

# UpNorth Media Center

10th Annual Report to Local Government Sponsors

*City of Traverse City*

*East Bay Charter Township*

*Charter Township of Elmwood*

*Charter Township of Garfield*

Presented by:



324 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, MI 49686

[www.liaa.org](http://www.liaa.org)

September, 2018

## Introduction

The nonprofit Land Information Access Association (LIAA) began operating the public- and government-access cable television stations for Northwest Lower Michigan on July 1, 2008. This is our tenth major report concerning the development and operation of the public- and government-access TV systems in Northwest Lower Michigan. Below, we describe the work undertaken by LIAA's UpNorth Media Center staff members and many active volunteers to record and show many aspects of our community both on cable TV and online. These efforts are being undertaken with the support and participation of the City of Traverse City and the Charter Townships of East Bay, Elmwood, and Garfield.

### Summary of Community & Local Government Benefits

LIAA's UpNorth Media Center provides many services to the participating local governments and citizens of the Grand Traverse Region. Some of these services are described below.

**Government-Access Television** – The UpNorth Media Center provides video acquisition, scheduling, transcoding (e.g., formatting different media) and cablecast services for the City of Traverse City and the Charter Townships of East Bay, Elmwood, and Garfield, as well as Grand Traverse County. We also contract with, schedule, and supply trained video operators to the participating local governments.

**Video Streaming & Multi-function Website** – Citizens use the UpNorth Media Center website ([www.upnorthmedia.org](http://www.upnorthmedia.org)) to watch *UpNorthTV* and *GovernmentTV* channels streaming 24/7. Programs are also available for playback on-demand through the website. The website also offers an up-to-the-minute *Community Calendar* and TV schedule. For video producers, the website provides an easy way to submit video for playback.

**Video Training & Education Classes** – The UpNorth Media Center provides Field Producer and Studio Producer trainings for organizations and individuals. The UpNorth Media Center also works with area schools to provide instruction for specific projects or classes.

**High-Quality Television Studio** – The UpNorth Media Center provides citizens with access to a professionally equipped, automated TV studio.

**Audio & Video Editing Stations** – The UpNorth Media Center offers a hands-on computer laboratory used for instruction and for local producers to edit and complete their projects. We offer both professional and consumer-level editing software, along with services that can provide music, video clips, graphics and other enhancements for video projects.

**On-Site Technical Assistance** – The UpNorth Media Center's highly qualified staff members are available to answer questions and provide technical assistance 40 hours a week and as requested on weekends.

**Scheduling of Local Content** – Local producers are assured that the video content they submit will be cablecast quickly and predictably, with more than one play.

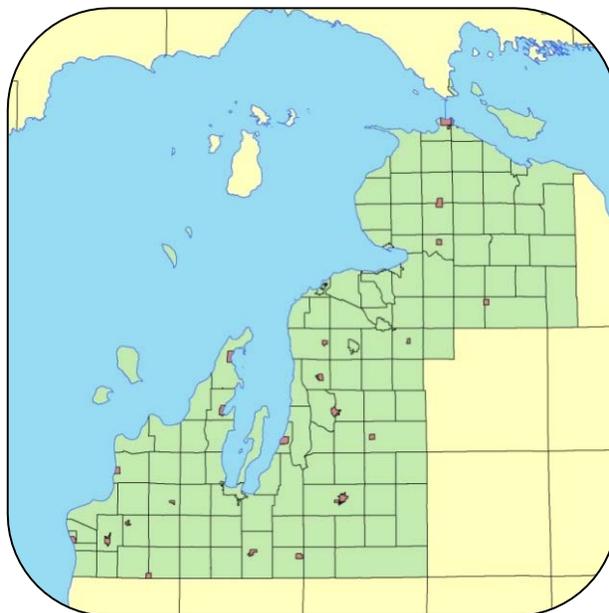
**Useful Viewer Services** – Our channels carry an attractive, easy-to-read *Community Calendar*. Programming schedules are regularly posted, and informative video feeds between shows provide viewers with quick weather updates, short news reports, sports stories, and interesting facts. We have also negotiated the ability to post UpNorthTV channel programming in the on-screen cable guide, allowing viewers to see what's playing and schedule DVR recordings.

**Equipment Support & Installation for Local Governments** – The UpNorth Media Center provides participating local governments with direct assistance to specify and install video equipment as needed to assure that public meetings are recorded and cablecast to local residents.

## Background – PEG-Access Television

Under federal and state laws, municipal governments may demand access to the cable television delivery system as part of their franchise agreements with cable TV providers. Cable providers must supply public, educational and government (PEG) access TV stations for the delivery of content generated by and for the community. In Northwest Lower Michigan, the City of Traverse City and East Bay, Elmwood and Garfield Charter Townships have joined together to exercise this option, protecting the delivery of four PEG-access TV channels.

In July 2008, LIAA entered into a joint agreement to operate both the public- and government-access television services for Northwest Lower Michigan (see *Figure 1: PEG Station Television Viewing Area*). Prior to that time, the public-access TV station was known as *TCTV 2* (channel 2) and was operated by the Traverse Area District Library. The government-access TV station was operated by the City of Traverse City. Two educational-access TV stations were—and continue to be—operated by Traverse City Area Public Schools and Northwestern Michigan College respectively.



*Figure 1: PEG Station Television Viewing Area*

In accepting the responsibility of providing both the public- and government-access TV services, LIAA offered a new approach, with improved public services, greater technical capacity, and better viewing experiences. We have worked to provide community TV services comparable to those available anywhere, continually enhancing citizen education experiences, developing higher-quality video content, and offering dependable technical support for citizens and participating governments.

In March 2014, Charter Communications moved to an all-digital format and relocated all PEG TV channels to the 180s and 190s. Viewers now find public-access TV as UpNorthTV on Channel 189, and government-access TV as GovernmentTV on Channel 191. During discussions about the channel change with Charter, UpNorthTV was able to secure the ability to display programming in the on-screen schedule guide through the company Rovi. UpNorthTV programming began appearing on the schedule in March 2014.

# Summary of Community & Government TV Services & Operations

**LIAA Oversight** – Founded in 1993, LIAA is a nonprofit community service organization with 25 years of experience in helping citizens, nonprofits, and local governments use technology more effectively for better communications, community development, and resource management. LIAA’s overall management and corporate policies are the responsibility of a volunteer Board of Directors composed of four well-regarded community leaders, educators, and foundation representatives from across the state. LIAA’s Executive Director, Technology Director, and Station Manager provide overall guidance and management of day-to-day operations for the UpNorth Media Center.

**LIAA Board of Directors**

John Egelhaaf, Executive Director  
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Sandra Clark, Director  
Michigan Historical Center

Alicia Kitsuse, Program Director  
Funders’ Network for Smart Growth & Livable Cities

Pat McGinnis, City Manager  
City of Grand Haven

**GovernmentTV Advisory Committee** – As the primary financial supporters of the UpNorth Media Center, representatives of the participating governments gather quarterly to review Media Center operations and strategies, plan any services they may need from the Media Center, and discuss any government initiatives that may be of interest to or be informed by the Media Center. This committee has adopted the *Policies for the Operation of Government-Access Cable Television* that guide operation of GovernmentTV. This committee ensures that the Media Center meets its contractual obligations to each of the participating governments.

**GovernmentTV Advisory Committee**

Susanne Courtade  
Township Clerk, East Bay Charter Township

Connie Preston  
Township Clerk, Elmwood Charter Township

Lanie McManus  
Township Clerk, Garfield Charter Township

Katelyn Zeits  
Deputy City Clerk, City of Traverse City

**Citizens Advisory Committee** – The UpNorth Media Center is managed with the advice of a Citizens Advisory Committee, which works with us to develop management strategy and *Policies and Procedures* to guide the operation of UpNorthTV. Reviewed and adopted by LIAA’s Board of Directors, these *Policies and Procedures* assure fair and equitable access to all resources, training and support. The

**UpNorthTV Citizens Advisory Committee**

Rich Brauer, Brauer Productions  
Beth Friend, East Bay Charter Township Supervisor  
Mary Grover, League of Women Voters  
Chuck Korn, Garfield Charter Township Supervisor  
Ward Kuhn, Attorney, Kuhn, Darling, Boyd & Quandt  
Grant Parsons, Parsons Law Firm  
Thom Paulsen, City Opera House  
David Poinsett, Citizen  
Doug Stanton, National Writers Series  
Susan McQuaid, Citizen

Citizens Advisory Committee meets on an as-needed basis to address issues and provide guidance to staff, and has established an Executive Committee that provides ongoing support through special project work. An essential part of the UpNorth Media Center, the Citizens Advisory Committee and its Executive Committee represent the community in the ongoing conversation about how the Media Center can best fill its role.

**Media Center Staff** – LIAA’s UpNorth Media Center staff consists of a full-time Station Manager and a full-time Media Specialist, each with extensive experience in TV operations and training. In addition, LIAA’s Financial Administrator, Technology Director, and Information Technology Specialists provide support for the Media Center, including contractor management and scheduling, website development and support, and networking and hardware support.

***2017-2018 UpNorth Media Center Staff***

**Matthew Kern**, Station Manager  
**Joe Torrence**, Media Specialist  
**Kim McNeil**, Financial Admin/GovTV Manager  
**Jim Muratzki**, Technology Director  
**Rob Astor**, IT Specialist  
**Paul Riess**, Media Manager

**Participation/Membership** – Media Center Membership allows residents to submit content for playback on Channel 189 and gain access to our free video training courses. Individuals who live in any of the participating jurisdictions can be UpNorth Media Center Members for free. In order to engage people from throughout the UpNorthTV viewing region, individuals who live outside of the participating jurisdictions may become Media Center Members by paying a fee of \$50/year or \$6/month. All members are given the same level of access to training, equipment, and cablecast services. A total of 17 individuals paid Media Center Membership fees over the past year (up from 13 in the previous year). An additional 23 individuals submitted media from within the participating jurisdictions.

***2017-2018 Nonprofit Member Organizations***

- Cherryland Humane Society
- City Opera House
- Fife Lake Makerspace
- Great Lakes Children’s Museum
- Groundwork Center
- Grow Benzie
- League of Women Voters Grand Traverse Area
- National Cherry Festival
- Networks Northwest (Traverse Transportation Coordinating Initiative)
- Northwestern Michigan College
- Old Town Playhouse
- Oryana Natural Foods Market
- Right Tree
- Rotary of Traverse City
- SEEDS
- Traverse Area Association of Realtors
- Traverse Area District Library
- Traverse Bay Children’s Advocacy Center
- Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
- Traverse City Film Festival
- Traverse City National Writers Series

Nonprofit organizations that wish to produce and cablecast their own shows can also participate in the UpNorth Media Center. These organizations pay a membership fee of \$100/year and receive

the same services and support as individual Media Center Members. For example, member organizations are able to borrow equipment, use the studio, and receive training at discounted rates. Shows produced by member organizations are cablecast in the same manner and under the same policies as shows created by individual Producers. Over the past year, 21 nonprofit organizations have participated in the UpNorth Media Center.

**Equipment & Facilities** – One of the most important tasks of public-access television is the maintenance and loaning of video equipment for community use. The UpNorth Media Center has loaned professional-grade video cameras, audio and/or lighting equipment 73 times in the past year, providing regular maintenance of the equipment and keeping careful records through standardized tracking forms and procedures. We also provide certified producers with access to video editing workstations in LIAA’s computer lab, available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. as well as any time upon request.

Additionally, we provide access to a remote-controlled video and audio studio and control-room facility within LIAA’s building. This facility has been used for video production over 50 times in the reporting period. Among other things, the studio offers access to three remote-controlled High Definition (HD) cameras, a green screen for composited backgrounds, modern fluorescent lighting, a high-quality teleprompter, an array of microphones, audio mixers, and an HD camera switcher. Some series shows record more than one show in a single studio session, increasing productivity and streamlining studio use. A partial list of regular studio programs produced in the last year includes:

- A talk show featuring interesting local people and ideas, *Ideas Live*;
- A short documentary series focused on a wide variety of topics from local to international, *Jax Tea Party*;



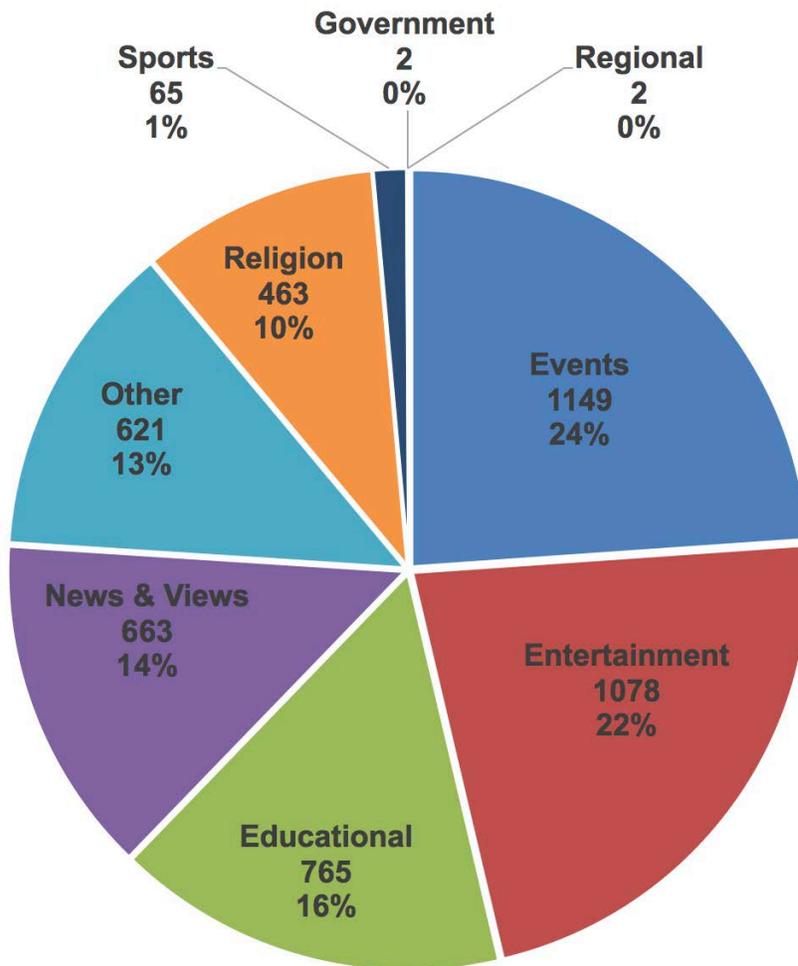
- A program profiling people and projects from around the region, *Northern Profile*; and
- A *Monthly Horoscope Forecast* with Ketii Natroshvili (pictured above).

**Programming** – Another key role of the UpNorth Media Center is the transcoding, scheduling, and cablecasting of video content for both UpNorthTV and GovernmentTV. In the past year, UpNorthTV scheduled and cablecast 4,806 hours of programming (*Figure 2 - UpNorthTV Programming Hours July 2017 to June 2018*). Over 2,683 hours of programming were also provided on *GovernmentTV* (*Figure 3 - GovernmentTV Programming Hours July 2017 to June 2018*).

## UpNorthTV Total Hours of Programming, By Type

July 2017 - June 2018

**4,806 total hours**



*Figure 2 - UpNorthTV Programming Hours July 2017 to June 2018*

# Government TV Total Hours of Programming

July 2017 - June 2018

**2,683 total hours**

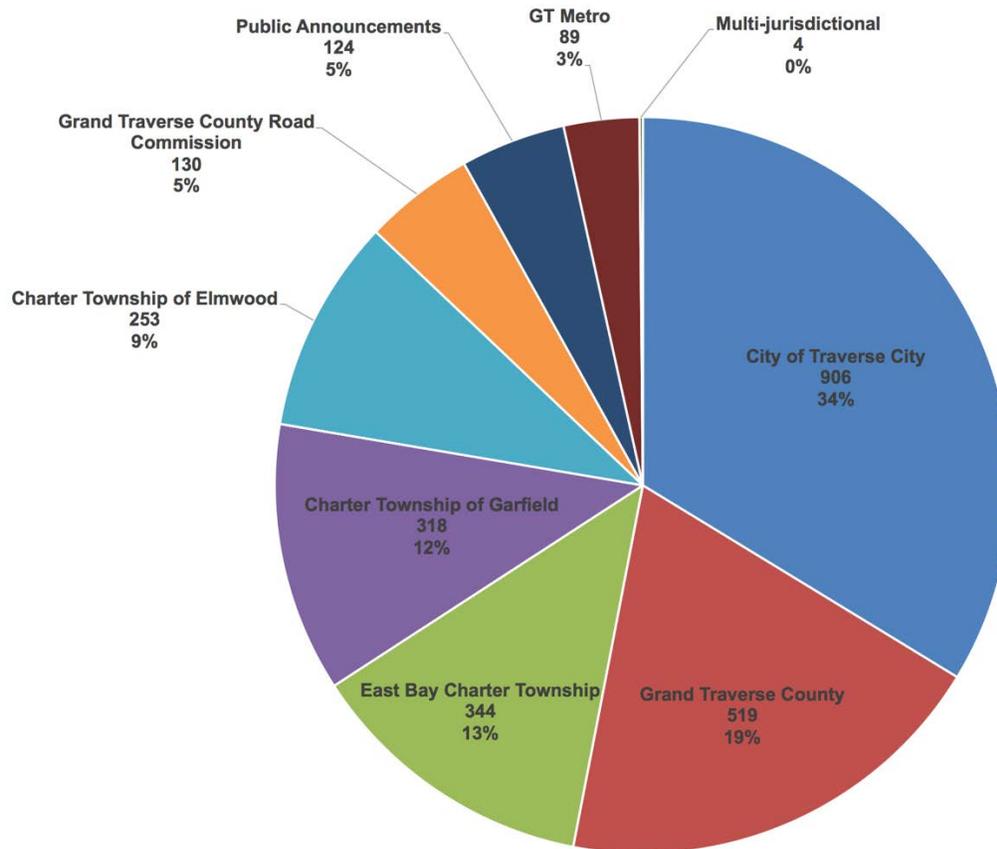


Figure 3 - Government TV Programming Hours July 2017 to June 2018

**Video Production Training and Support** – Another important goal of public-access television is education, training and support in the use of video production equipment, and in the art of telling stories or showing events with digital media.

All producers are required to take our *Producer Orientation*. In the past year, we have begun offering this training as a quick online video followed by a quiz. This provides participants with the basic concepts and rules of public-access video production and permits them to request airtime for a video presentation as a Certified Producer. There is no fee for this introductory course, and it is often combined with other classes. The UpNorth Media Center has certified 615 Producers since 2008.

We also offer a course for *Field Producers* that teaches people how to use cameras, lighting, microphones, and video editing equipment. This two-part course gives people the ability to operate and care for the mobile equipment and editing workstations available through the

UpNorth Media Center. We promote this course to nonprofit groups with an offer to have their volunteers trained to record their events. Graduates of this course are qualified to borrow and use the video production equipment at no charge (as long as their membership is current).

Our *Studio Producers* course gives members the ability to set up and operate the audio, video, and lighting equipment in the UpNorth Media Center studio. They also learn how to use the green screen or other backdrops to record their show. Members who complete this course are qualified to use the studio to produce shows at no charge.

Once members are trained, UpNorth Media Center staff provide ongoing assistance, such as equipment retraining, project planning help, and one-on-one video editing support.

In the last year, the UpNorth Media Center hosted 26 training courses (double the number from the previous year), and logged an additional 450 hours of direct assistance to Producers.

**GovernmentTV Management and Oversight** – The UpNorth Media Center coordinates and manages government television services for the viewing region. This activity includes assistance in the video recording of local government meetings, transport and transcoding of the video products, coordination in scheduling cablecasts, and the actual cablecast of most programs. Additionally, the Media Center specifies, installs and maintains the video equipment for local governments (e.g., cameras, digital data transfer systems), occasionally providing for improvements and repairs.

The UpNorth Media Center contracts with videographers to run the cameras and video switcher systems at roughly 25 different government meetings each month. The media is automatically transferred to the UpNorth Media Center over the Internet through digital data compression systems for streaming and cablecast.

Media Center staff members work closely with local government officials to ensure that the video production equipment in each location is working properly, troubleshooting hardware and software problems. This spring, we standardized the video recording systems at all four participating jurisdictions, allowing video contractors to easily switch between venues if the need arises.

**Website** – LIAA has a long history of creating and hosting websites for nonprofit organizations, local governments, and special projects. The UpNorth Media Center website at [UpNorthMedia.org](http://UpNorthMedia.org) is a key communications tool for UpNorthTV, GovernmentTV, and all aspects of the Media Center. This website provides a regularly updated program schedule, news and notes, public comment opportunities, access to documents (such as the *Policies &*

*Procedures*), a Community Calendar, help for producers, and other information. The website also provides a place to submit content: Members may request airtime and send video through the website; organizations submit Community Calendar events which are then automatically shown on our TV channels and on the website; and our *Meeting reView* solution helps governments link agendas and meeting documents to meeting videos.

The website provides quick links to real-time viewing of UpNorthTV and GovernmentTV online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visitors can also search the archives for past video presentations and watch them online through a video-on-demand streaming service.

Website hits (i.e., unique sessions) average around 2,607 per month. As can be seen in *Figure 4: Website Visitor Sources*, the majority of visitors come to the website directly (from, for example, a bookmark in their browser), with a slightly smaller percentage of visitors from search engines (such as Google). This indicates that the website is serving a specific community of users, as would be expected by something as local as UpNorthTV and GovernmentTV. Visitors also access the website by referral, which is usually a link from a participating government’s website. The remainder of visitors come in through our social media offerings.

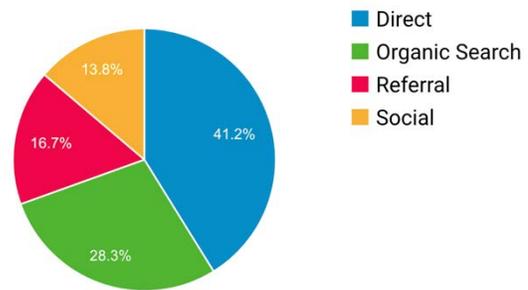


Figure 4: Website Visitor Sources

In the past year, the UpNorthMedia.org website received a total of 31,293 visits from 16,560 unique visitors as seen on *Figure 5: Website Sessions July 2017 to June 2018*. The highest traffic day for this period was Saturday, July 8th, 2017 (the day of the Cherry Royale Parade). Visitors to the website view an average of around three pages each, meaning once they get to the website, they are engaged to view pages beyond the one they originally sought.

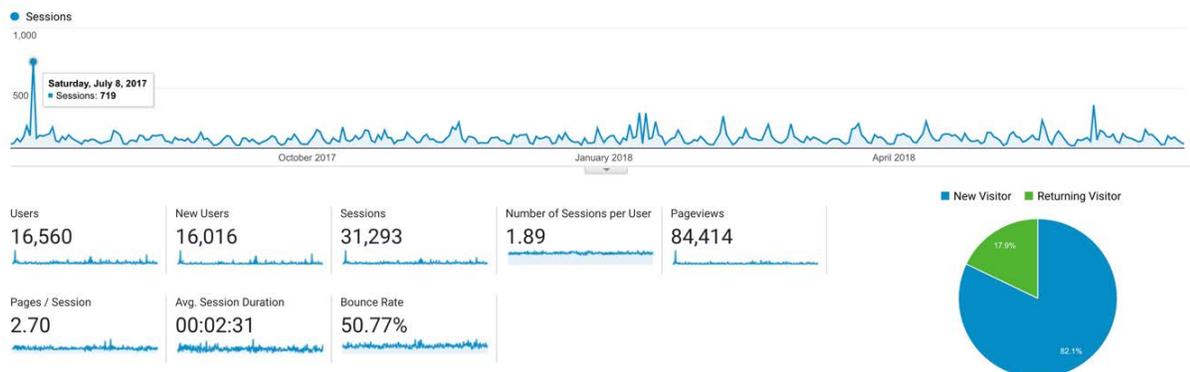


Figure 5: Website Sessions July 2017 to June 2018

The Media Center website received 84,414 pageviews last year (*Figure 6: Website Top 10 Pages July 2017 to June 2018*). Out of all the pages on UpNorthMedia.org, municipal pages received

some of the highest percentages of views. The GovernmentTV concurrent stream page (allowing viewers to watch the cable channel online) had 5,423 views. Grand Traverse County's page continues to be the most viewed for on-demand video at 3,885 views.

Page ?	Pageviews ?	Unique Pageviews ?
	<b>84,414</b> % of Total: 100.00% (84,414)	<b>63,333</b> % of Total: 100.00% (63,333)
1. /default.asp	<b>7,822</b> (9.27%)	<b>6,312</b> (9.97%)
2. /govtmeetings.asp	<b>5,646</b> (6.69%)	<b>4,297</b> (6.78%)
3. /govtnow.asp	<b>5,423</b> (6.42%)	<b>3,086</b> (4.87%)
4. /govtv_gtcounty.asp	<b>3,885</b> (4.60%)	<b>2,964</b> (4.68%)
5. /upnorthtvnow.asp	<b>3,551</b> (4.21%)	<b>2,042</b> (3.22%)
6. /upnorthtvshed.asp	<b>3,112</b> (3.69%)	<b>2,258</b> (3.57%)
7. /addyouevent.asp	<b>2,091</b> (2.48%)	<b>419</b> (0.66%)
8. /upnorthtvshows.asp	<b>1,952</b> (2.31%)	<b>1,398</b> (2.21%)
9. /govtv_cityoftc.asp	<b>1,831</b> (2.17%)	<b>1,447</b> (2.28%)
10. /govtvschedule.asp	<b>1,569</b> (1.86%)	<b>1,381</b> (2.18%)

Figure 6: Website Top 10 Pages July 2017 to June 2018

The UpNorth Media Center provides simultaneous web streaming of both UpNorthTV Channel 189 and GovernmentTV Channel 191. This live TV streaming involves a special set of computers and requires a substantial amount of the Internet bandwidth to be purchased by the UpNorth Media Center. However, this Internet stream ensures that people who do not have Charter Cable TV can still watch the public-access and government-access stations.

Internet users viewed the UpNorthTV stream 3,551 times during the last year, with 940 viewers accessing the page during the National Cherry Festival's Cherry Royale Parade on July 8, 2017 (Figure 7: UpNorthTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2017 to June 2018).

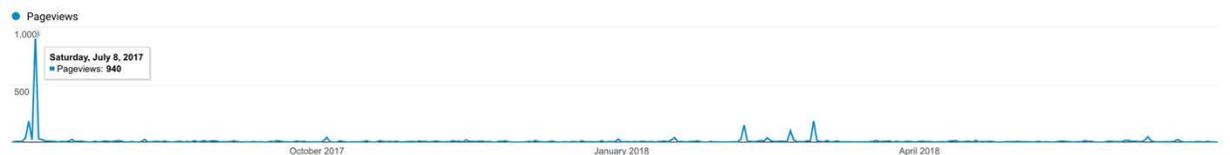


Figure 7: UpNorthTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2017 to June 2018

The GovernmentTV stream was viewed 5,623 times during the last year, with the highest volume being 157 on April 4, 2018 (Figure 8: GovernmentTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2017 to June 2018).

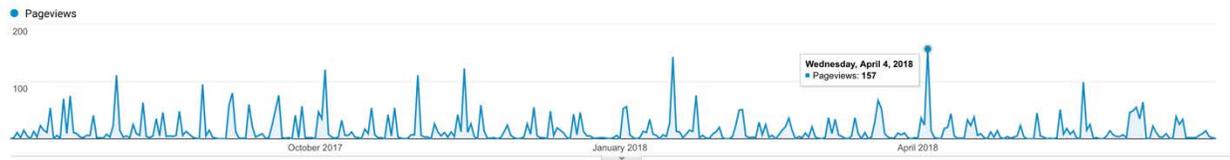


Figure 8: GovernmentTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2017 to June 2018

**Facebook** – We continue to use social media as a complement to the website to increase community outreach. The UpNorth Media Center has a presence on Facebook and YouTube. The UpNorth Media Center Facebook page helps to engage the community in discussion about events and programs on UpNorthTV and GovernmentTV. Over the last year, total page likes have increased steadily and we have had over 12,100 minutes of video views.

Figure 9: Facebook Demographics is a description of Facebook users who follow UpNorthTV. This information has been helpful in developing outreach and promotional strategies for our stations.

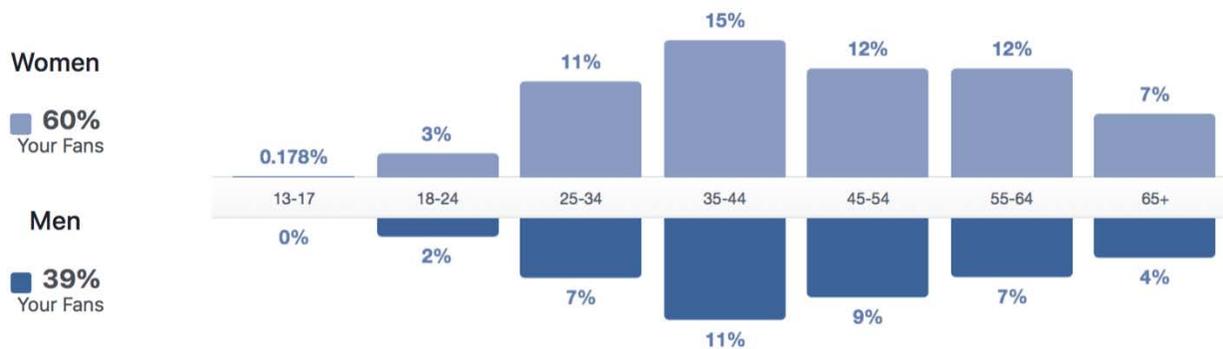


Figure 9: Facebook Demographics

**YouTube Channel** – In addition to the live-streaming and on-demand video services provided through the UpNorth Media Center website, we maintain a YouTube Channel (UpNorthTV) for video on demand. We upload only high-definition, high-quality content to this service, limiting its use to a degree. This channel provides an alternate place for people to find UpNorthTV shows created by the UpNorth Media Center, driving a different demographic back to our website. This past year there were 100,554 views of programs on the UpNorthTV YouTube Channel (Figure 10: YouTube Viewer Metrics July 2017 to June 2018). A total of 1,376,883 minutes of programming have been viewed on our YouTube page in the last year, with an average viewing time of 13 minutes, 41 seconds — a relatively long duration for YouTube channels.

Jul 1, 2017 – Jun 30, 2018

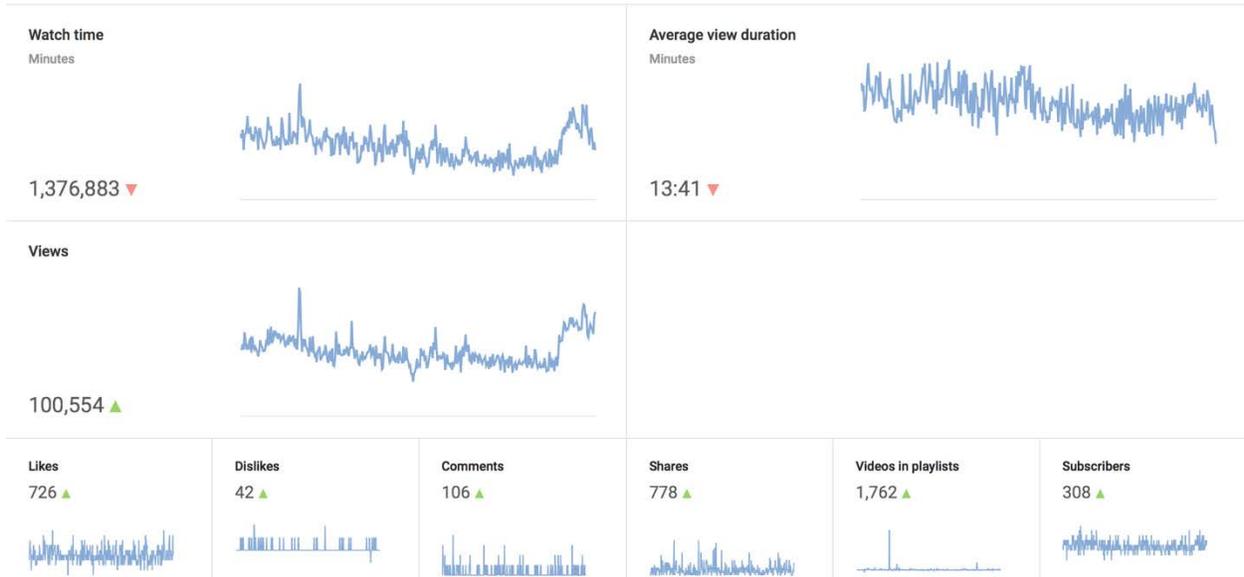


Figure 10: YouTube Viewer Metrics July 2017 to June 2018

## Special Projects of the UpNorth Media Center

To provide citizens and participating local governments of the Grand Traverse region the best public- and government-access TV services, the UpNorth Media Center expanded the number of special projects we produced this year. These projects help assure TV coverage of key community events, provide learning opportunities for volunteer producers, celebrate community culture and heritage, and help to assure easy access to video records of public meetings. Here are a few examples of the partnerships and projects the UpNorth Media Center has worked on this past year:

**National Writers Series** – UpNorth Media Center volunteers and staff record this nationally-recognized program of discussions with popular authors. Held at the City Opera House, this event provides a great training opportunity for volunteer camera operators and production assistants. The UpNorth Media Center recorded 18 National Writers Series events from July 2017 to June 2018.



**Traverse City Film Festival** – The UpNorth Media Center records the daily filmmaker panel discussions of the festival and prepares them for cablecast. UpNorth Media Center staff and volunteers set up a multi-camera production system at the City Opera House, record the discussions, and breaks it all back down before the next film is shown. UpNorth Media Center staff then put the finishing touches on the video at the office, and the panel discussion airs on UpNorthTV.



**Cherry Festival Cherry Royale Parade** – The UpNorth Media Center provides a live broadcast of the Cherry Royale Parade. Media Center staff and volunteers brave the sun to run cameras and cables, bringing the parade to people who aren't able to attend. The broadcast can be seen on UpNorthTV and Facebook Live via our Facebook page.

**76th Annual Rotary Show** – The UpNorth Media Center recorded and cablecast this fun locally-produced show at the State Theatre.

**Public Meetings and Events** – The UpNorth Media Center recorded a wide variety of public meetings and events partnering with organizations such as the Inland Seas Education Association, Traverse Area Association of Realtors, Traverse City Downtown Development Authority, Northwestern Michigan College Children's Choir, the Groundwork Center for

Resilient Communities, Traverse City Historical Society, Young Playwrights Society, Cherryland Humane Society, and others.

**Nature Change; Middle School Video Projects** – The UpNorth Media Center partnered with Nature Change, Inland Seas Education Association, and teachers at West Middle School to help students in the creation of mini-documentaries. Throughout the creation of the videos, the UpNorth Media Center provided technical support during the filming and editing process. When completed, the students got to see their films on the big screen at the State Theatre.



**Picnic at the Opera Season 6** – The UpNorth Media Center’s live TV variety show enjoyed a successful sixth season with record attendance. The UpNorth Media Center partnered with the City Opera House, the Audio Technology Department at Northwestern Michigan College, dozens of volunteers, and numerous talented volunteer guests (e.g., musicians, artists, poets, dancers, etc.)—totaling over 100 volunteers—to accomplish four shows performed live on stage at the Opera House and broadcast live on UpNorthTV and UpNorthMedia.org.



**NMC Children’s Choir** – The UpNorth Media Center has continued the tradition of recording NMC Choir’s in concert. Year after year, these recordings prove to be some of our most popular programs for DVD sales. Family members that are unable to attend the live performances regularly contact the Media Center for copies of the program.



## Next Steps for the UpNorth Media Center

We will continue to encourage public access to the cable television and online video environment in the coming year. To both promote this goal and expand into new areas, we have several new initiatives underway and planned for the coming year. Starting in the spring of 2018, the Media Center launched multiple programs aimed at increasing one-on-one time with volunteers, streamlining our workflow, and modernizing our approach to video capture and editing.

Here are some of our top goals for the coming year:

- **Increase and diversify volunteer support:**  
We aim to meet volunteers where they are. Due to dramatically different skill levels among volunteers, we have found that the most effective volunteer engagement and support follows a one-on-one approach.
- **Broaden our approach to media trainings:**  
Traditionally, we have offered a short list of in-depth trainings. Though these trainings have been successful at giving volunteer producers a strong understanding of video production basics, many producers have expressed interest in more topical trainings. These trainings will be offered more frequently, be shorter in duration, and often take place in-the-field. Examples of topical trainings include: two-person interviews, oral history videos, filming landscapes and wildlife, recording live events, multi-camera productions, and mini-documentary production.
- **Remove barriers to participation:**  
Many residents are unable to participate in Media Center projects because of conflicting schedules, lack of transportation, and disabilities. We will strive to make our trainings and events more accessible, less expensive, offered at more times outside of business hours, and approachable for people of varying levels of ability.
- **Highlighting our local focus:**  
Our local approach to media is one of the main things that separates us from other television channels in the area. We aim to produce and highlight media that has regional significance.

The UpNorth Media Center remains committed to training and providing learning opportunities related to video in our community. We will continue to maintain producer trainings for community members and nonprofits interested in learning about video and utilizing the equipment at the UpNorth Media Center.

## Funding & Expenses of the Community Media Center

LIAA's UpNorth Media Center is in its tenth year of operation under contracts with the City of Traverse City and East Bay, Elmwood and Garfield Charter Townships. Under these contracts, LIAA provides Public-Access and Government-Access TV services, including: education, technical assistance, equipment specification and management, scheduling and transcoding, video access on the Internet, and cablecasting. As stated in each contract, the primary purpose of this effort is:

“. . . to provide a forum for resident citizens, community service groups, nonprofit organizations, and other non-commercial groups to present their views and to celebrate local achievement, provide community education, encourage civic engagement, present local culture and art appreciation, and support individual expression.”

The most important source of funding for public-access and government-access TV are franchise fees collected from Charter Communications by the local governments in exchange for the use of public property (right-of-ways). The fees are usually reflected on each cable subscriber's monthly bill.

The franchise agreements between Charter Communications and the municipalities that participate in the UpNorth Media Center were renegotiated in 2018. As a result, the contract between LIAA and the participating municipalities was updated as well. The jurisdictions now provide support for PEG access through the dedication of thirty percent (30%) of their franchise fees to defray operation costs for the Media Center, and thirty percent (30%) of PEG fees to defray capital costs (i.e., new equipment and maintenance). The PEG fee formula was substantially reduced from the original contract with LIAA, as the equipment needs of the Media Center have stabilized over time (i.e., moving from a “start-up” to a mature operation). This means more of the equipment fees paid by Charter will remain in the hands of each participating municipality for their own equipment needs.

Our community's public-access and government-access TV systems operated by LIAA are financially viable under the new contracts with the City of Traverse City and the Charter Townships of East Bay, Elmwood, and Garfield. To provide greater flexibility, we have worked to enhance public-access TV funding through participation fees and fee-for-service work. In the coming year, we hope to continue building external funding by developing more underwriting and sponsorship opportunities.

Over the past 10 years, LIAA has kept costs at or below the funding levels provided. However, the entire PEG TV communications system would be stronger and more valuable to the community as a whole with the participation of additional municipalities. We continue to work to recruit additional municipalities to take advantage of this powerful community resource.