

Still Grabbing Dollars in a Tough Economy

WNET/WLIW's Barbara Bantivoglio has a history of getting results **By Allison Romano**



Despite the volatile financial markets and a slumping economy, Barbara Bantivoglio has a bullish goal for

the next nine months: to raise at least \$90 million for public TV stations WNET New York and WLIW Garden City, N.Y., both owned by the Educational Broadcasting Corp.

Such an objective would be ambitious even under better market conditions; last year the stations raised \$81 million. But Bantivoglio, who oversees fundraising, marketing and communications for the stations as VP of institutional advancement, believes she can continue to raise money, in part due to the stations' revered position in the New York market.

Public media in cities like New York are public treasures, she says. Our strength has been diversification of supporters, and that will continue.

For EBC, she says, that means working with a broad base of supporters, including foundations, companies, wealthy individuals and members who pledge donations to fund the stations and their highly regarded programming.

One way Bantivoglio is innovating is by bringing WNET's fundraising into the digital age. She is building an extensive online fundraising system, aiming to collect up to 200,000 e-mails and soliciting micro-funding donations big and small, including gifts under \$100.

Bantivoglio's ultimate goal for the EBC's fiscal year, which began in July, would be a big gain over last year's \$81 million. And she has a shot at doing it: In the last month, despite financial conditions worsening daily, she says she continued to receive sizable gifts, including pledges of \$2 million and \$1 million.

Even so, Bantivoglio admits these are difficult days to be in fundraising at a non-profit media outlet. In times like this, you keep diversifying, she says.

Since joining WNET in the summer of 2007, Bantivoglio has been working to increase contributions and raise public awareness for the venerable stations. She is drawing on decades of experience building partnerships between public and private partners and fundraising for major cultural institutions, including public radio's WNYC and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

The Haddonfield, N.J., native started her career in local government. For her first job, Bantivoglio went to work for the deputy mayor of Boston. She worked with city's business community on the 1976 bicentennial celebrations, including raising money for preservation of key Boston landmarks.

After moving to New York in 1978, Bantivoglio joined the mayor's office and again worked with the business community on partnerships, including forming a non-profit coordinating committee.

Those experiences led Bantivoglio to move to non-profit management. In 1992, she joined the startup of New Jersey's Liberty Science Center, coordinating fundraising be-

tween the business community, state and federal governments. In 1999, she jumped to be the associate director of external affairs at the Whitney, where she coordinated corporate and individual membership and gifting from individuals.

At both the Liberty Science Center and the Whitney, Bantivoglio says she saw that her political experience translated well in the non-profit world. Both politics and non-profits are all about relationship building, she says. It is about getting across your mission, how compelling your mission is; it is about persuasion and having the ability to communicate with people.

Bantivoglio went on to form a consulting company, Barbara Bantivoglio Associates, where clients included the London Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Television and Radio (now the Paley Center for Media).

In 2005, Bantivoglio landed her first job in media at WNYC. As VP of development, her areas of oversight included fundraising, membership, government relations and research.

WNYC has an outstanding product, she says. It is a real quality station and a real community asset.

Those attributes, she says, made it possible to raise \$57.5 million for a new broadcast facility, which was Bantivoglio's largest project while at the station.

The reach of public media, she says, helps make such major fundraising projects possible. Like most non-profits, she explains, public radio and TV stations have a limited advertising budget. But, she says, public stations can reach a large, diverse group because their programming and projects are highly visible on TV and radio and reach a large audience.

Plus, public stations do receive government funding, even if it is dwindling. (Every dollar counts, Bantivoglio says.)

When former NBC News President Neal Shapiro joined WNET/WLIW as

president in early 2007, he reached out to Bantivoglio. I had some new and interesting ideas, and wanted someone who was intrigued and thought that new ideas could attract dynamic fundraising, Shapiro says. Barbara was very successful at WNYC and brought that record to us.

Right away, he says, Bantivoglio set out to present a broader view of the stations' mission, rather than just fundraising for specific projects or campaigns. One such goal was launching international news program World Focus, which debuted in early October. Bantivoglio spearheaded fundraising for the project, as well as its marketing and publicity.

Bantivoglio is also diversifying WNET's sources of fundraising. A key focus, she says, is growing online giving and communications. In creating her digital strategy, Bantivoglio says she is taking lessons from environmental non-profits and political groups, which have been successful with online campaigns.

So far, WNET has built a database with 140,000 e-mails, and Bantivoglio aims to harvest 200,000 e-mails. She is trying to use that database to build WNET's audience and tap into new sources of membership and fundraising.

We're trying to talk to our membership and get them to support ideas and issues, she says. We are a multiplatform content company, and we've spent a lot of time on our Website. However people get our content, we're happy about it.

These are efforts that Shapiro applauds: As the media environment changes, we need to be flexible and change our approaches.

