Calling All Kids: LTV, Project MOST Launch New Series

Did you know that a herd of elephants is called a parade? Or that hoards of feral cats on the remote Aoshima Island in Japan outnumber humans six to one? Or that passengers feasted on the first-ever airplane meal — which included cold fried chicken, fruit salad and sandwiches — on a flight from London to Paris in 1919?

These questions, and more, are coming straight from the minds and mouths of local kids, who are sharing fascinating facts and fun discoveries during the “Did You Know?” television segment of a new children’s series produced by Project MOST and LTV.

Each 27-minute episode — the first is now available to stream on the station’s website — aims to tell the story of the East End by those who live here, according to Martha Stotzky, education director of Project MOST, a nonprofit organization that provides after school and summer learning programs spanning arts and culture, STEM, health, and wellness.

The new television series will reflect just that, Ms. Stotzky said — as well as the young voices who call the East End home.

“One of our guiding principals in our mission is that it’s a strong community sustained by emerging generations,” she said. “If we have a community of young people who are really informed and excited and compassionate, that’s who’s going to sustain this community going forward — and seeing themselves represented and reflected in the media is super important, even if it’s on local television.”

With shuttered doors due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Project MOST turned to social media to stay connected with the families it serves, posting educational videos and virtual activities to Facebook, to be watched from the safety of their own homes.
And it got Ms. Stotzky thinking.

“We started talking about, ‘Wow, what if we did a show and it was hosted on LTV?’” she said. “It really fit into the mission for community programming that we have, especially at a time when we can’t provide in-person programming. I started thinking about the shows being super local in content — and really being a voice for the community, as well.”

Tapping the talent of local artisans, creators and professionals — including artist Joyce Raimondo, master gardener Mark-Antonio Smith, musician Job Potter, dancer Charity Joy Robinson, African drummer Kate Albrecht, and others — the episodes defy genre, edited by Ellen Watson, operations director at LTV, to include a wide variety of interests.

“It’s a win-win,” she said. “As the public access station, LTV is always looking for new programming, and they’re already filming these little episodes. So what Martha does is she sends them over to me and I design the graphics, and find the intro and outro music, and I just edit them together into an episode.”

While an on-air premiere date is still undecided, that hasn’t stopped Ms. Stotzky from looking toward the future of the series, which she imagines will include two new segments once the pandemic settles down and social distancing restrictions are lifted.

“The line-up for the show, currently, is a little tricky being in quarantine and producing a show about the community, but we’re trying,” she said with a laugh. “For future segments, one is asking families to share their own cultural traditions with us. So that could be sharing an object relating to a holiday, or cooking a recipe on screen related to a particular culture.

“We’re so lucky to have families from all over the world living out here, so we see this really as an opportunity to learn from each other.”

The other will involve children in the actual hosting and storytelling of each episode, outside of the “Did You Know?” segment, allowing them to be correspondents at a location of their choice — perhaps a historical site or natural environment.

“I see it as, in some ways, almost cultural anthropology about this place,” Ms. Stotzky said. “The storytellers and the stories are local. We just want to bring in as many musicians and artists, and look at it as everybody teaching each other. We don’t want this to be just another platform where kids are being talked at, you know?

“We really want this to be responsive,” she continued. “We’re going a little slowly, we’re evolving — but we’re getting there, and it’s exciting.”