



WPAA-TV & Community Media Center (WPAA-TV) is a treasure box to anyone who wishes to create and produce digital media. The local non-profit makes available to the public the tools and stage necessary for the video enthusiast. It's a valuable free resource to the residents of Wallingford, both young and wise. It also offers an inspiring story of an East Wallingford resident, who brought together a neighborhood to transform community TV in Wallingford.

Curt Huizenga joined Wallingford Public Access Association's board of directors in 1998. A decade later when the station needed a permanent home, Curt spearheaded the acquisition and renovation to convert a cow barn to serve as the station's studio and community center. Located at 28 South Orchard Street in Wallingford, Curt remains grateful to Wallingford's blue-collar network, who came together to make the renovation possible.

Susan Huizenga, the station's volunteer executive director, gives credit to her husband, Curt, for taking on the project. "Volunteers like him are often behind the scenes and unrecognized for their contributions," Susan wrote in an email. "It's his small-town vibe and genuine connections with the community of Wallingford that fueled the station's revitalization and continues to make WPAA-TV possible," Susan commended.

As a retired HVAC Technician with a degree in Civil Engineering from Vermont Technical College, Curt was no stranger to creating community infrastructure, including water systems and playgrounds. He was also involved with the Rokeby Museum, a historic farm property and museum located in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. "I have used math in all that I do," Curt proudly stated, "including my volunteer service to WPAA-TV."

Curt's involvement with WPAA-TV grew from an interest in community projects, and provided opportunity for his children, who showed an interest in video production. His son, Cliff, was already accomplished in Photoshop, and eager to explore video storytelling. His youngest daughter, Heather, would create video shorts for fun, which would later become the foundation for WPAA-TV's three-minute movie challenge. A contest that encourages video enthusiasts, of all ages and skill level, to create a short film in any style or genre.

Even the citizen who may want to share a story, personal perspective, or interesting hobby, but who may not have interest in the technical aspects of video recording, can receive tech support at the station necessary to share their voice with the community. The station's diverse program schedule features local programs created in studio and produced by the community,

including Sunday worship, STEaMe educational content and language literacy programs, as well as global news on topics such as health, technology and culture. Shows are cablecast to local cable channels and can also be viewed globally in HD through the website <http://wpaa.tv>.

More than just a community space for digital media creations, the station is also dedicated to promoting public art by citizens of Wallingford. Like the tiger mural painted on the building's north side, by resident and internationally recognized large scale mural artist, Ryan Christenson. The indoor gallery displays awarded photography by local photographer, Charles Buzinsky. As well as fine art by other area residents, including Nelson Ford, Amy McNamara and Ingrid Mary Barthelemy Catalina.

In 1998, Curt moved to East Wallingford from Vermont, after a divorce left him single and with full custody of three children. He wanted to make roots in a town with a similar landscape to Vermont, with farms and open spaces. "I was eager for my school age family to have a community with some of the feel of



The tiger mural, displayed on the station's north side, was painted by Wallingford resident, Ryan Christenson

Photo by Amy Parisi, Amy's Artistry



Community TV conventions have been Curt and Susan's travel destination for the last two decades.

Photo by Amy Parisi, Amy's Artistry

Vermont," Curt shared, "and access to a better education and a much shorter drive to everything," he added.

It's been nearly 25 years since Curt moved his family to Connecticut, and two of his three children still choose Wallingford as their home, as well as 6 of his 9 grandchildren. A fan of Route Five Kitchen for its breakfast egg sandwiches, Curt continues to appreciate the many other nearby conveniences offered along Route 5. Although a back injury inhibits his

neighborly involvement, "If something needs doing he's there," Susan assured; But mostly, Curt admitted, "My preoccupation is the community television station."

Community TV conventions have been Curt and Susan's travel destination for the past two decades. "Seeing communities from the eyes of local media makers is special," Susan said of the many conventions her and Curt attend, including those in Boston, Washington D.C., Providence, Portland, Maine and Oregon. "Curt keeps abreast to the technology and community TV movement at conventions." Susan added. Curt has also attended several Comicon's with his children, accompanied by the station's blue penguin mascot, Freeman Penny Quinn, 1st Free Speech Ambassador; A repurposed video game character designed by Curt's daughter, Heather.

As a photographer and videographer hobbyist, I'm familiar with the cost of camera and video recording equipment, especially to stay high tech. Not to mention the challenge to find a quiet, conducive space for video or voice recording. Consequently, I immediately appreciated the valuable and creative resource



A converted cow barn serves as a community TV station and media center.

Photo by Amy Parisi, Amy's Artistry

WPAA-TV provides to the community.

Even more impressive though, is the ripple effect one person's initiative can have on a community. Inspired by his kids and an interest in community projects, Curt's involvement in WPAA-TV has cemented a legacy. Through the efforts of its volunteers, the station provides a place for budding videographers, future journalists, and growing podcasters to find guidance to grow their knowledge and interest.

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