

# **Middlebury Community Television**

## **A Vision for the Future**

In 1985 when Middlebury Community Television was formed, its founders had a straightforward objective: Create an informed and engaged citizenry. In essence, hold a mirror up to the community.

More formally, we are a nonprofit, interactive, community-based alternative to broadcast commercial and public TV. We announce and cover local meetings and events, offer residents free equipment and training to produce their own programs, and make available at no cost our two cable channels to share these programs with the community.

In 2013, MCTV's mission remains unchanged. But the media landscape has changed dramatically over the past 30 years and MCTV must constantly adapt to these new conditions.

In 1985, there were no inexpensive, high-definition, fit-in-the-hand iPhone cameras or user-friendly iMovie editing programs that enable anyone to be a video producer and storyteller.

There was no Internet, YouTube, Facebook, or cloud to easily and quickly distribute photographs, text, and video around the block or around the world.

Not only has production and distribution changed but so may our funding. Since its inception community television has been almost entirely supported by a fee charged to cable companies, such as Comcast, for their use of public airwaves. This guaranteed funding has served MCTV well, but today cable viewers are increasingly dropping their subscriptions and receiving programs directly over the lower-cost Internet. At present, there are no provisions for community television to receive funding from Internet transmission of programs.

How should MCTV respond to this new world?

1. MCTV has always been an innovator with a deep commitment to local programming. Over half our programs (school and select board coverage, public forums and hearings, lectures, town meetings, parades, graduations, church services, interview shows and documentaries) are locally produced.

This focus is essential to our mission and survival.

2. In the past several years, our ties with Ilsley Library have grown even closer. Today, we jointly fund a technology coordinator, who works with the children's librarian and schools in offering video training. Working with the library, we are creating a community production studio on the second floor. This collaboration is unique among community television stations.

3. We must continue to encourage and support programs that reflect the diversity and interests of our community. In an era, when anyone can produce a video we have a vital role in distributing material of community interest.

4. As Comcast's contribution diminishes we must explore new funding (membership, fund raising, corporate sponsors, Internet transmission fees, greater town budget support).

5. Digital literacy is essential to a community's wellbeing. We must expand our programs with schools, the library, town government, and the community to reach that goal.

6. A 21st century communications infrastructure is also essential to a community's vitality. As community facilities change and expand we must ensure that meeting spaces meet the transmission needs of the Internet age.

In essence to best serve the community, we must continue to evolve into a community media and resource center.