

Always Ongoing:

How a digital/newspaper media company and a public TV station continue to collaborate ... and sometimes say “no”

Sandra Svoboda
Program Director

Great Lakes Now at Detroit Public Television

ssvoboda@dptv.org @DetSandra

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Making It Up As We Go Along

Great Lakes Now

at

MLive Media Group

Detroit Public Television



Great Lakes Now: Mission, Audience, Community

Vision:

Serve as the regional hub for Great Lakes news and information and a national thought leader on critical freshwater issues

Goals:

- Instill a basin-wide Great Lakes identity and sense of stewardship
 - Centralize stories of policy, research, and practice
 - Grow public understanding

GreatLakesNow.org

Latest News



What are Joe Biden's views on two of the most controversial environmental projects in Minnesota?

May 12, 2020 - by MinnPost



Locked down along with NYC, upstate areas prepare to reopen

May 12, 2020 - by The Associated Press



In Minnesota, an innovative virtual approach to home energy inspections

May 11, 2020 - by Energy News Network

Biden never addressed the Line 3 or Twin Metals projects during his presidential primary campaign and has continued to avoid taking a stand since becoming the likely Democratic nominee.

The mountainous corner of upstate New York is under the same statewide lockdown rules as the pandemic-besieged city. That could soon change.

The Home Energy Squad is using surveys, photos and live video to help homeowners identify efficiency improvements.



Permit Pause: Michigan regulatory agency wants more info on Line 5

May 11, 2020 - by Gary Wilson



PFAS News Roundup: Sen. seeks federal probe of Cohoes incinerator, PFAS actions added to Senate bills, DuPont foresees settlements



Minnesotans urged to fish close to home to slow COVID-19

May 7, 2020 - by The Associated Press



ABOUT NEWS & ISSUES SHOWS EDUCATION SUBSCRIBE DONATE

GREAT LAKES NEWS & EDUCATION DURING COVID-19 CRISIS



Locked down along with NYC, upstate areas prepare to reopen

May 12, 2020 - by The Associated Press

MONTHLY SHOW - LATEST EPISODE



From Rust to Resilience - Episode 1013

April 20, 2020 - by GLN Editor

COLLABORATIONS



What are Joe Biden's views on two of the most controversial environmental projects in Minnesota?

May 12, 2020 - by MinnPost

Welcome to Great Lakes Now: a regional news and information hub about how we enjoy, study, work on and experience the world's largest supply of surface freshwater.

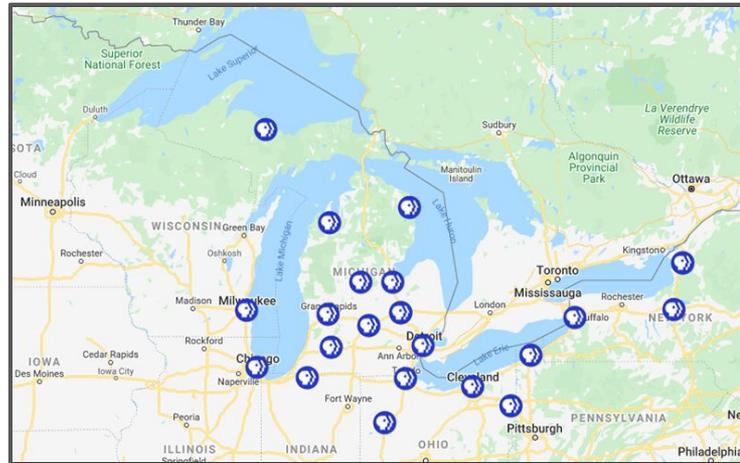
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GREATLAKESNOW

Great Lakes Now - The Monthly Program



- Half-hour, magazine-style program with a host
- Launched April 2019
- Diversity of topics, locations
- Has aired in seven states and Canada (Map of Stations)
- Carried regularly by 21 PBS channels.
- Seen by 1 million viewers in first 13 months.
- (Everything is on our website and YouTube)

8:05



News



Ann Arbor projects nearly \$16 million in budget reductions...

13 hours ago



Here's your last chance to be part of live chat with Cong...

13 hours ago



Dozens of homeless families housed in Grand Rapids hotel...

13 hours ago



Whitmer administration calls Republican lawsuit...

14 hours ago



UM scholarship program for first-generation college...

MLive Media Group

weather



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Coronavirus in Michigan



5 things to know about Michigan Gov. Whitmer's extended stay-at-home

RELATED STORIES

U.S. Reps. agree: 'The enemy is the virus,' not each other

Michigan is in Phase 3 of 6 in coronavirus response and recovery, governor says

Great Lakes Now Documentary Deliverable:

Produce a half-hour documentary, “The Forever Chemicals,” to air in March 2019 about the impact of PFAS contamination on communities

The Partners, circa January 2019

Great Lakes Now:

- In Year One of a three-year growth plan
- Staff of One (me)
- Contract Producer
- Basic website
- Traditions of collaboration

Goals*: **Produce a half-hour documentary**; Build reporting partnerships; Create landing page for doc as a model for the new program's.



*All Achieved.

MLive Media Group:

- Digital media company and newspapers in Michigan's smaller cities
- National leader in daily and enterprise coverage of PFAS contamination
- Two JOYs -- Paula Gardner and Garret Ellison -- as recognized by the Michigan Press Association for PFAS coverage
- Competition > Collaboration

Goals*: **Increase exposure for the award-winning reporting being done especially in Detroit market**; Build audience; Attempt collaboration.



Basic Plan: MLive reporters shared sources, stories and time...

... and Great Lakes Now put MLive reporters on TV (and online and in social promotion and in the credits ...and ...)



A promotional graphic for a program titled "The Forever Chemicals". The background is a photograph of a person in a high-visibility vest and cap, kneeling by a body of water, possibly collecting a sample. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, it says "Great Lakes Now Presents". Below that, the title "THE FOREVER CHEMICALS" is displayed in large, white, bold letters. Underneath the title, a smaller line of text reads "This 30-minute program is airing on Detroit Public TV on Thursday, March 30 at 9 p.m.". At the bottom left, there is a blue button with the text "Watch a Preview" and a play icon.

Funding Helped Extend the Scope of Work



THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
**CRAIG NEWMARK GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM**

By GLN Editor

A unique collaboration on TV and online will bring you more information about drinking water safety

February 27, 2019

By Sandra Svoboda, Great Lakes Now program director, and Mickey Ciokajlo MLive Regional News Manager

0 Comments

As residents, researchers and lawmakers learn more about how industrial chemicals are permeating household water supplies, [MLive Media Group](#) and [Detroit Public Television](#) are collaborating to report stories that will help further public understanding of this latest water crisis.

0 Shares

With the financial assistance of the [Ravitch Fiscal Reporting Program at the Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York](#), the two media outlets are partnering to do interviews, research, publish, and broadcast stories about PFAS — per- and polyfluoroalkyls — which are appearing in residential water supplies throughout Michigan and around the nation.

Readers and viewers will learn more about PFAS, a family of chemicals used in the production of household products, cleaners and waterproof clothing, when MLive and DPTV's [Great Lakes Now](#) initiative:

- Produce a series of coordinated multimedia stories
- Collaborate on a half-hour program "The Forever Chemicals" scheduled for broadcast at 9 p.m. Thursday March 28 on WTVS-56.
- Share behind-the-scenes stories, explainer videos and other digital work online

Coordinated Publishing/ Broadcast



PFAS pollution already costing Michigan communities millions

Michigan residents may be in line to pay for the fixes to PFAS contamination for years to come.

[🕒 March 20, 2019](#) - by [Paula Gardner](#)



Ann Arbor spends \$1 million to deal with PFAS contamination

The city started to ask in 2017: “What can we do about it?”

[🕒 March 20, 2019](#) - by [Paula Gardner](#)



In West Michigan, sticker shock over toxic water costs

Plainfield Township officials estimate that \$62 million is needed to bring municipal water to areas contaminated by PFAS chemicals.

[🕒 March 20, 2019](#) - by [Garret Ellison](#)

News

PFAS pollution already costing Michigan communities millions of dollars

Updated Mar 21, 2019; Posted Mar 20, 2019

The Great Lakes Now special “The Forever Chemicals” will air at 9 p.m. March 30 on Detroit Public TV. [Go here for more on the special and related content.](#)



MLive partners with Great Lakes Now/DPTV for PFAS reporting

A unique collaboration on TV and online will bring you more information about drinking water safety.

Have a Question About PFAS?

Ask Great Lakes Now. If we can answer it, we might loop it into our coverage so others can learn too.

By Sandra Svoboda

March 20, 2019

1

0 Shares

PFAS*: the acronym for industrial chemicals that are contaminating Michigan water and showing up in people's blood. Have you heard of them? Do you have a question about them and how they relate to your health, safety or water supply?

Ask Great Lakes Now your PFAS question. If we can answer it, we might loop it into our coverage so others can learn too.

Your PFAS Question

Search

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“The Forever Chemicals” Documentary, News Articles and Engagement

- 58 airings on 13 PBS channels in three states and Ontario - plus YouTube views
- MLive produced a series of articles about the cost to municipalities of the PFAS contamination, testing and clean up.
- Three public screenings of the program were held with panel discussions including MLive reporters and Great Lakes Now staff.
- Documentary won Best Mini-Documentary or Series and Best News Special or Documentary from Michigan Association of Broadcasters
- Documentary webpage served as a model for development of episode landing pages for Great Lakes Now monthly series.



Making it Up After “The Forever Chemicals”

Contact Process

GLN Program Director (Sandi) and MLive Regional News Manager (Mickey) are first points of contact. We “work it out.” Then Show Supervising Producer and MLive Staff can take it from there.

Relationship Development

Openness. Share plans early and often. Follow through. Have lunch.

Content Sharing

MLive has previewed the monthly show with stories, some digital content. (Led to an additional station airing...)



The Monthly Show - Launched in April 2019

Includes MLive involvement:

["PFAS in Ann Arbor"](#)

Segment aired on Great Lakes Now and DPTV's One Detroit weekly public affairs program.



Audience
Engagement:
“Have a
Question about
PFAS?”



What Else We've Done:

MLive's reporting expertise shared in Great Lakes Now monthly show segments.

“[Vanishing Shorelines](#)” in January 2020



What We Haven't Done:

Co-Reporting/Co-Publishing

Muskegon Shipwreck Survivor - Great Lakes Now - 1010 - Web Extras

Great Lakes Now • 1.4K views • 3 months ago

A shipwreck survivor talks about wreckage recently found near Muskegon in Lake Michigan. Find more at: <https://www.greatlakesnow.org/2020/01/muskegon-shipwrecks-high-water-shoreline-erosion/>

Re: Barge-wreck survivor script



Mickey Ciokajlo <MCIOKAJL@mlive.com>

To ○ Robert Green

Cc ● Svoboda, Sandra

You replied to this message on 1/11/2020 4:14 PM.



1/10/2020

Hi Rob,
I've talked to Lynn about this story and we're going to have to pass, sorry. We would need to follow up with the survivor and do further research on our end to make the story work for MLive and we just don't have the capacity right now to pull that off in the necessary timeframe. (I may have mentioned that we're down a reporter right now in our Muskegon office).
Have a good weekend. Thanks,
Mickey



What We Haven't Done:

Every event that comes our way...

Re: catching up



Mickey Ciokajlo <MCIOKAJL@mlive.com>

To ● Svoboda, Sandra



You replied to this message on 11/21/2019 9:06 AM.

Hmmm. Possibly. Let me talk with them about it and get back with you on that one.
Mickey

What Was/Is Next?

- Ongoing communication about Great Lakes-related coverage, show topics
- Continued MLive expertise in show and exposure to Great Lakes Now audiences
- Had early March meetings with additional DPTV-MLive managers to explore collaborations beyond Great Lakes Now

This was going to be a better slide before pandemic:

COVID19 focus; Staffing changes;

Engagement limits; Production shutdowns.

What We've Learned:

- Understand you're *making it up as you go along*
- Have a *point person* at each organization who can empower reporters/producers to work together
- *Don't be afraid to ask AND understand that it's OK to say/be told "no"*
- Attend conferences, follow up - *connections* really do happen
- Be honest, *communicate regularly*, forgive when something doesn't happen as you hoped
- *Be creative* about cross posting - suggest what it COULD be
- *Ask for funding*
- *Accept it's all new and different -- and super fun.*

Let's Collaborate!

Sandra Svoboda

ssvoboda@dptv.org @DetSandra

From Rust to Resilience

What climate change means
for Great Lakes cities

BELT
magazine

THE
CONVERSATION

ensia

GREATLAKESNOW

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Nonprofit News

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WATER MAIN

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MILWAUKEE'S NPR