studio on one of the PSA Days to record a public service announcement. Organizations shared B-roll and Lower Cape TV edited each organization’s PSA with voice and supporting visuals. Finished PSAs ran on Channel 99 and 22, as well as shared in social media. Organizations also received a link to the PSA and could download or share the short video via their own websites or social media activity. Some organizations moved from creating a PSAs into producing their own shows.

Others found the process so successful they scheduled additional PSA times. In another outcome from this process, some organizations began sharing their news with us and this led to Lower Cape News coverage of issues that mattered to our community. We also established and grew relationships with schools, libraries, historical societies, community associations, towns, town Channel 18s, and the Cape Cod National Seashore. The resulting shows – such as Today at the Seashore, Mental Health Awareness, and Superintendent Spotlight, provide examples of ways in which collaborations can create meaningful community content. Some of our news coverage combined meeting footage from one of the Channel 18’s with additional coverage and editorial interviews, creating another lens on regional events. Relationships are and will continue to be a core focus of Lower Cape Community Access TV.

**REFLECTING ON FACTS AND FIGURES**

**FUNDING**
The primary revenue stream for 2017 remained a percentage of revenue generated by Comcast in each of the five partner towns. Under the 1984 Cable Act, our towns have the right to ask for a share of the revenue Comcast generates within the municipality to support community access to video and television for public, education, and government missions.

On the Lower Cape, towns realized collaboration could create a more effective result than standing alone. Each town retains the majority of the Comcast funds to run their own government station, Channel 18, to fulfill the government/government transparency missions. The towns pooled the remaining funds and partnered with the nonprofit Lower Cape TV to fulfill the public and education missions.

Each town has a different population and generates a different amount of revenue for Comcast. Thus, the amount of support each town provides to Lower Cape TV varies. Chart X shows the source of franchise revenue passed through to Lower Cape TV by each town:

**USE OF TIME**

During 2017 we began a simplified tracking of how staff hours were spent. Over the year as a whole:

- **52%** of our time was spent on some form of content production or content support for the community
- **43%** of our time was spent on running the station and running the business
- **5%** of our time was spent on classes and workshops

Content Production. The majority of our time was spent on creating content. This included taping studio shows, supporting community producers on their shows, supporting the Nauset School district in its use of the studio, reporting and producing Lower Cape News, delivering Lower Cape Live events such as Whitecaps baseball, producing PSAs and PSA DAY, and in a variety of other ways directly creating or supporting others in their creation of video-based content.

We do not charge for production nor for supporting people or organizations as they create content for Channel 99 and 22. Building a conduit for local voice form an important part of our mission. Running the station/running the business. The details of operating a TV studio, distribution equipment, business operations, and marketing/outreach consume much of the remaining time. These tasks include scheduling Channels 99 and 22, building out infrastructure, managing cable-casting hardware and software, designing and delivering community outreach tools, and running operational functions such as accounting and general IT.
We anticipate continuing to expand Lower Cape News and Lower Cape TV’s news and feature reporting. We expect to continue to grow our citizen journalist correspondent base, hone our coverage of areas of importance to the Lower Cape, and find new partnerships for reporting and delivering information for and about our region. In order to sustain these activities, we will be exploring various funding options to build upon the core franchise funds.

We also anticipate continuing to expand and enhance Lower Cape Live. Based on the positive response from live Whitecaps baseball and some live community events, we see a hunger from the community for more of these types of activities.

We also intend to continue to expand distribution options to enable people to access content wherever they are, be it in front of their TV, on a computer, or on a mobile device. We will be launching a new website with enhanced capacities and a mobile app available in both Google Play and Apple App stores.

Closed captioning is an important means of access for many people on the Lower Cape. We will be working on grants and other funding sources to add closed captions to selected news and public affairs content.

We will be continuing our work with education and young people, in partnership with a variety of organizations. Based on the enthusiasm from the pilot programs in the summer of 2017, we have heard clearly there is an interest in the community. As with other expansion areas, we are actively exploring funding options specific to journalism, storytelling, and media education.

We will also be rolling out more structured workshops for adults. People have told us they like that coaching and on-demand training options, but we will also be exploring some additional formats that may also serve to help people connect with others who share an interest in video storytelling and to help our current community producers grow additional skills.

Last, but certainly not least, a big goal for Lower Cape TV in 2018 is continued listening - listening to the needs of our community, its interests, and its dreams. From listening, we will continue to build relationships and become part of the fabric that makes the Lower Cape such a special place.

Teresa Martin
Executive Director