



By: Gene Stowe
 Photos: Greg Swiercz

Public. Broadcasting.

Renovated downtown space fulfills WNIT's twin mission

WNIT is putting more “public” in public broadcasting with its renovated space in downtown South Bend. Also more “broadcasting.”

The station has been moving from its Elkhart headquarters to the former WSBT building since April, beginning with office staff and production, with the studio operational in July.

An open house on Aug. 28, during ArtBeat, will welcome the public through the revolving door moving at Lafayette and Jefferson into the warm, contemporary artful space the station fashioned as a community center.

“What we wanted to create was a community destination center — something that would represent the ‘public’ part of public media, which is what we are,” says Mary Pruess, president and general manager. “There’s a lot of room for interpretation.”

There’s a lot more room for just about everything in the concrete-and-steel structure that doubles WNIT’s previous space and brings together the studio and offices.

The exterior of the newly renovated WNIT building, on Lafayette St. in downtown South Bend. Photo illustration by Tim Stonecipher.

Plans for new space started some seven years ago. Schurz Communications, moving to new headquarters in Mishawaka, offered the building in 2008.

The Troyer Group architects designed the renovation, and the Holladay Corporation managed construction. The work took more than a year.

Two stories totaling 30,000 square feet have been renovated, with another 10,000 square feet available in the basement for expansion. The studio has been restored to its 50 by 80 feet, the largest public broadcasting studio in the state with room to leave sets standing and seat live audiences.

The wood-paneled walls and earth-toned carpeting warms the contemporary design and welcomes visitors.

“They think TV, they think high-tech and then you’ve got glass and chrome,” Pruess says. “I didn’t want that. I wanted people to feel at home here.”

“We’re easy to find. We can host

things. We have meetings. We can create partnerships with community organizations. We can have them come to our facility.”

A community room can hold 130 people seated, 250 standing, for events, sometimes connected to WNIT shows. New technology frees the station to reach into new areas.

“We’re going to be expanding on our signal,” says Angel Hernandez, vice president for production. “We’re going to be going into another channel. Now you have the possibility of welcoming guest professors, guest experts, guest businesspeople.”

“We can roll out a camera and roll it right into the community room. It’s so convenient. It’s right there.”

For example, a Notre Dame professor could provide follow-up in the room to a NOVA show on the solar system, or people could gather for political discussions as the election approaches in the fall.

WNIT also will be able to broadcast live from anywhere in Michiana — festivals, town hall meetings, “go right to where the public is,” Hernandez says.

“This is a new generation of media,” Pruess says. “Old analog






(Left) A control room at the new WNIT building. (Below) The studio in the new WNIT building boasts the largest studio in the state.

broadcast TV is now no longer. With digital broadcasting comes other ways of disseminating information. It's not just a TV station."

Later this year, a block of programming from across the state, called the Indiana Channel, will become part of the Michiana Channel.

WNIT-produced specials include "Raising an American Legend," about the American Countryside Farmers Market; "Farm Fresh to You," about fruit farming in southwest Michigan; and "Kicking the Notes the Toradze Way," about Alexander Toradze, founder of the Toradze Piano Studio at Indiana University South Bend.

"We're Michiana's storytellers," says Roger Chrastil, corporate communications specialist. "If it wasn't for WNIT, the story wouldn't be told."

"We want our viewers to get the information they need," Hernandez agrees. "Community is No. 1." 



QUALITY OF KARE



Independence

Bath / Aide Care

Companion Care

KARE Services assist the elderly to live as independently and as safely as possible in their own familiar environment – whether that is in a retirement community or in their own home.



Kelly's Aging Resource Expertise, LLC

269-684-1984 • 574-292-2900
KKaidanRay@aol.com

59248901

welcome

The physicians at **Otorhinology Associates:**

Robert C. Brooks, MD • Jon B. Chadwell, MD
Ruta Gandhi, MD • Daniel W. Kletzing, MD • Stephen T. McTigue, MD
are pleased to welcome

Douglas R. Liepert, MD

Board Certified in Sleep Medicine • Board Certified in Otolaryngology



Dr. Liepert is a Diplomate of the American Board of Otolaryngology, a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, a member of American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy and American Society of Sleep Medicine.

Scheduling New Patients Now

Call 574-232-4800 or 1-800-992-1891.

Douglas R. Liepert, MD

ALLIED PHYSICIANS
your allies for life
www.apom.com

59466801