

May 9, 2012

PBS President and CEO Paula Kerger Speaks at KC Chamber's Insight Kansas City Meeting

PBS President and CEO Paula Kerger had the highest praise for KCPT and its leader Kliff Kuehl during her talk about public television's history, mission and its future. Kerger spoke at Union Station as part of The Kansas City Chamber's *Insight Kansas City* speaker series. You can see her speech at <http://youtu.be/yCQKhtK49Qo>.

An interview with Paula Kerger and KCPT's President and CEO Kliff Kuehl will air on [The Local Show](#) on KCPT on **May 10 at 7:30pm** and will be able to be seen online at kcpt.org.

Kerger, who has been at the helm of PBS since 2006, told the Chamber that they actually have a lot in common with PBS in their shared missions for opportunity, serving communities and the exchange of ideas.

"Although the means of connecting with our audience has changed over the years, we remain focused on using media to fulfill our public service mission to help everyone, of every age, from every walk of life reach their full potential," said Kerger. "Across every platform we're providing new resources for children to learn and give all American access to the dramas, documentaries, history, news and public affairs and arts programming that expand horizons and open up new vistas."

Kerger applauded public television stations across the country for continuing to serve this original, educational mission and talked more specifically about KCPT's focus on local coverage.

"Right here in Kansas City, KCPT has evolved over the years, growing their reach and impact to serve more Kansas Citians," said Kerger. "KCPT is positioning itself as a trusted and constructive center stage for the region."

The future of public television, Kerger said, will be dependent on innovation in three main areas: connection, content and community engagement.

Beyond the traditional broadcast, PBS and member stations have more opportunity to connect with viewers than ever before through social media, the web and mobile content.

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KCPT is a nonprofit, community-owned television station serving the greater Kansas City area that provides programming and services—on air and off—that entertain, educate and enrich the community. For more information about KCPT's programs and services, or to become a member and support public television in Kansas City, please go to www.KCPT.org.

And as Kerger points out, PBS is excelling in these pursuits. This year PBS received nine [Webby Award](#) nominations, including nominations for [pbs.org](#), [pbskids.org](#) and the [PBS iPad App](#). In addition, PBS has created six web-only series.

“We’ve done a lot of analysis of looking at who is actually watching us online and over 60% of the people watching videos at [pbs.org](#) are between the ages of 18 and 49,” said Kerger. “Now in Public Broadcasting we’ve talked for years about how we can create content that connects with a younger audience. I’ve always believed, and I’ve been in this business now for a while, that our content is compelling, it’s just that we don’t always fit people’s busy lives.”

In addition to making existing PBS content accessible at any time and on multiple platforms, Kerger sees opportunities to use new media to test out new shows and formats that aren’t suitable for broadcast, but further PBS’ mission to educate.

Although changing technology has presented a slew of challenges for broadcasters, Kerger sees many exciting opportunities for public broadcasting to provide all Americans with “content of consequence” among hundreds of other channels, whose programming consists on average of about 50% reality television shows.

“In the US, channels that were supposed to replace PBS by offering history, drama, and arts programming have increasingly turned to reality television,” said Kerger. “We’ve made deep investments in a couple of areas: arts, history, science and news.”

PBS launched the [Fall Arts Festival](#) in 2011, which brought spectacular performances to the millions of Americans that tuned in. KCPT will be one of the presenting stations for the upcoming [Summer Arts Festival](#) with “[Homecoming: The Kansas City Symphony Presents Joyce DiDonato](#),” which will air nationally on **July 20th**.

“[Homecoming] is a spectacular piece not only because it focuses on great art, but it is also a spectacular piece because it shows what a community can do when it dreams big,” said Kerger. “And that is the inspirational message that I am so proud that you’re going to bring from Kansas City to every home across this country.”

In addition to touting PBS’ commitment to the arts, Kerger said that PBS’ highest calling is its kids programming.



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“No other media company creates this kind of quality kids programming that treats kids as kids and not as mini-consumers,” said Kerger. “We have received more Emmys for children’s programming than all other cable and television networks combined.”

Outlining PBS’ community engagement strategies, Kerger focused heavily its resources for teachers. In 2011, PBS and its member stations launched [PBS LearningMedia](#), which helps teachers and homeschoolers bring technology into the classroom with thousands of free videos and interactive resources available online. In addition PBS is partnering with NASA, the National Archives and the Library of Congress to incorporate their educational resources and make them easily available to teachers.

Kerger concluded her presentation saying that not only does she believe public television will continue to serve its original mission well into the future, but it will also expand its services.

“Our work cannot be replaced or replicated by commercial outlet because we exist to serve the people and not to sell to them. Our bottom line is the number of lives we touch,” said Kerger. “Of all the stations out there we are the only ones charged with this honorable mission and we are the only ones who can put the people’s airwaves to the service of the people.”

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