

KSUN is really about the sun, Battlement and Parachute

By Anne Huber

It was December 11, 2002 – Fran Storm’s birthday – and if you remember Fran, who lived in Battlement Mesa and worked at the Battlement Mesa Activity Center (BMAC) then you know there was a certain festivity about the day.

Several KSUN board members, a couple of technical guys and Fran and I were all crowded into the tiny SKUN studio inside the BMAC. It was time to turn on the transmitter and say “Hello” to a brand new audience at a brand new radio station. The process had taken more than two years.

At first nothing happened, and then technical volunteers Larry Huber and John Chapman made the right connections and finally – transmission! Officially incorporated as KSUN Community Radio, Inc. with the Colorado Secretary of State, the real call letters submitted to the FCC are KSBP for Sun, Battlement and Parachute.

The founders

The late Tom Beard, then-manager of Battlement Mesa Company and Jimm Seany, a broadcast journalism instructor at Mesa State College, met early in 2000 to discuss the possibility of a station for Battlement Mesa and Parachute. Later, Bill Atkinson, a retired licensed radio engineer, drew up plans for the station.

The first official station meeting was held that November with Harlan Hanson as president; Jim Warren, Vice president and treasurer; and Linda Berry, secretary. The FCC application was filed in January of 2001.

KSBP’s mission is to keep listeners informed about the local community and give voice to other nonprofit and community organizations in the Grand Valley. Early programming included “The History of Country Music 101” produced by Floyd McDaniel, a run of old-time radio shows; “The Carmel & Fish Show” airing popular music; “Fric and Frac” hosted by Mary Lee Mohrlang and Terry Lynott that evolved into Community Connections, a live Friday morning interview program; and “Blessing Up,” a live one-hour Sunday morning program that has aired for several years. Floyd McDaniel hosts The Morning Show live every weekday morning playing classic country in between announcements. The station is also equipped for emergency weather and Amber alerts.

Challenges

Things can go wrong running a radio station, including these:

1. In 2007, a Grand Junction Cumulus Radio representative announced that coordinates for the KSUN antenna were incorrectly filed and that if not corrected, the station would be fined or worse, shut down. But there was another reason for his visit; Cumulus had purchased a nearby frequency (101.3) only two digits away from KSUN’s 101.1, and the local station would have to get another frequency, which ultimately moved to 103.9.
2. A licensing report that KSUN mailed on time to the FCC was considered not filed because of a rule change that required the report to be filed online. KSUN board members were not aware of the change. The subsequent steps necessary to straighten this seemingly minor mistake was extensive and required hours of telephone and online time. KSUN was fined \$750 and not long after, KSUN joined the National Federation of Community Broadcasters an organization that advocates for nonprofit stations and keeps small stations such as KSUN notified of rule changes that have serious consequences.
3. The on-air computer crashed. Recovery and replacement of the necessary hardware and software again took volunteers many hours to repair. The music that had been carefully categorized into different genres so that programmed music could play at the appropriate time was jumbled. Now classical, jazz, rock and country might play in the same segment. Over time, most of the errors have been corrected.

The details

KSUN operates because of the generosity of its members, underwriters, volunteers and foundations such as the Mt. Callahan Community Fund. Mr. Callahan has made several awards to KSUN to improve programming.

Floyd McDaniel, retired businessman, dedicates many hours each week to keep programs organized. The board meets monthly on the fourth Tuesday at 3 p.m. at BMAC to discuss programming, memberships, fundraising, underwriting and community outreach. These meetings are open to the public.

There are opportunities for community members to help with station operations and KSUN needs more volunteers to solicit new underwriters, produce new shows, help with fundraising and serve as committee members on special projects. KSUN broadcasts Grand Valley football and basketball. It streams its signal on the Internet so it can be heard all over the world.

Expenses include music fees paid to several organizations, liability insurance, hardware and software updates, rent, telephone and Internet.

Tune in to 103.9 on your FM dial. If you can't pick up the signal, call the station at 970,285.2246 for assistance. The station's range is about 15 miles east and west; DeBeque and Rifle along the I-70 corridor. Listeners can acquire a program schedule from the studio or view the schedule online at www.KSUNradio.org. The next board meeting is April 24 at 3 p.m. at BMAC. KSUN is a 501c3, tax-exempt organization and donations to KSUN are tax deductible.