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Riding the air waves with new enterprises

Nov. American Experience, Julia and Jacques, This Old House, Teletubbies and Barney. These are some of the programs you and your family enjoy watching on WUSF-TV Channel 16.

While it's hard to imagine better programs, the local facilities they're broadcasting from greatly improved with the completion of a state-of-the-art television broadcast center at USF-Tampa.

After operating from the basement of USF's original library for 35 years, WUSF-TV began broadcasting from its new digs last year. Housed next to its sister station, WUSF-FM (89.7), the new television facility includes two large studios, state-of-the-art digital transmission equipment and powerful digital production gear capable of creating high-quality programming for local and national distribution.

The move also marks a new era of growth and change for public broadcasting.

Earlier this year, WUSF announced the creation of a new division, WUSF Productions, that leverages staff expertise and the new WUSF digital production facilities to serve the needs of all Tampa Bay area businesses and organizations. WUSF Productions offers digital production and post-production facilities and services to all commercial and public organizations that wish to create video products. It creates new revenue streams to support station goals including community services and local production.

The WUSF management team has been reshaped to help meet these strategic goals.

JoAnn Urofsky, WUSF 89.7 station manager, has been named interim general manager of WUSF 89.7 and WUSF-TV Ch. 16 with responsibility to supervise all station functions.

"These new initiatives will give us additional funds to increase services to our audience," Urofsky said.

James B. Heck has been named executive director of WUSF Advancement. He previously served as general manager for WUSF Public Broadcasting for 14 years. He will seek new resources for WUSF through major and development giving, corporate programming, underwriting, foundation and government grants, and community and government relations at the local, state and national levels.

William D. Buxton continues as WUSF-TV station manager, and assumes new responsibilities as managing director of WUSF Enterprises.

"WUSF now has the digital facility to serve any organization that needs to produce digital video," Buxton said. He became station manager of WUSF-TV in 1995.

USF's rich history of public broadcasting began in 1963 when WUSF-FM went on the air.

During the first six years, the WUSF-FM studio and transmitter were housed in a building being used by the school of business administration.

In the fall of 1979, the radio station moved into a new building.

The television building is adjacent to it. A corridor runs through the center of the building, allowing students to walk through the station while heading from the residence halls and Martin Luther King Jr. Plaza to the academic buildings. A second-floor screening and conference room with a glass wall offers a bird's eye view of the studios, including the 3,000-square-foot Studio A. This studio provides opportunities to produce more local programs similar to WUSF's award-winning series Beyond Science.

The largest studio in Channel 16 is the third most-watched public TV station in Florida. WUSF-FM is the most listened to public radio station in Florida.
Castigating Lakeland storytellers

In Lakeland, WUSF-TV Ch. 16 will turn the role of program producer over to local residents. The project, "Our Town: Lakeland," is the pilot program for an ongoing WUSF series featuring communities throughout the station's 11-county coverage area. Videotaping volunteers will tell the story of their community using a "day-in-the-life" format.

"We'll ask volunteers to showcase their town in ways they see fit," said "Our Town" producer Ken Cherry. "With the freedom of a blank tape, camcorder and plenty of enthusiasm, Lakeland's community storytellers will tell the story of people, places and events important to this city.

The station is seeking 30 volunteers who will agree to videotape Lakeland life on Saturday, April 6. The resulting tapes will be edited together into a one-hour special called "Our Town: Lakeland," scheduled to air in June on Ch. 16.

A WUSF producer will coordinate coverage to avoid duplication of stories. "Each person will be asked what part of the Lakeland community they would like to cover," Cherry said. "Everyone's ideas will be compiled and story assignments will be made."

Volunteers must attend one of the planning meetings on March 25 and March 27, Cherry said, to learn tips on how to shoot video and to coordinate story assignments. To volunteer, call Cherry at ext. 4-4000.

USF Sarasota/Manatee hosts terrorism experts

The Florida Political Science Association's annual meeting took place at USF Sarasota/Manatee's Sudakoff Center on March 8. Highlights of the day included a discussion on the War on Terrorism, moderated by USF Sarasota/Manatee Professor Robert Barylski, an international politics expert, and a dinner in honor of Susan MacManus, USF professor of Political Science.

Barylski was joined by University of West Florida Professor M. Lal Goel to discuss the War on Terrorism. Many audience members listened attentively and shared their emotionally charged opinions.

Other lively panels included one on American and international politics, urban politics, Florida politics and religion and politics.

That evening, association leaders honored MacManus with the prestigious Manning Dauer Award for her outstanding contributions to the study of politics. In addition to her accomplishments as a professor, MacManus is a prominent author and commentator on Florida and American politics.

USF St. Petersburg plans on-campus residences

Students attending USF St. Petersburg could soon begin living on campus.

The university's campus Board of Trustees voted unanimously on Feb. 26 to begin negotiating leases with downtown apartment complexes to provide the first-ever housing accommodations for students.

The school also will begin a search for an independent, nonprofit corporation to build residence halls on campus.

The board's action allows campus officials to begin negotiating master leases with adjacent, privately held residential property owners.

The first apartments could be available for an anticipated 40-120 students in fall 2005.

The independent, nonprofit foundation sought by the board would develop and operate residence suites for another 240 students. The residences would be built on university-owned land.

New on-campus housing would consist of four-bedroom single apartments and two-bedroom double suites.

This is precedent setting. There is no regional campus in Florida with housing.

Construction would occur in phases, with the first units ready in 2004.

Before the vote, USF President Judy Genshaft told the board: "This is precedent setting. There is no regional campus in Florida with housing. We're treading new ground."

Students now need 120 beds, said Steve Ritch, associate vice president for student affairs. Ritch oversaw the housing study conducted by consulting firm Triad Research Inc.

Barness lauded for half century of caring for children

More than 400 physicians, researchers from all over the United States gathered together to show their love for Dr. Lewis Barness, a man who changed the face of pediatrics on Valentine's Day at the Tampa Marriott Waterside.

Barness has mentored hundreds of students and residents, always carried a well-worn water pistol for children. The tribute included a two-day scientific session and a banquet dinner.

Barness is regarded as one of the College of Medicine's founding fathers, along with doctors Roy Belanke and Doon Smith.

Educated at Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, Barness served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine before becoming chairman of USF's Department of Pediatrics in 1972. At USF he helped recruit faculty to the fledgling medical school, built a curricula and attracted many of the best and brightest medical graduates to pediatrics.

As a researcher, Barness made important contributions to the field of infant nutrition, and is recognized as a pioneer.

Barness' career, which has spanned more than 50 years, is filled with professional accolades, including president of the American Pediatric Society.

On Feb. 14, he was celebrated as a role model, friend and a man deeply committed to children's welfare.

Barness' colleagues and friends told stories about him. Dr. Allen Root served as the master of ceremonies for the evening, introducing luminaries from the universities of Florida, Wisconsin, California and Pennsylvania.