Delaware Media First/NPR Radio Station to be Established at DSU

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Delaware State University and the University of Delaware have joined Delaware First Media (DFM) in a historic collaboration to launch WDDE-FM 91.1 Dover, the first-ever Delaware-focused public radio station.

WDDE-FM is owned by Delaware First Media, the nonprofit company that operates the online multimedia news service DFM News [1]. The universities are the lead institutional sponsors of the station, which will be based on the campus of DSU, the host university.

WDDE [2] will begin broadcasting into all three counties this summer on 91.1 FM, serving a Delaware audience of more than 800,000 on-air and online listeners with nonpartisan local, national, and international news.

“WDDE is a major step in Delaware’s evolution as a state with a strong news media that connects Delawareans downstate and upstate to create a shared community culture,” said Delaware First Media President Micheline Boudreau. “We are thrilled to launch this project with the strong sponsorship of Delaware’s premier universities.”

“Delaware State University is proud to be the home of WDDE-FM,” said Carolyn Curry, DSU’s chief of staff and vice president of Institutional Advancement. “This project offers outstanding educational opportunities to students and will provide immeasurable value to communities across the state.”

The University of Delaware has been affiliated with Delaware First Media, WDDE’s parent company, since 2010. UD housed the offices and newsroom of DFM News, provided student interns, and co-produced with DFM the Delaware congressional election debates in 2010. “Sponsoring WDDE is a natural outgrowth of our relationship with DFM,” said David Brond, UD’s vice president for communications and marketing. “And at a time when lawmakers, grantors, and the public are seeking creative partnerships, this UD/DSU collaboration has the potential to become a national model for supporting high-quality local journalism.”

The cooperative effort responds to the recommendation of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Democracy to “increase the role of higher education, community, and nonprofit institutions as hubs of journalistic activity.”

WDDE will generate original, substantive news coverage of Delaware events and people that is urgently needed in a state with few local news sources. “Some Delawareans can tune into out-of-state public radio stations, but when they break for local news, they’re not focusing on what’s happening in Delaware’s legislature, at a Delaware theater, in Delaware schools,” said Boudreau. “On WDDE you’ll find out what’s going on right here where we live.”

"Delaware has a national profile far larger than its small size—think a Vice President, companies whose innovations are felt globally, and an Air Force base that serves a unique role in the nation’s defense,” said Governor Jack Markell (D). “Now Delaware will have a public radio station broadcasting within our borders and exporting news about Delaware to the nation. WDDE is a welcome addition to the strong institutions of our state.”

The station will bring jobs to the Dover area immediately and will provide the opportunity for Delaware businesses to distribute their messages across the state through underwriting on WDDE, Boudreau noted.

WDDE will have a national impact as well. WDDE reports about Delaware will be exported to National Public Radio’s audience of more than 26 million listeners nationwide. NPR officials welcomed the news.

“Local stations serving communities across this nation are the strength and backbone of public media,” said NPR CEO Gary Knell. “We are very excited about the prospect of WDDE-91.1FM in Delaware joining the NPR family of member stations.”

“I think it’s great that you and your colleagues are working hard to bring public radio to Delaware,” NPR board chair Dave Edwards wrote to the staff. “Public radio is at its best when it is able to serve local communities with quality programming that

helps residents stay informed and engaged in public policy issues. A station in Dover will be able to play that role."

A strong team of journalists with decades of public media experience leads the WDDE effort. It includes General Manager George Boosey, former program director of WBUR-FM in Boston and a public radio industry consultant who helped create five nationally distributed public radio programs. News Director Tom Byrne, who helped create DFM News in 2010, will oversee WDDE's news staff. Byrne and other DFM principals, including Boudreau and board members Nancy Karibjanian and Ann Ahl, have had award-winning careers with nonprofit radio and television stations in Delaware and in major media markets.

The WDDE team includes Liane Hansen, the popular 22-year host of NPR's award-winning *Weekend Edition Sunday*, with a nationwide audience of 3 million. After retiring from NPR in 2011, Hansen moved from Washington, D.C., to Bethany Beach, Delaware, and joined the effort to launch WDDE.

"This is what NPR stands for: supporting the growth of local radio stations that tell the powerful stories of their communities with professional, responsible journalism," Hansen said. "As someone who has been a part of Delaware life for years and truly loves this state, I'm thrilled that Delaware finally will have its own NPR station, and I'm thrilled to be a part of it."

WDDE will be financed through individual and corporate support as well as grants. The station is looking for a groundswell of support over the next several months. "We all, as Delawareans, need to come together to make this happen," Boudreau said.

"Every day, great stories about Delaware go untold," Boudreau said. "Important stories about the legislature, about this year's election, about our vibrant arts community, about innovations in education, about Delaware's unique legal community, about its industries – we want to start telling these stories now."

Supporters can make a one-time or recurring tax-deductible donation online at WDDE.org [2].

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Links
[1] http://www.dfmnews.org/
[2] http://www.wdde.org/