**Press Release**

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**WITF To Focus on New Efforts To Expand**

**Its Journalistic and Educational Mission In Central Pa**

*Proceeds from spectrum sharing agreement will enable WITF to launch*

*digital-first state government-focused news organization, media literacy program and*

*PBS Kids Channel with support from donors and sponsors*

HARRISBURG (February 9, 2017) – WITF, Central Pennsylvania’s public media leader, announced today that it will realize $25 million in a channel sharing agreement related to the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) national auction of broadcast spectrum.

The WITF Board of Directors indicated the proceeds will be deposited in WITF’s board-designated endowment. The earnings from the endowment will add about 9%, or approximately $1 million, to WITF's annual revenues and will be utilized to accelerate WITF’s work in three important areas, to fulfill its mission to “strengthen our communities by connecting them to each other and to opportunities for lifelong learning.”

“This is a great opportunity for WITF,” said President and CEO Kathleen Pavelko. “By sharing surplus spectrum, WITF is now able to work with our supporters to fulfill our mission in new, ambitious ways.”

The auction was overseen by the FCC. Because of technological advances, WITF can share its spectrum without reducing its current broadcasting capabilities--in fact, WITF will add a multi-cast channel, as described below. The channel sharing agreement is a technical contract for the delivery of each station’s broadcast signal to viewers and cable providers; there will be no editorial interaction or change in broadcast content for either station.

“The Board of Directors of WITF is committed to using these proceeds to enhance our public media mission in a manner that reflects both this opportunity – and our history of careful stewardship,” said Board Chair Mieke Driscoll.

WITF’s Board has been engaged since June 2016 in its regular strategic planning process, enabling the Board to solicit public input on mission expansion opportunities as the confidential auction proceeded.

“In August 2016, we surveyed more than 2,000 members of our Central Pennsylvania community – volunteers, donors, sponsors, listeners, viewers and readers of WITF.org and our social media properties - to ask them what aspects of WITF’s journalistic and educational mission they would most like to see enhanced,” said Pavelko. That input resulted in the Board’s initial determination to focus on these initiatives:

1. Launching a new, **statewide news organization**, dedicated to enhanced coverage of Pennsylvania policy, politics and statewide issues. This new effort would utilize digital platforms to give Pennsylvanians the information needed to be informed citizens, and help to fill the void created by years of declining news coverage by print and commercial media.
2. Creating a **media literacy program** for Central Pennsylvania – a program to help elementary, middle school and high school students interpret and use media wisely.
3. Launching the **PBS Kids Channel,** a 24/7 broadcast and streaming channel to make PBS’s trusted children’s programs available to all, free, every hour of the day.

“These efforts are substantial and will take time, expertise, and donor support to achieve. We are confident that our volunteers, donors and sponsors will be as energized by this incredible opportunity as we are,” said Pavelko. “By working together in this effort, we can make WITF into the public media organization our audiences have come to expect.”

Pavelko indicated that WITF is now gathering more input from its broad Central Pennsylvania community to further shape and finalize its plans.

**About WITF**

WITF is a trusted, valued supplier of programs and services that both satisfy and stimulate curiosity of residents in every community in the Central Pennsylvania region. WITF broadcast services reach audiences in 19 counties. The company comprises public broadcasting stations WITF TV and WITF 89.5 & 93.3, plus the RadioPA Network, witf.org, WITF Educational Services, Media Solutions and the regional magazine Central PA (in association with the Patriot-News). WITF’s mission is to strengthen our communities by connecting us to each other and to opportunities for lifelong learning. WITF engages minds and enriches lives.

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