KBIA to pick up Pepper segments

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Advertisement

Radio station KBIA announced Monday it will host a new radio version of “Pepper & Friends” when the show leaves television in September.

According to KBIA’s Web site, weekday 10-minute segments by “Pepper & Friends” host Paul Pepper will begin Oct. 5 during the “Morning Edition” program. The TV version of “Pepper & Friends,” a talk/variety show on KOMU, is an hour long each weekday.

KOMU announced in May that it would be canceling “Pepper & Friends” after 27 years on the air. Since then, fans of the show have shown their support through petitions and protests aimed at getting the station to reverse that decision.

KBIA is a University of Missouri-licensed public radio station and National Public Radio member station that broadcasts on 91.3 FM.
'Pepper' finds new home on KBIA

By Emily Ponder
July 28, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **Paul Pepper signed a contract with radio station KBIA/91.3 FM on Monday**, bringing his community content from television to the airwaves.

In May, KOMU announced the “Pepper and Friends” program, which has run for 27 years, would air for the last time on Sept. 18. KOMU General Manager Marty Siddall cited budget issues as the reason for the show’s cancellation.

KBIA General Manager Mike Dunn said bringing Paul Pepper to the radio would allow community members to benefit from the local angle of the programming. The talk show has traditionally featured community organizations.

“The biggest reason for the existence of KBIA is student training and public service, and that public service part makes Paul Pepper a perfect fit for us,” Dunn said. “We think that the kind of program he provides makes Columbia a better place.”

Although the radio show will be 10 minutes long instead of the hour allotted on television, the KBIA version, dubbed “Radio Friends with Paul Pepper,” will feature much of the same subject matter as its television predecessor.

“We talked to Paul about concentrating on two things: The arts community and what we call the service community, which is all the different organizations around the city that provide services to people,” Dunn said.

The show, which debuts Oct. 5, will air Monday through Friday during the Morning Edition. In addition to the radio segments, the show will also be videotaped and placed online for viewers to access at any time.

“We’re real excited about it,” Dunn said. “Our staff is excited, Paul is excited.”
Dunn also said the radio version would give an opportunity for community members who would miss the show to still have access to the content.

Pepper said while he was sad about losing "Pepper and Friends," he was looking forward to continuing to highlight the community on KBIA.

"I feel very good about that because at least we will be able to do some of the segments from 'Pepper and Friends' on KBIA," Pepper said. "I think it's wonderful for the community because what KOMU did by canceling our show was simply silencing a voice in our community. I think KBIA has had the foresight to see that there really is a need for organizations and community. That doesn't mean that I don't feel sad about the end of 'Pepper and Friends.'"

The radio show does not include James Mouser, Pepper's longtime co-host. Dunn said a short segment does not lend itself to having a co-host. Pepper said Mouser, who is a cartoonist for the Fayette newspaper, wants to focus on his art and hopefully become syndicated.

Columbia resident Dan Peek has contested the cancellation of "Pepper and Friends" through letters to media outlets and university officials. Although he hopes KOMU will still bring Pepper back, Peek said he is glad KBIA picked up the program.

"I see that as a very positive thing," Peek said. "I'm happy that Paul will be on the radio, but I don't see that excluding him from being on TV. I still do not believe that KOMU will actually go through with canceling 'Pepper and Friends.'"

Peek said a town meeting in response to KOMU's decision to cancel the show is planned for Aug. 5 in the Arts and Science Building at MU. A protest was held outside of KOMU on July 6 to voice objection to the cancellation.

Pepper said he is surprised and grateful for the community's support.

"The one thing I really want to get across to people is how much James and I both appreciate what people are trying to do to save the show," Pepper said. "I think that one reason people are doing that is because they feel it's their show."

Pepper said he wasn't sure if KOMU would do anything in response to the community protests.
"(Siddall) has told us that he has made his decision, and his decision is final, but there has been an awful lot of outcry," Pepper said.

Dunn said KOMU was made aware of the decision to bring Pepper to KBIA before the contract was signed. Sidall could not be reached for comment Monday.

Pepper's contract is for six months, which Dunn said would give both parties a chance to try out the partnership. He said he expects that, when the contract is reviewed at the end of six months, they will find Pepper's time at KBIA to have been positive.
New GI Bill covers college for vets, but won't easily replace old GI Bill

BY KAVITA KUMAR
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Tens of thousands of additional military veterans who have just finished up their post-Sept. 11 duties are expected to enroll at the nation's colleges and universities this fall, lured in part by the most significant expansion of educational veterans benefits since the original GI Bill was signed in 1944.

But while the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which goes into effect Saturday, will be a much better deal for veterans in many states, the new law may not be so popular with veterans attending public universities in Missouri and Illinois.

That's because both states already offer generous tuition breaks that may make it more lucrative for many to stick with the old federal GI Bill.

That means that public universities in Missouri and Illinois will likely continue to absorb a large portion of the costs to educate veterans. That's in contrast to the new GI Bill, in which the federal government pays colleges directly for the full cost of educating these students.

Still, the new bill does have some major benefits for Missouri and Illinois veterans, namely a provision that will give them the option to attend private universities for free — or close to it — if those schools are among more than 1,100 participating campuses.

Terry Dale Cruse, dean of enrollment at Missouri Baptist University, noted that the new bill will make private universities a more affordable option to veterans who prefer smaller campuses or specific programs.
"Students basically have the same opportunity whether they want to enroll in a state school or a private school," he said. "This really broadens the access for students."

The new GI Bill gives veterans the option to have the federal government directly pay public universities in full for their tuition and fees. On top of that, returning combat veterans will get a housing and textbook allowance.

Under the old Montgomery GI Bill veterans received about $1,321 a month, out of which they paid tuition, fees, housing and living expenses. But they often also had to take out student loans to cover all of their costs.

Keith Widaman figured he gets $150 more every month under the old GI Bill. That's because Missouri only makes veterans pay $50 a credit hour — instead of as much as $245 a credit hour at the University of Missouri-Columbia — under the Missouri Returning Heroes Education Act passed last year.

"The Returning Heroes Act is a phenomenal opportunity," said Widaman, who started taking classes this summer at MU after returning from eight years in places such as Iraq, Kuwait and Haiti with the Marine Corps. "That's why the new GI Bill doesn't do much for me."

MORE LUCRATIVE?

Carol Fleisher, director of MU's veterans center, said staying on the old bill has turned out to be a better deal for the majority — but not all — of the school's 300 or so students currently using military benefits. It's the same with the more than 60 veterans who have enrolled at MU for the first time this fall, she said.

In the first year since Missouri put into place the tuition break for veterans, MU has reshuffled it budget to find $214,000 to pay for the state program, said Tim Rooney, the school's budget director.

Rooney said he was aware that the state law was leading many veterans to stay on the old GI Bill instead of letting the federal government reimburse the university in full under the new bill. He said he expected that the
university's lobbyists will explore the issue in coming months.

The tuition break for veterans in Illinois is even more charitable. Under the Illinois Veterans Grant, veterans get free tuition and fees at public universities and community colleges.

A recent analysis by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission estimated only 40 percent of eligible veterans will choose to use the benefits of the new GI bill. For the rest, students will get more money by pairing the state grant with the benefits of the old GI Bill.

Since Illinois has not fully funded the grant recently, more of the burden has shifted to universities. Southern Illinois University had to find $1.2 million from its budget for the grant last year. And school officials expect that to increase this year to $1.5 million as more veterans enroll and stay under the old GI Bill. SIUE had 564 students who used some kind of veteran benefits last semester.

State officials in Illinois, including the governor's office, are looking for ways to encourage more students to use the new bill to alleviate the burden on the state and its universities.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Under the new GI Bill, the federal government will pay up to the highest public in-state tuition level of each state if veterans attend a private university.

On top of that, most St. Louis-area private universities have signed onto the Yellow Ribbon portion of the bill, in which the government agrees to match any additional scholarships the school gives to make up the remaining balance. Most area schools have agreed to maximum matches, allowing veterans to attend those schools for free.

Brent Brugman, 27, used the old GI Bill to go to Lindenwood University in 2007-08. Even though the school also gave him a military scholarship, he still had to take out $10,000 in loans to cover tuition as well as his living expenses. The following year, the Marine Corps recalled him back involuntarily.
and stationed him for seven months in Fallujah, Iraq.

He's returning to Lindenwood this fall — but this time under the Yellow Ribbon program, so he does not have to worry about taking out loans. It's a deal that has caught the interest of many of his military buddies.

"Most of them were working dead-end jobs," Brugman said. "But now a lot of them are going back to school" under the new program.

St. Louis University has already had 22 veterans apply since it started accepting applications July 15 under the Yellow Ribbon program.

"It's a win-win for colleges and universities," said Boyd Bradshaw, SLU's vice provost for enrollment, of the Yellow Ribbon program. It's obviously a great deal for veterans. And he said the university, which has about 50 veterans in its student body, appreciates the added diversity.

The school will basically break even by offering the benefit, Bradshaw said.

While the admissions deadlines have already passed for the fall semester at Washington University, Bill Witbrodt, director of student financial aid, said he hopes more veterans will apply and enroll starting in January and next fall, adding to the school's 12 undergraduates and 28 graduate students using military benefits.

EXPANDING BENEFITS

The Department of Veterans Affairs expects 460,000 veterans to enroll in college in the fall, up from 354,000 last fall.

To handle the surge in benefit claims, the VA's regional office in downtown St. Louis has hired 150 employees in recent months, bringing its education staff to about 350. The office, which has spilled over into a second building, processes claims for 16 states in the central United States.

Marie George, the chief education liaison officer, said the staff has been working around the clock to process roughly 30,000 claims that have inundated
the office since May 1. She said she expects the volume to increase as people become more comfortable with the program.

"We knew there would be hesitation about accepting a new education program," she said.

Some universities have also been prepping to help acclimate the new crop of veterans about to descend on campuses. MU commissioned a task force last year to explore ways to make the school more veteran-friendly. One result: the veterans office, which opened in December.

The office has helped organize two veterans-only classes this upcoming year — one on adjusting to university life and a second on leadership.

Fleisher also started a support group for veterans on campus a couple years ago.

"Veterans kept coming into our office saying, 'Am I the only veteran on this campus?'" she said. "It occurred to me that it would be a good thing for them to get together because they are older, and they are sitting in classes with 18- and 19-year-olds."
Changes coming to GI Bill

Colleges expect more veterans.

By Janece Heavin

Monday, July 27, 2009

Advertisement

Local college administrators are hoping a new, more generous GI Bill will lead to an increase in veterans' enrollment.

Starting Saturday, military personnel on active duty after Sept. 10, 2001, will be eligible for the new benefits, which include tuition, housing expenses and a $1,000 stipend for books and supplies.

"We are expecting a spike" in veterans, said Tery Donelson, assistant vice president for enrollment management at Columbia College. Historically, he said, when a new GI Bill goes into effect, the number of veterans enrolling in college increases roughly 25 percent.

This year, the Department of Veterans Affairs expects to see a 30 percent increase, from 354,000 veterans enrolled in college in 2008 to 460,000 after the new bill takes effect.

About 250 veterans are enrolled at the University of Missouri, said Carol Fleisher, director of the MU Veterans Support Center, which opened in December. Fleisher isn't sure how the new bill will affect enrollment.

"We're keeping track to see if the uptick is going to happen," she said.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays up to the most expensive in-state tuition at a public college in a veteran's state. In Missouri, for instance, the maximum tuition is $269 per credit hour. Individuals who served at least 36 months of active duty after Sept. 10, 2001, are eligible for 100 percent of the benefits, and those who have served fewer than three years are entitled to a portion of the benefits, depending on the duration of the service.

The current GI bill reimburses veterans for about 70 percent of costs at public colleges and about 30 percent at private schools. The new bill will cover more costs and will pay the schools directly.
Veterans who qualify for 100 percent of the benefits also are eligible to take advantage of the Yellow Ribbon program at participating schools. MU and Columbia College signed up to participate in that program, which means the schools will contribute up to half of any tuition expenses that exceed the GI Bill benefits. The VA will pick up the other half of those costs.

"The bottom line is that a" qualifying "student is not going to have to pay any tuition or fees to go to Columbia College," Donelson said. "It's a good opportunity for veterans to go to school, and this new program makes it pretty much no cost."

Donelson believes Columbia College is in a better position to receive those veterans than other colleges or universities because the school gives credit for military training. Columbia College has about 8,300 veterans enrolled throughout its system of campuses, which includes facilities on 18 military bases.

"The reason we're military-friendly is because we look at the training and education and work experience a person got in the military and give credit for that," he said. "So a veteran may come in with 30 or 40 credit hours. They're closer to their degree and have a head start when they come here. Some universities don't give any credit for military experience or training."

Military training credit is not transferable to MU, but a task force is being formed to rethink that policy, Fleisher said.

"It's a complex issue," she said. "We're looking at peer universities and other research universities to see what they're doing."