

Prometheus Radio Project

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Enclosure: LPFM applicant profiles



Low Power FM Applicant Profiles

The Low Power FM (LPFM) radio service provides diverse, highly localized programming to communities around the country. The following profiles are of applicant organizations in the 2013 LPFM Application Window.¹ As they demonstrate, LPFM stations can take many forms, such as broadcasting local community arts programs, celebrating and documenting regional cultures and music, and promoting public health education.

Media Alliance – Troy, New York

For residents of the upstate New York town of Troy, the Sanctuary for Independent Media is the only place one can go to hear an anti-consumerist gospel choir, a lecture on race and media from a celebrated journalist, or a free jazz and electronica duet. But with the New York Media Alliance poised to get on the FM airwaves, all these events and more will be available to any Troy resident with a radio and an interest in community arts.

Founded in 1977, the Media Alliance is an advocacy group for media arts and artists. In their one-of-a-kind community arts center – a century-old church called the Sanctuary – the Media Alliance has built audio and video production studios, as well as a performance space for visiting artists. While the organization’s members initially believed that proximity to the state capital Albany would allow them to focus primarily on media advocacy, they realized that before any legislative victories they would need to build a movement.

“When we arrived, there was such a low level of awareness about community media and media arts that it made more sense to actually start doing it first and to try to develop a grassroots constituency and then increase advocacy once people have a better idea of what this is about,” said Media Alliance director Steve Pierce.

Along with their production studios and performances, the Sanctuary also holds film screenings, community media workshops, and discussions led by artists and activists. With an LPFM station, the Media Alliance plans to continue to offer this combination

¹ The profiles contained in this document are available at www.prometheusradio.org/futurestations.

of music, education, and public affairs, allowing them to reach many residents who may have missed out on their events.

“Because this is one of the most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in upstate New York, there’s a large group of people here who aren’t reached by conventional television or print media or email,” explained Pierce. “So radio presents a different outreach strategy and would allow us to find people who are otherwise unreachable.”

Radio NOLA HIV – New Orleans, Louisiana

For Radio NOLA HIV, who hope to become WHIV-LP, saying the name of the station is a part of the mission. “HIV is, unfortunately, still a highly stigmatized disease. But by just saying the word, or calling out the letters over and over again, WHIV, or HIV, it becomes destigmatized,” says MarkAlain Dery, assistant professor of medicine at Tulane University and medical director of a sliding scale HIV clinic. He cites the example of diabetes in the last 50 years, in which the enormous stigma was mitigated as people loudly and boldly gave public name and recognition to the disease.

In 2009, Dery and his colleagues formed the New Orleans Society for Infectious Disease Awareness (NOSIDA) to raise awareness of the HIV epidemic that has quietly but forcefully hit New Orleans and neighboring Baton Rouge; the two cities consistently rank at three and two, respectively, for new HIV diagnoses in the US. NOSIDA strives not only to erase the stigma and raise awareness surrounding the epidemic, but also to promote public health measures like checking one’s HIV status. Dery explains that one in five carriers of HIV are unaware of their infection, and that these cases account for 50 to 60 percent of new infections. To promote HIV testing, NOSIDA hosts the annual HIV Awareness Music Project, a concert at which local celebrities and musicians promote testing through publicly taking an oral HIV test to demonstrate that the test is painless, simple, and fast. Free testing is available on site at the events.

But NOSIDA wanted to diversify their outreach and employ new and innovative strategies for raising awareness of, de-stigmatizing, and getting tested for HIV. Dery had been following the media coverage of the Local Community Radio Act and after seeing Prometheus on *Democracy Now!*, he realized that community radio would be the perfect tool for NOSIDA. It would allow for longstanding, local, and participatory community education on HIV issues in New Orleans, and an LPFM station was manageable even for a small organization like NOSIDA.

While NOSIDA has only five staff members, they have built a deep community network of doctors, legal professionals, youth, educators, musicians, artists, clinicians,

and healthcare advocates. This network has rallied enormous community support for WHIV, whose full name, *Radio NOLA HIV: Programming Dedicated to Human Rights and Social Justice*, describes the diverse programming the station intends to feature. Drery believes that WHIV will fill a gap by providing a participatory forum for local political discussion. NOSIDA plans to air youth-oriented and youth-created programming, promote broadcasting skills, and provide space on the airwaves for peer-to-peer education about safer sex and healthy choices.

In addition to public health-related broadcasts, Radio NOLA HIV will air Spanish-language programming directed at New Orleans' large immigrant communities. Dery says the station plans to broadcast programming in multiple languages for populations repeatedly targeted by hate crimes and police harassment, particularly for undocumented and transgender communities. Dery also hopes the station will be a resource for the city in the event of another environmental disaster. NOSIDA will place its transmitter in a building with a generator and make the antenna highly wind resistant, ensuring continued broadcast ability in the case of power outages.

Gullah People's Movement Radio – Beaufort, South Carolina

When Jabari Moketsi finally gets his LPFM station on the air in Beaufort, S.C., the first program on his schedule will be hosted by octogenarians. The show, entitled "Keepers of the Culture," will provide an oral history of the African American community in low country South Carolina and Georgia, often referred to as Gullah or Geechee. Though Brother Jabari plans to feature other music, news, and public affairs programming, all of it will serve the same purpose of preserving and strengthening Gullah culture, and sharing it with the rest of the world.

Gullah culture began with West African slaves on the rice fields of the southeastern US coast, and it persists today in the food, medicine, folk stories, spiritual practices, and language of the coastal plains and Sea Islands of South Carolina. By celebrating this distinct culture over the airwaves, Brother Jabari hopes to elevate conversations about the Gullah people, both inside and outside of the community itself. Public affairs programming will not only educate members of the Gullah community on issues concerning health, culture, and economics, but will also serve to promote tourism and encourage government officials to engage with their Gullah constituents.

"You have powerful entities in a community, but some people don't have a way to speak to them from a mass point of view. But with a radio station, you have a vehicle to hold those entities accountable, and in doing that, you empower the people in the community."