

JC-TV, TBN's Youth Network, Marked First Anniversary in January

Trinity Broadcasting Network's (TBN) youth-focused channel JC-TV marked its first anniversary in January. Though JC-TV is available on only a handful of cable outlets—in Huntsville, Montgomery and Valley, Ala.; Panama City, Fla.; Augusta and Columbus, Ga.; Charleston, S.C.; Knoxville, Tenn.; and the campus of Old Mississippi University—leaders say it is available in 3 million U.S. households and worldwide through its live Internet stream.

The 24-hour channel includes much of the youth-oriented programming that aired on TBN on Saturday nights, including Eastman Curtis' This Generation and Real Videos. But the network also is chock-full of original shows such as the youth forum WWJD-TV, the extreme sports show Xtreme Life, the fashion and beauty show Mind, Body and Spirit, and more than 10 hours of Christian music videos each day.

The youth network was developed in late 2002 after TBN founder Paul Crouch had a dream in which teens were telling him they needed a media vehicle that would be relevant to their generation. TBN Vice President of Administration Paul Crouch Jr., who also oversees operations for JC-TV, said TBN invested \$1 million to create the infrastructure and solicited churches, youth ministries, and Christian colleges and universities for programming.

Crouch Jr. said JC-TV is not a commercial venture. "It costs

nothing for youth ministries to be on JC-TV," he told Charisma. "It's kind of a missions project of TBN. TBN is underwriting the whole enchilada right now."

Crouch said the network has been well-received, particularly in Costa Rica and Africa, where youth are watching over the Internet. "The penetration overseas has been faster than in the United States," Crouch said.

Though he hesitates to describe JC-TV as a Christian version of MTV, Mark McCallie, who works with Jan Crouch as JC-TV programming director, said the goal is to see the network rival MTV's production quality as it airs Christ-focused, entertainment-driven programs for youth.

Brandon Crouch, a 20-year-old JC-TV personality, said he has received "amazing" feedback about JC-TV. "I've had parents come up to me and practically fall at my feet saying: 'Thank you so much. Your network has saved my son or daughter's life. What can I do to get involved?'

"Time after time, even in Costa Rica when I was there, I had youth coming up to me saying: 'Thank you. Your God has changed my life.'"

"Kids are searching," his dad, Paul Crouch Jr., added. "I think a lot of kids stop on MTV because they think it's cool or kind of the in thing." He said hundreds of youth have posted messages on their Web site, , complimenting the programming."

"I think there was a pent-up demand for this kind of thing," McCallie noted. "It will have a higher level of entertainment

value than you might see on TBN.”

The JC-TV team has plans for further expansion, with new shows in the works, including an extreme-sports show that McCallie said will rival the quality of shows on ESPN.

Previous efforts to create a 24-hour Christian music channel failed. Z Music Television, owned by Nashville, Gaylord Entertainment Company, shut down its cable signal in June 2000 after five years in operation. Crouch said JC-TV isn’t dependent on viewers and distribution as Z Music was because the youth network is not commercial-driven.

He said TBN has the resources to “keep it going forever,” but they hope the network will one day be self-sustaining. “We’re serving the product. Now it’s up to the end-user to see if they can put enough pressure on the cable system to get it into their homes,” Crouch said. “I’d encourage youth ministries and universities to mobilize and say, ‘Put this on the cable systems.’”

Brandon Crouch believes God has blessed their ministry. “We have practically the world covered,” he said. “If it wasn’t for God, we wouldn’t be this far in the first place. If you look at the bigger picture, God has brought us this far.”

Adrienne S. Gaines