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FEATURES

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New director hopes to put "public" back in public-access TV

Tony Shawcross wants to bump up the "public" in public-access television.

"If it were up to us, everything would air," says Shawcross, executive director and co-founder of Deproduction Group, chosen by the city in February to run channels 57, 58 and 59, where all comers are welcome.

Shawcross isn't into dictating. To him, community access means community control. He has an open-door policy when it comes to choosing the stations' 72 hours of daily programming. "Every show submitted is guaranteed to air at least once," he promises. When and where it airs again is up to the stations' 300,000 viewers on Comcast cable.



DICK KRECK
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"At the core of our model is that viewers can vote," eventually online, he says. "The public should make those decisions, not just another guy behind the curtain."

Deproduction replaced Denver Community Television in September. Shawcross' pitch to the Denver

City Council included the vow that his group would finance the endeavor without taxpayer money, but getting the new public-access stations self-sufficient hasn't been easy. "To be totally honest," says Shawcross, "we knew it would take a while to build the donor base and our reputation with foundations."

Programming is not entirely free range. "We make producers take full responsibility for content. It must be suitable for all ages. We have had a few shows that should not have been on the air, and we have responded to those. We would never pull something off the air because it's something (viewers) don't like." FCC regulations and a no-commercials rule figure into it.

Shawcross can use as his model GrassRoots TV12 in Aspen, celebrating its 35th anniversary. Last year, the station, the nation's first community-access station, produced 750 original shows on arts, alternative entertainment, talk and local sports.

Information on the nonprofit Deproduction's technical and training assistance to learn how to produce programming is available at denvergov.org/community_tv/9740aboutus.exp.

Around the dial

More is less. Richard Huff of the New York Daily News, commenting on the fact that the average U.S. household gets 104.2 channels: "But (it) watches on average only slightly

more than 15 of them." ... Mitch Jeniker, anchorman for KMGH-Channel 7, emceeds the [Colorado Humanities](#) living-history dinner featuring Mark Twain on April 19 ... Charlie Louvin, the surviving half of country legends Louvin Brothers, performs on "etown," taping at the Boulder Theater at 7 p.m. April 4 ... Quotable: "Keep away from people who belittle your ambitions. Small-minded people always do that, but the ones who are really great make you feel that you too can be great." Maria Muashindange

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