

WLBT Jackson, MS Comments on Localism

Local News

Provide details on your station's investment in local news.

- How many local newscasts are aired per week? 47 half hour local newscasts per week and 32 news/weather updates each week.

What percentage of your daily programming is devoted to local news? 9% of the 24/7 week.

Has your station added newscasts in the morning or at other times? In 15 years we have doubled it; going from 11 ½ hours of news per week to 23 ½ hours or 47 half hour newscasts each week as well as 32 news/weather updates each week. 1997 WLBT added Saturday and Sunday morning local newscasts from 6:00am-7:00am. In 2002 WLBT added Midday Mississippi, a half hour live program from 12:30pm-1:00pm and devoted to local community interests.

- Give examples of how your website is used to enhance local news coverage. On-line featured daily news and breaking news stories, video streaming, weather page with live Doppler Radar and forecast populate the wlbt.com website. Viewers can also receive free of charge daily news updates and weather forecasts for their exact address. Recently WLBT took helicopter footage of the hurricane Ivan damaged areas from Mississippi to the Florida gulf coasts. We put this in the form of streaming video on our website. People from our area and all over the world could see how the affected relatives, friends or on property they owned. Election results are also posted as they come in.

- Are editorials on local issues regularly included in the local newscasts? Give examples. "Point of View" - News Director's Commentary of issues in our coverage area. Recent topics include: city's lack of action on abandoned houses, Mississippi's obesity problem, habitual criminals who don't stay in jail, praise for the Red Cross with the recent hurricanes, rash of car thefts and displaying tattered American flags.

Local Public Affairs

- Describe all daily or weekly programs devoted to local public affairs, local politics, community activities, and similar issues. Mid-Day Mississippi - news segment featuring interviews with local organizations, schools, political representatives, business owners, authors, etc. Mid-Day Mississippi gives people an opportunity to get their message to the public.

Indicate the length of such programs. Half hour - Monday thru Friday Describe the nature of such programs (call-in shows with community or political leaders, interviews, issues highlights). Mid-Day Mississippi carries daily interviews with representatives of community organizations about upcoming events of local interest. Newsmakers such as elected officials and government representatives are often interviewed on current issues.

- Are there regularly scheduled segments on local public affairs included in your local newscasts? Yes, during the Early Report 6:30am-7:00am a segment called Mississippi Window is a public affairs feature. How often? Daily How long are such segments? Each is about 2 ½ minutes in length. Give examples. A new exhibit for the Natural Science Museum, the Zoo, or one of the other local museums, Free Health Screenings, a new play at a local theatre, as well as a daily calendar feature called Mississippi Window of community events.

Creating or Selecting Programming

- Describe your station's efforts and practices for determining the types of programming you air. For example, do you hold regularly scheduled meetings with community leaders, or have an open door policy, accept and review emailed suggestions, conduct polls of your local audience, perform auditorium tests of various programming, etc. Give examples. WLBT relies on several sources to determine what to program. Audience surveys, Nielsen ratings, focus groups, viewer calls, e-mails, letters and an open door policy all are used to gather input from viewers.

- Preemptions: provide any examples when your station preempted network programming in order to air other programming of more interest to your local community, such as local political debates, local sporting events, or because the network programming diverged from local community standards. WLBT on a regular basis interrupts network programming to warn the public of threatening weather conditions. In the course of covering the news we also preempt network and syndicated programming. Recently we interrupted network programming to bring live coverage of an Amtrak derailment that had injuries and a fatality, interrupted network programming to give updates in a murder of an entire family by a relative and aired live the funeral of a former Mississippi Governor interrupting syndicated and our local news. WLBT also preempted NBC when we felt that the show God the Devil and Bob did not conform with the standards of our community.

Emergency Programming

- Describe any live and/or on-the-scene coverage of emergencies, weather, traffic, crime, and similar events, including any positive impact of your coverage on the local community. WLBT will break in and cover live any news or weather event that may impact our viewers. On several occasions WLBT has saved lives by warning of tornados. We have received several e-mails and calls thanking us for warning them of damaging weather. WLBT frequently has live reports that make the viewing public aware of possible emergency conditions such as: toxic spills from trucks or train derailments, escaped convicts or dangerous criminals, boil water warnings because of contaminated water supplies and scams that harm our viewers. WLBT's helicopter airs traffic reports Monday - Friday.

- Describe your station's investment in ENG or weather forecasting equipment. WLBT has three ENG trucks and an ENG helicopter that can also transmit live. Typically ENG trucks run about \$200,000 each and we spend more than \$130,000 annually on our helicopter lease. WLBT invests in the latest technology in weather with live Doppler Radar, storm tracking and forecasting software and severe weather watches and warnings directly from the National Weather Service that appear automatically on the screen. Weather equipment at WLBT costs more than \$400,000 and operating costs exceed \$200,000 annually.

- Does your station participate in AMBER or EAS (e.g., as a Local Primary or Monitoring Station). WLBT does participate in the AMBER ALERT program and EAS.

Political Programming

- Describe any candidate debates sponsored or aired. Include examples of candidates declining debate offers. WLBT aired 3 hours of debates prior to this November's elections which included 1 hour with the 2nd Congressional candidates, 1 hour with a Supreme Court race, and 2 half hours with 2 other

Supreme Court Races. We allowed two of these debates to run on sister stations in the state. WLBT had scheduled a one hour debate for the 3rd District Congressional candidates. The incumbent 3rd District Congressman and the Reform Party candidate refused our offer to participate either in a debate or in a separate interview. WLBT conducted a 15 minute interview with the remaining candidate for the 3rd Congressional office.

- Does your station offer candidates other types of free air time? Give examples, and include examples of candidates declining offers of free air time. Not in addition to the debates and profiles described above and the regular news stories that run in the course of an election.
- Describe your station's efforts to analyze important political/ballot issues or candidates. Are local political issues discussed, or candidates interviewed, during newscasts or public affairs programming on a regular basis? There are numerous news stories that cover issues and candidates. Press conferences, candidate forums and targeted reports done on each issue and/or candidate have been a tradition for WLBT. WLBT makes every effort to make each candidate's views known and each side of an issue covered. During elections WLBT often has political analysts from academia or a balance of political operatives to give viewpoints come on during election coverage and give insights
- Does the station cover local campaign and/or convention events? Give examples. Significant campaign events are covered especially if they are open to the public. Local and statewide party conventions are covered when they are held. Several of the political parties had events for their presidential candidates and WLBT was there to cover all of them.
- Describe the station's participation in promoting voter registration drives. WLBT did a 15 minute interview with the Secretary of State on the upcoming election regarding voter registration and ballot questions such as candidates, referendums, constitution amendments. Numerous stories have been done on the importance of being registered to vote and then making sure to cast your vote.
- Give examples of how your website is used to enhance political coverage. All of the news stories WLBT airs on elections and campaigns have been are placed on our website and kept in archives for a week. Streaming video of political coverage is also available on the wlbt.com website. Election results are posted on wlbt.com as they come in.

Civic, Cultural and Other Community-Responsive Programming

- Describe all programming targeted at particular segments of the community, including the number of hours weekly, and the nature of the programming (e.g., foreign language, youth, women, minorities, farmers, religious groups, etc.)
Black Enterprise Report - minority-half hour weekly
Hispanic Heritage Awards - minority - one hour per year
Voice of Goodwill - religious - half hour
Coral Ridge - religious - one hour weekly
First Presbyterian Church - religious - one hour weekly
Crossgates Baptist Church - religious - one hour weekly
Kenny the Shark - children- half hour weekly
Tutenstein - children - half hour weekly
Trading Places: Boys vs. Girls - children - half hour weekly

Endurance: Hawaii - children - half hour weekly
Strange Days at Blake Holsey High - children - half hour weekly
Darcy's Wild Life - children - half hour weekly
Look Around Mississippi - local diverse people and places - half hour weekly

- Describe any coverage of local events, such as local sports, museum openings, fairs, holiday events, local theater, fire or police outreach events. Give examples. Local events are communicated on various newscast and Mid-Day Mississippi, a program dedicate to community events and local interviews. International Ballet Competition, International Dresden Art Exhibit; high school football and sports programs (Friday Nite Lites & Sports Journal), local college and universities sports programs; live coverage from MS State Fair, Jubilee Jam, Farrish Street Festival, Celtic Festival, Latino Festival and numerous local fairs and festivals. Holiday coverage includes Coverage of the Martin Luther King Parade, Veterans Day Memorials, Memorial Day ceremonies, Fourth of July fireworks, Labor Day honoring the workforce, Thanksgiving dinners served at local establishment for homeless persons; holiday greetings from military personnel out of the country and Santa's Toy Chest where thousands of toys are donated to needy children.

- Describe any PSAs local groups or addressing local issues, including the number of PSAs aired per week. Give examples of any particularly successful campaigns. WLBT airs approximately 100-200 PSA spots per week. WLBT also is very involved in may PSA groups efforts. These are just a few of the examples of WLBT's involvement with local pubic service groups: American Heart Association and WLBT had the Red Dress campaign targeting heart disease in women, Santa's Toy Chest telethon on WLBT collects toys for needy children, Wednesday's Child features hard to adopt children each week, Blood drives with Mississippi Blood Services, Walk for Diabetes Cure - team of employees participates to raise funding and awareness and Season of Giving which donates furniture to families that have lost furnishing due to fire, flood or financial hardship.

- Describe your station's coverage of important issues affecting the local community, such as consumer rip-offs, smoking and other health hazards, safety, drinking & driving, domestic abuse, and similar issues. "3-On-Your-Side" is regular news feature that makes viewers aware of consumer rip-offs and scams; "Crime Stoppers" - encouraging viewers to assist in solving crimes by offering rewards for information leading to the arrest of criminals; "Medial Matters" - WLBT has a dedicated medical reporter that airs ten health stories per week on medical breakthroughs, health alerts and warnings. Our numerous newscasts cover just about any issue that confronts our viewing area.

Music

- Does your station provide on-air opportunities for local artists, either periodically?
or on a regular basis? Are local artists promoted, interviewed? Give examples. Monday - Friday; Mid-Day MS segment allows local artists to promoted and be interviewed. Local authors and their books are also featured.
- Does your station try to air music in less mainstream genres (e.g., jazz, classical, bluegrass/roots, etc.) or offer formats new to the community? Give examples. A variety of artists and music perform live during Mid-Day MS.

Station Participation in Community Activities

- Give examples of your station's support of non-profit and charity initiatives, such

as telethons and other efforts on behalf of the March of Dimes, United Way, Make-A-Wish, etc. United Negro College Telethon, MDA Telethon, St. Jude's Telethon and Santa's Toy Chest telethon. Are station executives on the boards of such groups? Several of WLBT's management and news anchors are members of various non-profit boards.

- Provide examples of how your station promotes causes not tied to a particular organization, such as health screenings, free vaccinations, nutritional advice, community fundraisers, blood drives, disaster relief efforts, etc.

- Give examples of station involvement in education initiatives, such as Partnering with schools to promote their needs for school supplies, or promoting immunizations or after school programs. Adopt-A-School Program (2 schools); talent schedules time to visit schools during events such as National Library Week, graduations, Big Brothers Big Sisters "Bowl For Kids", WLBT has numerous station tours for students including one sponsored by the Metro Chamber of Commerce for career information.

Does your state promote or air "scholar bowl" shows? No Give examples. Does your station cover school board or PTA meetings, or important

Education-related issues? Give examples. Yes, any significant education issue is covered by our Education Reporter. Jackson Public Schools went to uniforms this school year and WLBT covered both sides of the issue, parents in Hinds County protested the Superintendent as being racially bias and WLBT covered both sides, Science Fairs and students who excel are featured on WLBT.

Give examples of how your website is used to promote community service/involvement. Community calendar - viewers can post information to the site regarding their events, on-line giveaways, etc.

Dan Modisett

WLBT - LIBERTY CORPORATION

Jackson, MS