2018 Annual Report

Presented on Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Westford Community Access Television, Inc.
(WestfordCAT) is a 501(c)3
Massachusetts Non-Profit Corporation

The Westford Board of Selectmen has appointed WestfordCAT as the
Mission
To promote the use of local access to enhance a free and diverse exchange of ideas and interests that fosters community participation and educational opportunities.

Commitment
- Encouraging community involvement in the production of local access programs while maintaining a friendly, open and creative environment that will allow individual ideas to develop into collaborative productions.
- Maintaining an educational setting for WestfordCAT volunteers in an effort to advance their knowledge in multiple forms of media production and distribution.
- Encouraging the creation of unique programs to share with our community.
- Providing live coverage, recording and archiving of many of the Town of Westford Government meetings.

Delivery
- Offer training and technical assistance in the use of video production equipment.
- Supply access to production resources.
- Provide broadcast and streaming channel time on the PEG Channels.

Governance
- Governance is by a Board of Directors comprised of a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 members serving two year staggered terms, except appointed liaisons.
- The Westford Board of Selectmen, Westford School Committee and the Nashoba Technical School District School Committee may appoint a director to serve as a liaison with their organization.
- Remaining directors are elected by the Corporation’s membership.

Financial Statement as of December 31, 2018
- Cash $ 312,059
- Short-term Investments $ 97,185
- Accounts Receivable $ 120,793
- Accounts Payable $ 2,545
- Franchise Fees $ 481,586
- Capital Grants $ 10,000
- Change in Net Assets $ -63,907
Board of Directors as of December 31, 2018

Dan Bush
President
Nancy Burns
Vice President
Christina Sacco
Treasurer
Tracey Tebrow
Clerk
Betsy Alvarez
Member at large

Shunhe Xiong
Member at large
Tom Clay
Board of Selectmen
Avery Adam
School Committee
Warren Adam
Nashoba Valley Technical High School Committee

Executive Committee

Dan Bush, President
Nancy Burns, Vice President

Christina Sacco, Treasurer
Tracey Tebrow, Clerk
Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

WestfordCAT continued to improve its relevance and importance in the community by adding visibility to both the successes and the challenges our Town experienced in 2018. Through our daily news articles and weekly news programs, our local meeting coverage and our special event coverage, more people turned to our channels, both on cable and online, to stay informed with all things Westford.  

Our training classes, scout programs, internships and volunteer programs have helped many area residents develop skills and build their professional and personal media portfolio. Revamping our front area with new edit systems and virtual reality technology attracted more visitors and provided new options for other community organizations to host their own meetings.  

This past year there were a few more changes to the WestfordCAT Board of Directors. We said goodbye to our longtime producer and Past President, Ira Keltz, and at-large Directors Nina Cimini and Paul Playe. We welcomed new Directors Shunhe Xiong and Betsy Alvarez. Christina Sacco continued to serve as our Treasurer, Nancy Burns as our Vice President and Tracey Tebrow as our Clerk.  

Individuals and organizations continued to provide valuable support by making donations of cash or services, including our CPA firm, Anstiss & Co., P.C. who discounted their services to make the audit of our financial statements more affordable.  

In September, the FCC introduced a new ruling that could potentially threaten the financial stability of PEG stations around the country. Twenty-six Westford residents and organizations filed objections during the comment period, and we now await their final decision and implementation so that we can measure the financial impact of this ruling in conjunction with already declining franchise fees we’ve experienced this past year.  

In 2019, we plan to initiate ways that the community can assist in budget shortfalls, through membership drives, increased underwriters, additional donation requests, other fundraising events and activities. All of these actions require staff time and attention, and we are unsure of the impact these budget shortfalls will have on our services as we strive to fulfill our mission and exceed community expectations.  

Thank you to everyone, including our supporters in the community, board and committee members, all the producers and volunteers, and the hard working staff who continue to make PEG access in Westford better each year.  

Sincerely,

Dan Bush, President
SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS
Lauren Horton, Executive Director

In early 2018 we completed renovations to the front area of the station, transforming it into a full featured media room with a Smartlink projector and 90” display board and speaker system, providing the community with a meeting space that they can reserve for multimedia presentations. We also added four high-end edit systems and virtual reality headsets so that visitors can either watch immersive 360 video or interact with a variety of virtual reality games, experiencing firsthand the wonders of this emerging technology.

During the year we recorded more than 200 productions in our studio. We also went on location to record 126 field productions and cover 127 government-related meetings and specials. Two of our local productions won awards at the ACM-NE video festival, with a first place win for Cheryl Major’s Thin Strong Healthy series and second place talk show award for Main Street Westford. Political coverage this year was extended to include both local and state elections, with most candidates getting experience in our Public VR Lab following their interviews and debates in our studio.

We saw significant growth in our online presence, adding 76 new subscribers to our daily newsletter for WestfordCATNews.org, which went out to almost 500 readers each day. We also added almost 200 new subscribers to our YouTube channel and saw a 62% increase in YouTube views, totaling more than 89,000 for the year.

We continue to produce our weekly WestfordCAT News program, highlighting issues, meetings and events covered during the week. This highly produced program is a team effort with our staff, board members and community volunteers. Our Adoptable Pet of the Week segment was recognized by the Lowell Humane Society this year, noting that all but two of the 120 adoptable pets we featured have found new homes. We continue to add new segments and invite the community to submit their own content or get on-camera experience by anchoring segments.

Our virtual reality equipment has proved quite popular during our two fully attended summer camps – one in June and another in August – for 20 area students. We also held a successful Unity workshop for designing 3D environments for eight students and teamed up with a local Girl Scout troop to deliver a three-week badge program on community media.

As all these accomplishments and improvements occurred, the funding we received from our local cable companies declined, due to reduced cable subscriptions and lower bundling prices, leaving us with our first ever P&L loss for 2018. We are concerned with our ability to continue our level of services as we divert our efforts to fundraising. Your help in adding more sponsors, program underwriters and individual donors for WestfordCAT will be needed in 2019. We look forward to your continued involvement and support!
Lauren Horton, our Executive Director, had another very successful year, overseeing our staff and driving the renewal of our Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the Town of Westford for 10 more years. Her work with Verizon to replace our remote live connections with IP transcoders has expanded our ability to stream live recordings from any building connected to the Town network. She also drove the updating of our franchise agreement with Verizon to reflect this new arrangement.

We ended the year with 10 active Station Sponsors and one active Program Underwriter, thanks to the efforts of our Marketing and Outreach Manager, Sarah Fletcher. Her efforts to increase awareness in the community of our productions and services resulted in increases in membership, sponsorships, and overall studio traffic. She has continued as President of the Westford Business Association, promoting WestfordCAT’s offerings to the larger business community.

We also enjoyed another year with our talented Production Coordinator, Patty Stocker, whose work both in front of and behind the camera, along with her solid video editing skills, greatly contributed to many of our productions, including our weekly WestfordCAT News program. Nick Woodbury provided consistent coverage of our government meetings, programming of our three channels, and many other key tasks around the studio. Steve Edwards continued to grow in his technical role over the last year, custom building our new high-end PC edit systems, running most of our studio recordings, updating our studio’s video switcher, and maintaining our live connections with the Town and with Nashoba Valley Technical High School. Joyce Crane, our News Director, continued her efforts throughout 2018 to have WestfordCAT recognized as the primary source of local news and event listings in town. Live meeting coverage, unique news stories, and on demand videos all attracted users to connect with our site.
Business Members

Bridges by Epoch                              NE UFO Conference
Cameron Senior Center                          Northern Bank
Eastern Bank                                  Sai Baba / Anaysuya Gunturi
Enterprise Bank                               Westford Department of Health
Harkness Law Office                           

2018 New Members

Avery Adam                                    Lisa MacCartney
Syed Ahmed                                    Prachi Mahurkar
Liewei Bao                                     Revati Mahurkar
Liza Bernard                                   Zebadiah McCall
Trent Brookings                                Sammy Muffetore
Dawn Brooks                                    Jose Nino
Lisa Caldwell                                  Garret O’Connor
Tristan Caldwell                               Sean O’Donnell
Theresa Catino                                 Ray Peachey
Joshua Coppinger                              Jon Rose
Ryan Cozzens                                   Terry Ryan
Nick D’Agostino                                Kyla Schultz
Nadina DaGraca,                                Dana Snowdon
Pamela S. Frushour                             Sharon Spanos
Ana Furtado                                    Christine Steinhauser
Claude Galinsky                               Matty Tricca
Geoff Jamieson                                 Pamela Tricca
Laxmi Khamal                                   Julia Tseng
Erica Labb                                     Sarah Turcotte
Erika Lamier                                   

2018 Studio Sign-Ins
Total: 621

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2018 Special Recognitions

Producer of the Year – Betsy Alvarez, New Beginnings

Business Member of the Year – Bridges by Epoch

Volunteer of the Year – Ryan Cozzens
WestfordCAT News
News Director Joyce Pellino Crane

WestfordCAT News Online posted almost 800 pieces of content to our website, along with many more photos, covering local breaking news, special features, and events. As community newspapers become financially strapped and forced to regionalize, we found many local stories were being left untold. Seeing the opportunity for more local content, our news team and volunteer columnists have been working hard to cover more stories about Westford.

We took on some heavy topics again in 2018, including the controversial matter of Drew Gardens on Boston Road where a developer’s plan to build a farm-to-table restaurant on agricultural preserved land brought out a faction in town that strongly opposed the idea. The most popular story of 2018 was “Westford Farmers Market Squashed for Season.” The breaking news article, published on April 25, 2018, brought 5,690 views, highlighting the disappointment of local residents on the loss of the Farmers Market.

Social media -- particularly Facebook -- remains a significant and major community connector for making readers more aware of our news stories and also for learning about which topics are of interest in our community. We try to post daily to our Facebook and Twitter accounts, keeping our online community informed and involved.

In 2018 we also began to post links to shows produced by WestfordCAT volunteers on our news site, so that others might be inspired to do their own shows. Through these efforts, we successfully attracted a handful of new producers.

As we continue our coverage in 2019, our goal is to cover the hard and breaking news, maintain a level of excellence in reporting and writing, populate the website with quality content, stay highly visible in both personal and professional appearances around town, and do nothing to violate the town’s trust in us. We hope we can maintain our independence and viability in the future.
2018 Annual Programming Report

1,152 Programs added across three channels
442 Programs added to the VOD Library
349 Videos added to YouTube

Locally Produced Programs & Covered Meetings

The Public Channel
20 Locally Produced Series / 135 Episodes

28 Locally Produced Specials

9/11 Memorial 2018
2018 Apple Blossom Festival
2018 New England UFO Conference
Adoptable Pet Sponsorship Promo
Baseball Talk w/ Tommy Doyle
Benefit Concert & St. Marks
Bring Your Cat To The Vet
CCLS 2017-18 Year End Performance
Cheppinatlu Chestara – Do Deeds
Dandelion Concert 2018
The History of Nabnasset Segment
2018 Town Common Menorah Lighting

Month of Gratitude – “What are you Thankful For?” (22)
Nava Durga
PCA Flute Orchestra
Red Storm Gears Sea Press Play
Saving our Teens Event
Scenes from Lowell
1st Middlesex District State Senate Democratic Forum
Strategic Planning Retreat 2018
Sun Santa Toys for Tots Event 2018
WBA Tax Reform Seminar 2018
WBA Town Managers Talk
WCAT Holiday Greeting
WCP Welcome Summer Concert

20 Non-Local Imported Programming / 455 Episodes

A Healthier You (4)
Chamber Chat (2)
Current Buzz (1)
Bay State Baptist Church (5)
Business Matters (1)
Dacey’s Divas (8)
David Pakman Show (103)
Democracy Now (233)
Get Healthy w/ Holly (2)
History Show (1)
Learning the Bible (6)
Lowell Folk Festival (11)
Money Talk (3)
Perils for Pedestrians (6)
Physician Focus (2)
Reeling (25)
Scrooge Theatre Performance
The Kamla Show (17)
The Legal Edition (11)
Young at Heart (13)

The Education Channel

8 Locally Produced Programs & Series / 30 Episodes

Girl Scout Troop 85009 Outdoor Fun Day (3)
NVTHS Station ID’s (5)
NVTHS Holiday Cheers (4)
Prehistoric Island – Episode 2 – Survival of the Fittest
WA Graduation 2018
Video Camp June 2018 Montage
Video Camp August 2018 Montage
WPS System Updates (14)
5 Locally Imported Programs

NVTHS - Graduation Ceremony ‘18  
NVTHS - Promenade 2018  
NVTHS - National Honor Society Ceremony  
NVTHS - Chorus State House  
Fieldtrip  
Westford Academy Sports – WA vs. AB Boys Volleyball (April 11, 2018)

3 Non-Local Imported Programs / 133 Episodes

Train Time (69)  
STEM in 30 (29)  
Expedition New England w/ Scott Tucker (35)

The Government Channel

15 Locally Covered Meetings / 126 Total Meetings Covered

Annual Town Meeting 2018 - AM & PM Sessions  
Special Town Meeting – OCT 2018  
Board of Health (9)  
Conservation Commission (23)  
Disability Commission (1)  
Finance Committee (9)  
LWV MAR ATM Warrant Review (1)  
LWV OCT STM Warrant Review (1)  
LWV Candidates Night 2018 (1)  
Permanent Town Building Committee (1)  
Planning Board (18)  
School Committee (22)  
Selectmen (23)  
Tax Classification Committee (1)  
Zoning Board of Appeals (14)

4 Non-Local Imported Programs / 6 Episodes

Beyond the Badge (2)  
Haverhill’s Choice – 2018 Midterm Elections (Haverhill Community Access)  
LWV Candidates Forum – 3rd Congressional Dist. (Acton, MA Community Access)  
MA House of Representatives Meeting Sessions (2)

182 Locally Produced PSAs/Shorts in 2018

9/11 Memorial 2018 PSA  
Adoptable Pet of the Week (43)  
After the Bell (6)  
Being Volunteer Dance Competition  
BOH Shopping Reusable Bags  
Candidates Minute (3)  
Cameron Charity Auction PSA  
CAT Tracks (15)  
Christmas Through the Ages Short  
Come to Annual Town Meeting ‘18  
Declaration of Homestead PSAs (3)  
Free Speech Week Ads (2)  
Free Speech Week Shorts (4)  
Thanksgiving Gratitude PSAs (6)  
Happy Thanksgiving PSA  
Hidden Battles Cornhole PSA  
Holiday Cheer Compilations (6)  
Holiday Cheers (28)
WestfordCAT runs public service announcements and bulletin board announcements on each channel providing local information on upcoming events, programs and services. Messages for the bulletin boards can be submitted through our website, by emailing bulletin@WestfordCAT.org or by sending a fax to 978-692-5246.

WestfordCAT endeavors to post information in the most expedient and visually impactful manner. In 2018, the community submitted 71 slides and 171 PSAs to the bulletin board.
Training

All of our staff was involved in continuing efforts to expand training classes offered through 2018. In collaboration with Roudenbush Community Center, we offered two summer video camps hosting 10 students in each session. These are the ever-popular “Lights, Camera, Action!” summer youth video training camps.