A Conversation With Michael Clark, the new director of LTV in East Hampton

Michael Clark, the former owner of Crossroads Music in East Hampton and more recently in Amagansett Square, talks about his new position as the executive director of LTV. Mr. Clark, who replaced Eric Giardnob on October 22, also discusses what he sees as a bright future for the public access television station, based in Wainscott.

What drew you to the job at LTV? What made you interested in taking on this new role?

I've always had a focus on the local community, especially when it comes to the arts and music; since my days with Crossroads Music. I've been a guest on LTV shows and jointly produced over 40 episodes of "East End Underground" that focused on bringing attention to the great local music scenes. This position is a natural extension on that – letting people know and understand the greatness of the East End.

Obviously, LTV is a public access television station with content related to local government coverage but also community news and the lifestyle of living on the South Fork. How would you like to see LTV grow?

Because we are public access, the possibilities are unlimited. Like anything else, it all comes down to dollars and cents. We currently are generously funded by the town and village of East Hampton, but frankly we need more in order to make LTV the true communication hub of the East End. We need to make the local community understand the importance of what we do so they become more involved through programming, subscription and underwriting. That is paramount. Educating the public is a priority. We currently handle the government meetings out there, as you said, but there is so much happening and we don't have the people power to get it all covered. I've already expanded reach to the local schools for internships and young people who are interested in the communications business. That's important, but we need more; we need more. This is everyone's station. Together we can bring new ideas and grow.

Is what it about the current station that you think is its strongest attribute? Where do you see the great potential for growth?

The strength of LTV is the community. As said, this is YOUR station. Our mantra is LTV is YOUR TV So, we are being the community and it allows us the resources needed to expand and financially. Of course, our amazing staff and their attention to detail and multi-tasking capabilities are part of the reasons why it's thriving. We've all been brought together in this situation. I think the greatest potential for growth is the creative aspect. We have some great programming now, but there is always room for bigger and better things. The East End is known for its focus on arts and entertainments and we really need to continually tap into that.

We understand you are thinking about reviving the LTV music program “East End Underground”, this time with a live audience and perhaps a simulcast on radio? Is this true? Can you tell us a bit about your hopes for that program?

EEU has been a pet project for awhile. It's gotten good reviews, but we want to make it even better by feeding off the energy of a live audience. There's nothing like that feeling. It's amazing to watch a local band take an audience in their hand and hold them there until they are ready to let them go. We want to capture that. We hope to start that in 2021.

Your background is in music. What drew you into that world? What musical instruments do you play and do you have a favorite genre?

My background is actually management. I spent 20 years as a communications manager for Verizon. Music was just my passion. My three boys are musicians, and my wife used to sing "back in the day." I was the one who simply took it all in so I couldn't call myself a musician. I know three different sets of drums for year-round use and now I'm not sure who is better – and myself a musician. Especially with the caliber of musicians out here. Rock and roll and the blues are my favorites, but there isn't much I don't like. Someone has to be the audience and that's me. I'm fine with that.

While LTV is a nonprofit, it does need funding to keep its doors open and to develop robust programming. Have you begun to look at ways to build financial support around the station?

Generating working capital is a big part of my job. I've hit the ground running, but revenue is on my mind constantly. Everything we do has to be monetized and because we are a 501(c)(3) it has to be completely transparent and attended to meticulously. I'm seeking those couple of sponsors that will afford us some breathing room to accomplish more for the community. The tough part is sponsors want to see where their money is going, and we need the money to show them. I'm working on finding a way to make that happen.

What do you hope to educate the community about in terms of the potential for the station? How does this station evolve to meet a consumer base that consumes information in varied ways? And what facilities does the station have that are available for rent or use by members of the community?

LTV is an amazing facility. We currently have a soundproof room for podcasting that is available for rentals and use. We need to get the word out so even more people know. We also have an entire second floor with office spaces that are available for rent. Again, people need to know. All of our studios are readily available. But we need you out on our website, ltht.org. It is completely underutilized, in my opinion, so it is a primary focus moving forward.

Angela LaGrecia, an award-winning actress, comedian and producer, serves as the station’s creative director. How has it been working with Angela? How do you think you will complement each other?

Yes, Angela is amazing. Her experience in the business is well documented and is there for all of us to benefit from. We’ve only just scratched the surface on what she brings to LTV, but we are off to a good start. It’s hard to keep up with her. Her ideas flow every minute. I’m like a sponge and soak it all in. It’s quite an honor to be associated with her. She’s already brought and initiated great ideas like her Salons, comedy benefits and even pieces she has filmed herself at local events. She’s very easy to work with, and I look forward to learning and accomplishing even more.