

Radio

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local programming with a variety of news, sports, interviews, music and entertainment. The station also features network programs spotlighting American Indian issues, with recent programming devoted to the Keystone XL pipeline.

THE EARLY YEARS

The station couldn't be found on the air when it first came into existence, admitted KDKO station manager Chaske Rockboy.

"We started about 10 years ago livestreaming on the Internet," he said. "One day, Charon Asetoyer wanted us to be out there and put the radio station on the air. In 2010, we went on the air."

Landing a spot on the FM dial was a matter of good timing and a window of opportunity, Asetoyer said.

"We had a two-week opening with the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) to apply for licensing," she said. "We managed to submit our application during that time period, and we were approved. There was no community station in the area, so we were able to get licensed."

KDKO receives its funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, private donations and other

sources, Asetoyer said. The eight-person staff includes the on-air talent of Rockboy, Flying Hawk, Asetoyer, Donna Haukaas and Elizabeth Black Bull.

A community advisory board meets monthly to deal with station operations.

The station seeks to hold down its expenses, Rockboy said. "We're a low-maintenance operation," he said.

However, KDKO uses technology comparable to some radio networks, he said. In addition, the station maintains a playlist of 10,000 songs.

KDKO operates on low power but still makes its presence known in parts of southeast South Dakota and northeast Nebraska, Rockboy said.

"We're 800 watts. Some days, we go farther out if it's windy," he joked.

However, the station has reached listeners as far north as Armour, as far south as Spencer, Nebraska; as far west as Gregory, and as far east as Tyndall, Asetoyer said.

The station is still streamed on the Internet, giving it a worldwide reach, Rockboy said.

"I let people know on Facebook what we're doing," he said. "I have a friend from Canada who listens to the Marty (Indian School) games. We get responses from around the world."

REACHING OUT

The addition of Marty school and sporting events has become a popular draw, Rockboy said. "I graduated from Marty Indian School, so it's a way for me to give back to the school," he said.

Rockboy recalled the large crowds attending games when he graduated from Marty Indian School in 2001. He noticed few people attending games when he came back years later to watch his nieces and nephews in sports.

The KDKO coverage of Marty games – with the station's prominent place on the sidelines – has stimulated fan interest and attendance, he said. The coverage has also brought pride among the young athletes who enjoy the recognition of their achievements.

The school coverage has produced an added benefit, Asetoyer said. Students must remain academically eligible to participate in the contests which are broadcast, she noted. "That's encouraging some of the youth to maintain their eligibility," she said.

In addition, Marty students – some as young as middle school – have formed their own news crew to report and produce shows on school events, Asetoyer said.

PRESERVING THE CULTURE

The KDKO station and its website also play an important

role in maintaining cultural identity, she said. The station broadcasts lessons in the Dakota language by Diane Merrick and Gail Hubelling as well as announcements in both Dakota and English.

"The Native language is being lost each generation more and more. Our organization has been leading the work on the Dakota language presentations in our area," Asetoyer said. "This has been extremely helpful in getting younger people to get engaged in the acquisition of the language. You really hear the difference. It's being used a lot more than it was five years ago."

KDKO has also shown a willingness to tackle the tough issues facing the Yankton Sioux, Asetoyer said. The station has produced programming and announcements dealing with alcoholism, drugs, diabetes, cancer awareness, domestic violence, gang violence and sex trafficking.

KDKO is co-sponsoring an Oct. 21 conference on sex trafficking at Fort Randall Casino.

Rockboy sees the station and website reaching out and touching people's lives.

"It's for the Yankton Sioux, our people," he said. "But we're also there for everyone, no matter what race. We're all in the community and live together."

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