

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Showtime: The WICT Network Honoring Title IX at Signature Luncheon

The **WICT Network's** Signature Luncheon is back in full force Thursday for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the association is pulling out all of the stops for the occasion. Those attending the 12pm ET event at NYC's Plaza Hotel will be treated to a celebration of the 50-year anniversary of the landmark Title IX law being enacted.

"We're really grateful that everybody's coming out and sort of treating this as an opportunity to not only shine a spotlight on an important law, but also to support one another and just be together again," WICT Network President/CEO *Maria Brennan* told **CFX**. "I don't think there's anything better than that."

This isn't The WICT Network's first time celebrating Title IX and its influence. It partnered with **ESPNw** and the **Women's Sports Foundation** in 2012 to hold an event honoring 40 women who benefitted from the passage of the legislation. But the group wanted this to be a markedly different occasion that discussed the societal conversations and upheavals that have marked the last decade.

"We're in a post Me Too world and we're also in a pandemic world where we have seen women really lose ground in the workforce, so we thought the backdrop for this celebration of Title IX has to be different from what it was 10 years ago," "So the way that we thought about doing that was let's look at all of our member companies and talk about what they're doing to shine a spotlight on this."

But the program won't be entirely celebratory. Even five decades later, not everybody is on board with the core tenet of Title IX. At its core, it solidified that no person should be discriminated against or receive preferential treatment in educational programs or activities based on their sex. The WICT Network wants to talk about those corners of the nation where folks still haven't embraced that value and encourage its members to act.

"Here's a call to action, and the call to action is yes, celebrate these victories, but also make sure that you're supporting your local community and telling the story when they're not compliant with Title IX because statistically, we know that it is such an important thing," Brennan said. "Sometimes there are detractors who try to eliminate or water down the effects and the importance, the impact of the bill, and that's not good either because we don't want to go back to the way it was before."

The WICT Network is recording the event and will be making it available to members that weren't able to make it to the live gathering in an effort to spread the word and place an even greater focus on the programmers that are supporting the Title IX milestone. Those include some that will speak during the Signature Luncheon, including documentary filmmakers *Al-lison Glock*, *Nicole Newnham* and *Dawn Porter* who are helping craft content for **ESPN's** Fifty/50 Initiative celebrating the civil rights journey of women. Also speaking are *Ndidi Massay*, VP of Workplace Culture & Diversity Initiatives for **CBS Sports**, and **WarnerMedia** News and Sports SVP/Chief Diversity, Equity



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FREE TO ENTER!

& Inclusion Officer *Johnita Due*.

The program's grand finale will be the presentation of celebratory medals to several Title IX champions that have been selected by The WICT Network for their ongoing work toward fulfilling the promises of the legislation. Many of the individuals who will receive the honors have been active participants in The WICT Network's programs and work to advance equality in the workplace and beyond for all individuals.

"We wanted to make sure that they were a good complement of the working machinations of Title IX because I think a lot of people feel like Title IX is all about sports... but it really is about equality," she said. "We were trying to look at individuals and it's doing more than just saying thank you for your work. We really wanted to also award them."

FOREIGN DISCLOSURE RULES HIT THE COURTS

The broadcasting industry's fight against the **FCC's** foreign disclosure rules came before a three-judge panel at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit Tuesday, and their plight seemed to fall on sympathetic ears. The case all comes down to rules adopted by the Commission last year that requires broadcast stations to search in a federal database of registered foreign agents before putting leased programming on the air. **NAB**, **MMTC** and the **National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters** came together to bring the legal challenge, which claims the FCC overstepped its statutory authority and violated the Constitution by hindering freedom of speech. Key to the broadcasters' argument is their belief that the regulation will put a huge burden on small stations that may not have the resources to conduct the type of in-depth research and investigations that the Commission expects. "While every search of a database is an investigation, it is indisputable that if you get a hit in your search results, you have to conduct a full-fledged investigation," NAB attorney *Stephen Kinnaird* argued during oral arguments Tuesday. "And for this regulation to have any arguable worth, you have to posit that there will be such hits." One member of the judging panel quipped that what could have solved the broadcasters' concerns about the investigations would have been the institution of a voluntary disclosure a station could provide to the FCC before a program airs alerting them of foreign sponsorship. That could have placed the burden of conducting the larger-scale investigations onto the Commission. Representing the FCC was *Bill Scher*, who argued that the broadcasters were overstating the complexities of the search. However, he did admit that not every investigation would look the same as broadcasters must meet a standard of reasonable diligence. What that looks like could vary depending on the programming, the foreign agent and the broadcaster.

The **WHO** and the **WHY**

CFX's spotlight on recent new hires & promotions



KRISTINA Schake
EVP, GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS
WALT DISNEY CO.

3 THINGS TO KNOW

- Kristina joined The Walt Disney Company this month as EVP, Global Communications, where she's responsible for the company's worldwide communications strategy and operations as well as serving as the lead spokesperson. She reports to Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Geoff Morrell.
- In the past, Kristina worked for multiple political campaigns and administrations. Last year she was appointed by President Joe Biden to oversee the government's \$1 billion nationwide campaign to educate the public about the COVID-19 vaccine and how people could receive it. Additionally, Kristina was the Communications Director for First Lady Michelle Obama, Deputy Communications Director for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign and Senior Communications Strategist for California First Lady Maria Shriver. Beyond her work in politics, she was the Global Communications Director for Instagram and was a primary advisor to the company's CEO.
- Kristina co-founded the American Foundation for Equal Rights, an organization that ran from 2009-15 and advocated for equal rights for Americans. The bi-partisan organization supported plaintiffs in a federal lawsuit challenging California's Proposition 8, which intended to ban same-sex marriage.

IMDB TV TRANSFORMING INTO FREEVEE

IMDB TV has a new name. **Amazon's** ad-supported streaming service will change its name to **Amazon Freevee** on April 27. It will be the AVOD's third name in its short lifetime, having launched as **Freevee** in January 2019. The rebranding will come as the streamer prepares to unleash an enlarged slate of original content. "Bosch: Legacy," a spin-off of an original from sister service **Amazon Prime Video**, is coming on May 6 and additions to its comedy and DIY programming lineups is also on the way. The service plans to grow its stream of original content by 70% by the end of the year, and it recently scored a multi-year extension to its distribution deal with **Roku**. More series orders will be announced during the company's NewFronts Presentation on May 2.

DISNEY+, NAT GEO PACKAGED IN NEW BUNDLE

Disney is taking its bundling strategy to another level. It is now offering **National Geographic Premium** with **Disney+**, a deal that combines a National Geographic digital member-

ship, print issues and Disney+ for \$10.99/month or \$109/year. *The Hollywood Reporter* had the [exclusive](#) on the bundle. It will be made available for purchase on Earth Day, April 22.

DIRECTV WINS IN NAD BATTLE AGAINST CHARTER

DirecTV scored three victories with the **National Advertising Division** recently in a battle against claims made in a television commercial for **Charter's** Spectrum video product. DirecTV challenged three express claims made by Spectrum in the commercial: that consumers could not watch the "biggest game of the year" on **DirecTV Stream**, that none of consumers favorite sports channels are available on DirecTV Stream and that DirecTV Stream has no local sports channels. NAD recommended Spectrum discontinue all the claims, but said it could modify the final "no local sports channels" to instead inform consumers of networks that are not available and which packages are being compared between the two providers. The Super Bowl was available on all DirecTV Stream packages, negating the first point made by Spectrum, and while the comparative availability of RSNs on the two services is something Spectrum could highlight, there are RSNs available on all but one of DirecTV Stream's packages.

MORE FIBER EXPANSIONS

Vexus Fiber is investing \$12 million in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana, and looks to bring its fiber network to an additional 13,000 homes over the next 12 months. Vexus already reaches 6,500 homes and businesses in St. Tammany, and plans to add tens of thousands more in the next three-to-five years. – **Ritter Communications** is expanding RightFiber services to Newport, Arkansas, in a \$2.6 million project funded by the company. Construction is expected to start this month with other expansion projects in Arkansas already underway.

DISH HIT WITH FINE FOR E-WASTE

DISH Network California Service Corporation has agreed to pay \$5.5 million in a settlement with the Alameda County District Attorney and California Attorney General for the illegal disposal and mismanagement of hazardous waste. According to the officials, DISH has allegedly violated California's environmental laws and regulations since 2005. Audits of DISH facilities across multiple years have found that hazardous chemical elements from electronic devices were being disposed of in trash bins designated for municipal landfills. In addition to paying the fines, DISH must provide training to employees to ensure ongoing compliance with California's hazardous waste laws and hire an independent third-party auditor to perform compliance audits at the company's 25 state facilities.

MORE WALKING DEAD NFTS TO COME

The next collection of "The Walking Dead" NFTs will drop Thursday at 3pm. The collections include 5,000 *Daryl Dixon* motorcycles with 20 different bike designs and 50 model-kit bikes. Walker Access Pass Holders have one-hour pre-access to the drop.

DISH ADDS JOBS IN DENVER

DISH Network added more than 1,000 employees in Denver in 2021, going from 5,338 to 6,362 as the company looks to roll out

5G to 70% of the U.S. population by June 2023. According to the *Denver Business Journal*, these acquisitions were [mostly organic](#) as the only acquisition last year was of **Republic Wireless**.

UPFRONTLY SPEAKING

TV One and **CLEO TV** unveiled their programming slate for 2022 at their joint upfront. For TV One, "Unsung" and "Uncensored" give glimpses into the lives of celebrities, and "Represent Our Voice" is a series meant to bring information in the build-up to the presidential election. TV One will also debut films such as "Safe Room," "Stalker," and "Stranger Next Door." CLEO TV is introducing shows "Decor Remix" and "Global Gourmet" on top of "Culture Kitchen," "Life Therapy," "Living by Design" and more.

PROGRAMMING

HGTV greenlit six new series for 2022-23, starting with "Revealed," where family ancestry influences design decisions, and two house restoration programs "Renovation 911" and "Fix My Frankenhouse." "Luxe for Less" shows how to have high-end design on a budget, "Saving the Manor" follows a couple renovating a dilapidated English estate and "Small Town Potential" showcases a design business helping clients buy and renovate properties to turn into their homes. – **AMC+** is celebrating Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May with a collection of series, specials and films across the company's portfolio spotlighting the AAPI community called "Asian Americans Amplified." Programming includes "Killing Eve," "True Terror with George Takei," "Slumdog Millionaire" among others. The full lineup can be viewed [here](#). – **OWN's** "The Nightcap with Carlos King" will premiere May 14 at 10pm following the debut of "Love & Marriage: D.C." The Nightcap with Carlos King will have guests from the network's popular shows and talk about various storylines. – The U.S. women's tennis team will host Ukraine in the Billie Jean King Cup qualifying round April 15-16 on **Tennis Channel**. Coverage begins both days at 1pm. – "Naked and Afraid XL: Next Level" returns with a new season May 1 at 8pm on **Discovery**. The new season will have eight rookies attempt to last 40 days, while four veterans look to last 60 days.

AWARDS

The **Alliance for Women in Media Foundation** unveiled the winners of the 47th annual **Gracie Awards** ahead of its in-person event in Los Angeles on May 24. The event will honor women in television, radio and digital media and recognize programming that highlighted female-driven stories. **CBS'** "48 Hours: What Happened to the Perfect Child" earned the honor for news documentary while **Warner Bros.'** "Home Sweet Home" won the TV Family Series. The full list of winners and honorable mentions can be viewed [here](#).

PEOPLE

Cable One's Board named *Todd Koetje* its next CFO effective July 1, succeeding *Steven Cochran* who will serve as a consultant to the company through early January 2023. Koetje joined the company in September 2021 as SVP, Business Development and Finance.

Think about that for a minute...

Pluses and Minuses

Commentary by Steve Effros

It's getting very awkward. I've been in the cable/broadband business for over 45 years. I'm considered somewhat of an "expert," whatever that means, regarding cable. I've testified before Congress numerous times on the subject over the years as well as been a litigant in court cases and qualified as an "expert witness." When my friends have a problem or are confused about their cable or broadband choices, they call me. Now I find it's getting almost impossible to answer their questions!

The transition, or, more accurately the addition of streaming services to the ones we all used to get on "cable" has not gone well. Blame it on the technology? The marketers? The business plans? I don't know, but it's getting totally out of hand when the "experts" are as confused as everyone else.

I think the decision to use the concept of "plus" for the name of streaming services has created a great deal of the problem. What does that "plus" refer to? Does it mean, for example, that while I may have the "Disney Channel" on cable, "Disney+," the streaming service, has some programming in addition to the stuff I can see on the "channel?"

And then there's HBO and HBO Now, which was renamed HBO Max. The "Max" variety, I understand, is the streaming service on broadband. But does it have more stuff than HBO on cable? Turns out the answer apparently is yes, but most folks in major cable systems who subscribe to HBO through "cable" also have Max available to them as well, so they can see that extra stuff, whatever it is.

Does the "plus" or the streaming service mirror the original branded product? It's rarely clear, but it would appear that most companies, when marketing the streaming service, add archived programming because it's easier on a streaming service to access virtually everything "on demand" and that's not true of all cable service providers. Oh...wait a minute, most of the major cable companies now offer "on demand" archived product from the various programmers as well! Is there any wonder that customers are confused?

The problem is not just with the commercial networks. Think of PBS, the "free," "non commercial" network which runs week-long commercials! (That's a column for another time.) They now offer a "plus" service as well, but it's called "Passport," and you can only get it with a "donation." Passport has all the good archived programming. No donation, no archive.

And all of this avoids another point, which is whether any of these "plus" services, and streaming services in general are really going to make it. Sure, some of the biggies will, but most are losing money big time. Warner Media, now Warner Brothers Discovery, rolled out "CNN +" two weeks ago after spending hundreds of millions of dollars building it up and promoting it. After two weeks of what has been described as "lackluster" response, the new board which just met, is rumored to be considering cutting back the service! Boy, that's quick, but with folks like John Malone on the Board, I wouldn't bet against their decision making.

So where does that leave us? Well, a report today says Disney is going to offer a "bundle" with the Nat Geo archives including print copies of National Geographic. But I thought my "Disney +" subscription already had the Nat Geo archives available to me! And so it goes.

The "pluses" in my view, have turned into "minuses." They are confusing consumers far more than not. It seems to me that if there are going to be new streaming service offerings, call them that. Distinguish them from the other offerings, or tell us they are the same. Don't just use symbols, bundling and buzzwords few understand.



Steve

T:202-630-2099
steve@effros.com

(Steve Effros was President of CATA for 23 years and is now an advisor and consultant to the cable industry. His views do not necessarily reflect the views of Cablefax.)

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