

## CABLE CONNECTION

### Singing the praises of PEG cable channels

Last month I was in Washington, D.C., for the Alliance for Community Media's 25th anniversary meeting. The Alliance is an organization that supports Public, Education and Government (PEG) Access Television.

In our communities you can see Public Access on INFO TV-12, Education Access on channels 10 and 20 and Government Access on channels 8 (City of Farmington Hills), 13 (Novi) and 15 (Farmington).

The Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC) has always felt that Access TV is important and has continued to make provisions for it in the cable franchise agreement with Time Warner Cable. But this isn't only a local issue.

FCC Commissioner, Gloria Tristani spoke at this Alliance for Community Media conference singing the praises of Access TV: "At its most basic, PEG access empowers individuals and groups to use the media to educate and enrich their communities. It is television by the people and for the people. It represents the purest form of media democracy."

She continued by indicating that when you put cameras in the hand of average Americans they make shows that look like America, unlike the boilerplate shows we see coming out of the commercial stations.

"One of the true strengths of public access programming is the opportunity for different

groups to produce and show programs about their own cultures," Tristani noted.

#### Public access shines

But it's not only public access that shines. She pointed out that "there is little doubt that educational opportunities can be enhanced through education access channels. One-way distance learning has improved the lives of many students." And here's what she had to say about Government Access:

"Government access channels are, without question, an important exercise of self-governance. C-SPAN is a great contribution that the cable industry has made to Americans. It allows Americans to watch their elected leaders do the nation's business. Whether we like what we see is another matter but the point is we can see what is going on. We can then make our views known. We can be better-informed voters."

"The same should be true for local government. Allowing citizens to see their local governments in action is a vital democratic tool. I can think of no more valuable use of the communications media than to strengthen our democracy. Government access channels do that in a profound way. They allow citizens to see parts of their government they had previously only read about, if that. Democracies work best when citizens have more information, not less."

Tristani expressed her concern over the consolidation of the radio, television, telephone and cable industries. The 1996 Telecommunications Act eliminated limits on national radio station ownership, among other things. But in that time, Clear Channel, a group owner has gone from owning 62 stations to owning roughly 1,200 stations today. But she also notes that as more consolidation occurs, the value of PEG access programming increases.

She cites PEG access at the "antidote to the dangers of cable industry consolidation. It is a powerful idea that part of the media should exist directly in the hands of the public rather than large corporations. The ground-up programming you get when you empower individuals to create their own shows can be a welcome contrast to the top-down, lowest common denominator of network programming."

Do you want to get involved in Public Access? Then come to SWOCC studios' next Orientation workshop on Wednesday, Sept. 5 from 7-9 p.m. Call (248) 473-7268, ext. 14 for details and to make a reservation.

Caren Collins is the Executive Director of the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC). The next Cable Access Committee meeting is at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 11, at SWOCC. The next SWOCC meeting is at 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 2, at Farmington City Hall.



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## CAMPUS PIPELINE

#### LEADERSHIP TRAINEE

Eric Springer, a resident of Farmington Hills and student at Albion College, recently attended North America's premiere management and leadership training experience for college level students. Springer attended Operation Enterprise for an intensive weeklong training experience in Berkeley, Calif. He was chosen from over 600 students internationally.

#### MSU GRAD

David Gossella of Farmington Hills recently graduated from Michigan State University as well as being named to the dean's list. He is now employed with General Dynamics.

#### TECH WORKSHOP

Asia Mack, daughter of Lynette Martin of Farmington, recently participated in the Explorations in Engineering Workshop at Michigan Tech University. Mack is a sophomore at Wall Lake Western High School.

#### NATIONAL SCHOLARS

Lindsay DeRose and Raymond Naglik Jr. of Farmington Hills have both accepted membership in the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and will be honored during a campus ceremony this fall at Michigan State University.

#### MATH HONOREE

Elizabeth Lawrence of Farmington Hills was recently inducted into Kappa Mu Epsilon National Mathematics Honor Society during initiation ceremonies at Kettering University.

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