

Big changes planned in cable access programming

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Turn the tube on at 6 a.m. Oct. 15 and you will see the launch of the new Info TV 12.

"Change is coming," has been the message to viewers for some time, without an explanation as to what the change is.

The station is at the Southwestern Oakland Cable Commission (SWOCC) building on Research Drive in Farmington Hills.

Beginning Monday, programming will be expanded from 6 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week. The hours were previously 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

"We will have a lot more time on the air," said Jason Alan Wantuck, the program coordinator. "In the past we had a haphazard schedule. There really was no rhyme or reason. We are putting things on at certain times which make sense. It will allow us to play things a little more often. This gives people more opportunity to catch their favorite shows. It will get more people interested in coming here and producing."

A new morning line up

includes talk shows and aerobic exercise shows, for example. An Info TV 12 movie showcase is scheduled for 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays and 3:30 p.m. on Saturdays. "We will show old movies—Bing Crosby, Cary Grant, Bob Hope, Abbott and Costello."

There's a new logo, new graphics and a new color scheme. "We hope people will tune into Channel 12 and see something which looks a little more like a network channel," Wantuck said.

A new file server will allow changes on all of the channels eventually, Wantuck said.

VELA of Salt Lake City, Utah created the software; Roscor which has locations nationwide, provided the hardware and assembly.

"What the file server does is, it allows us to spruce up our playback where we are actually broadcasting from," Wantuck. "What we used to have, literally, was the equivalent of two VCRs. What we would do is put one show in for a half hour on the top deck and you would put another show in underneath it. When it came time to switch shows, you would hit the stop button on one and hit play on the other. It was a rickety system."

The new system, he added, is more professional and somewhat rare for a public access station. And the price tag? Undisclosed, but it's in the six figures.

The system is digital, so there is better quality. "Everything is digitized into the new computer system," he said. "Everything is scheduled through the commu-

ty."

SWOCC also operates three government channels, one for each of three cities in the consortium. Farmington is Channel 15; Farmington Hills, Channel 8; and Novi is Channel 13.

"In the new building, we will bring everybody together. The new building will be much larger. We will have a lot more studio and production space."

SWOCC Studios, as it is known right now, will move to Nine Mile and Farmington next summer after building renovation at the site.

The quality of the new file server is expected to be even better after the move because there will be new cable lines, he said.

When Wantuck was hired in March, his mandate was to put a new face on public access. That included developing a new marketing scheme, a new look, new promos and a new logo. Wantuck has experience with his own production company, as well as with script and production consulting.

Free is the key

Because public access is a free service in every hometown, across the nation, there's a perceived stigma about it, Wantuck said. "It's a great opportunity for local people to express themselves and have a little fun. Most of the people who come here don't have much of a professional background. So some of the more high-brow people might tend to look down upon it. People have a great time here and the quality of productions

gets better all the time."

People who produce their own shows do so on their own time. They, their crew and guests are unpaid. Equipment use is free for their use; SWOCC offers training.

Wantuck hopes to do a poll that will give a better idea of the communities' favorite programming and also study how it relates to demographics.

Program scheduling, however, is on a first-come, first-served basis, Wantuck said. "If someone

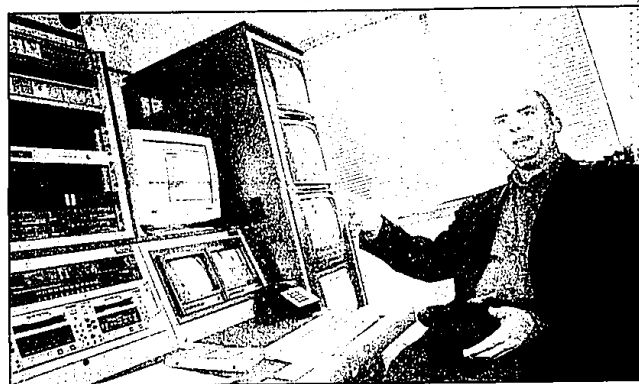
comes to me, wants to put a show on at a certain time and we have that spot available, we will put it on," he said. "There's no politics or anything else. It is completely free speech and that's the great thing about it. We don't pre-screen any shows."

If the producers believe shows might be controversial or for an adult audience, they indicate that finding upon show completion and submission. The show is then scheduled after 9 p.m. to be more in line with FCC rules,

Wantuck said.

For instance, a pro-life show filmed in Texas which shows abortions isn't aired early, he said.

An out-of-state show can be broadcast if it is sponsored by someone with some connection—residency or work—in any of the three cities covered by SWOCC, Wantuck said. "We want the shows to reflect the communities," he said.



Access Improvements: Jason Alan Wantuck says the new digital editing system will help the look of the public access channel.

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