

## **FCC Localism Task Force “RM-10803”**

Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for holding an FCC Localism Task Force hearing on Wednesday, May 26, 2004 in Rapid City, SD. I attended the session but was unable to share my experience on broadcast media localism before my flight left for Sioux Falls. Thank you for allowing me to share it with you now in writing.

Broadcast media is an important part of my experience – both professionally and personally.

For example: As Director of the Catholic Foundation for Eastern South Dakota I needed help with the promotion of an event that we produce to help preserve a civic and spiritual landmark for our region – St. Joseph Cathedral – a prominent structure full of art, culture and a symbol of the faith and tenacity of the people who settled the prairie.

I approached KELO Television and engaged in conversation that not only resulted in a promotional sponsorship for our Christmas concert, featuring the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, but also resulted in the uninterrupted prime-time broadcast of the concert across our region on Christmas night. We were able to develop relationships that benefited many:

- The general public had free access to this locally produced holiday event
- The SDSO received much-needed performance revenue and publicity
- Even though we did not directly receive revenue from the broadcast, the physical needs of the Cathedral structure were effectively communicated to the public
- The FM and AM co-promotional radio station sponsors used the television audio recording to broadcast the concert uninterrupted on their stations on Christmas Day, and
- KELO TV had quality local holiday programming on its prime-time lineup.

This has grown to an annual event that is much anticipated and is now in its eighth year. In addition, we had our first springtime Cathedral symphony concert this past April that was broadcast on the UPN cable station.

We have also broadcast a weekly Sunday TV Mass for 20 years. Even though we pay for the production and broadcast, it is truly a service, especially to the homebound. Through a KELO’s network of stations across South Dakota, an average of 9,000 people watch the weekly broadcast, demonstrating the power for good that local television provides.

On the personal side, last year my wife and I became aware of a 7-year-old Mexican boy who did not have accessible medical care for the treatment of his leukemia. A generous doctor and our Catholic hospital agreed to treat him for free. A local businessman arranged for transportation to Sioux Falls. Our family opened up our home to Carlitos and his family – for a two-week stay that turned into seven months.

Carlitos lost his battle with leukemia but our community became determined to not let it be in vane. The “Amigos de Carlitos Fund” was established and next month we will be bringing outdated medical equipment from Sioux Falls to his Mexican village. We are also helping other children from Los Cabos. As a matter of fact a 5-year-old boy and a 9-year-old girl are staying with us now. In addition, we are close to securing the gift of a vacant home (which will be called, “Casa de Carlitos”) that will be used by other families who we can bring to Sioux Falls for medical care.

Last summer, a Kevin Kjergaard, a KELO cameraman heard about Carlitos and the way our community was responding to his medical need. In the course of the past year, five different news stories on three different television stations (KSFY, PAX, KELO) have been broadcast, helping to build awareness of this grass roots effort to help people in need, and to promote understanding and community service.

Weather:

For SD, the quick access to weather information is vital. I appreciate broadcasting’s willingness to interrupt programming for weather-related warnings.

In summary, we recognize the changes taking place in broadcast media. Ownership has changed, but it is still about relationships. Perhaps the key question isn’t, “Are the broadcast stations owned out of state?” but rather, “Are the General Managers and management involved in, know and care about their community?” Fortunately, our community has GM’s that volunteer on community boards, know the issues and address them. I don’t believe a station can be successful without this local approach.

We also recognize that it is a competitive environment. We have responded by trying to better understand the issues facing broadcast media, building relationships and developing partnerships whenever possible that are “win-win.” In South Dakota, we have to work together. We are glad that broadcasters here are involved and responsive to our local community.

Thank you,

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