



Thursday, March 15, 2012

WGTE Tackles Dropout Crisis in Toledo

New Public Media Programming and Public Engagement Initiatives to Help Students and Teachers

TOLEDO, OH - WGTE Public Media has initiated a series of broadcast, online and community activities as part of "American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen," a national public media initiative funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) to help Toledo and other communities across America to address the high school dropout crisis.

Every year 1 million kids drop out of high school nationwide. In Toledo, 37 percent of students failed to graduate in 2010, according to the Ohio Department of Education. The estimated economic impact on the Toledo area is a loss of nearly 20 million dollars in revenues and earnings, according to the 2011 Alliance for Excellent Education report.

WGTE is one of more than 60 public media and television stations around the country that are working directly with their communities to address the dropout crisis. WGTE and "American Graduate" project partners, Toledo Public Schools and the United Way of Greater Toledo have developed a blend of media across several platforms - TV, radio, online - and community engagement efforts designed to raise public awareness and offer solutions to increase Toledo high school graduation rates.

Education has always been at the center of public broadcasting," said Marlon P. Kiser, President and CEO of WGTE. "That's why we are proud to be a part of this important national initiative and are honored to work with the local community to make sure Toledo's students stay in school and graduate. We cannot allow a generation of our young people to fall through the cracks."

"Every year, one million of our nation's young people make the life altering decision to drop out of school resulting in severe consequences for their future and our country," said Patricia Harrison, President and CEO of CPB. "Through the 'American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen' initiative, America's public radio and television stations - locally owned and operated - are engaging local non-profit partners, business leaders, parents and teachers to help young people stay on the path to a high school diploma."

Toledo's "American Graduate" initiative began in the fall of 2011 with a series of public awareness messages on WGTE public radio and television, along with a comprehensive informational website and two "Deadline Now" public affairs programs focusing on the dropout crisis. The initiative culminated in a live WGTE Town Hall program, hosted by Bill Harris, that brought educators, parents, administrators and non-profit groups together for a community discussion. Below are the highlights from WGTE's "American Graduate" initiative:

- **Local partnerships** – Toledo Public Schools, United Way of Greater Toledo and the YMCA of Greater Toledo.
- **Local Programming** – WGTE's weekly public affairs series, "Deadline Now," produced two programs that addressed the dropout crisis in Toledo's Public Schools, and efforts within the community and school system to reverse the trend. Both programs included in-depth discussions of the American Graduate Initiative. The first program's guests were Superintendent of Toledo Public Schools Jerome Pecko and Jim Gault, Chief Academic Officer for the system. The second program examined efforts to boost high school graduation rates in the greater Toledo area. Guests on this edition of "Deadline Now" were Bill Kitson, President and CEO of United Way of Greater Toledo, Dr. Romules Durant, Assistant Superintendent for Toledo Public Schools and James Gault, Chief Academic Officer for TPS. The episodes can be viewed online at www.wgte.org/graduate.
- **Town hall** – The "WGTE Town Hall: American Graduate - Finding Solutions for Toledo's Kids" program, explored how non-profits and schools can work hand-in-hand with parents and communities to surround each child with the support and resources they need to succeed. Panelists included Jim Gault, Chief Academic Officer, Toledo Public Schools; Dr. Romules Durant, Assistant Superintendent, Elementary Education, Toledo Public Schools; Dr. Jerome Pecko, Superintendent, Toledo Public Schools; Greg Braylock, Education Specialist, United Way of Greater Toledo; and Sue Rowe, Teacher Innovation Specialist, Toledo Public Schools. Volunteers from the YMCA of Greater Toledo were on hand to answer phones during the live broadcast. The WGTE Town Hall can be viewed online at www.wgte.org/graduate.
- **Reading/early learning initiatives** – The Martha Speaks Reading Buddies program, developed to accompany the "Martha Speaks" television series, is a cross-age reading program. The program is an innovative way for first graders and upper-level elementary students to increase their vocabulary, develop their self-esteem and social skills, and enhance their love of books and reading. WGTE implemented this program at Leverette Elementary School for eight weeks and at Sherman Elementary School for six weeks.

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WGTE Public Media (The Public Broadcasting Foundation of Northwest Ohio) is a non-profit organization and a center of learning and education for Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan. Founded as an educational institute in 1952, education remains at the heart of what we do every day. From our entertaining, informative and educational programs that air on WGTE TV, FM 91, and Knowledgestream.org, to our professional development opportunities for K-12 teachers and preschool day care providers, WGTE helps to make Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan a better place to live. Discover more WGTE at www.wgte.org.

About American Graduate

The public media initiative, [American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen](#), is helping communities across America identify and implement solutions to address the high school dropout crisis. Supported by the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) (CPB), the multi-year campaign is designed to raise awareness and dialogue through national and local multiplatform programming. Targeting communities with highest dropout rates, the initiative also increases local engagement and action through collaborations and partnerships, and increases student engagement through teacher professional development and classroom curricula. Public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – reach 99 percent of the country over the air, have built models for successful intervention in early learning, and have deep connections in the communities they serve. Nearly 300 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate and CPB is partnering with America's Promise Alliance and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Visit American Graduate on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or AmericanGraduate.org.

About [CPB](#)

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967, is the steward of the federal government's investment in public broadcasting. It helps support the operations of more than 1,300 locally-owned and -operated public television and radio stations nationwide, and is the largest single source of funding for research, technology, and program development for public radio, television and related online services.

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