

**Connecticut Radio Information System, Inc.**

**FY 2011 Annual Report**

**September 28, 2011**

Dear Friends of CRIS:

Fiscal year 2011 marked an important year at Connecticut Radio Information System Inc. as it set the groundwork to expand and create a new, sustainable revenue model that ensures future generations of people who are blind, learning disabled or physically challenged will have access to the same printed information enjoyed by their family, friends and colleagues.

The CRIS Board of Directors adopted a long-term strategy to serve as a roadmap for its business plan, which diversifies revenue streams and adds new, sustainable fees-for-service that are consistent with the organization's mission. The strategic plan also focuses on several ways to improve service and increase audience levels.

As several radio-reading services in the nation closed their doors during the recession due to a lack of funding, the need to create a sustainable revenue model and expand the CRIS audience became even more evident. Cognizant of this need, a number of new initiatives were launched or implemented, including:

- Development of long-term strategy, sustainable business plan
- Distribution of Internet radios in nursing homes / assisted living facilities
- Development of on-demand subscription model
- Creation of CRIS signature event, Dining & Dancing In The Dark
- Launch of redesigned CRIS Web site
- Enrollment in Independent Charities of America, a federal, private and state employee giving program
- Improvement of media presence with increased press releases
- Implementation of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)
- Introduction of children's programming (beta-testing)
- Addition of new collaborations with businesses, media and nonprofits.

Despite the nation's slow recovery from the recession, CRIS ended the year with a surplus largely due to the retirement of its mortgage liability, thanks to the Connecticut State Bond Commission and the attraction of several new funders supporting the launch of children's programming. CRIS also is very thankful to the generosity of its many funders and the dedication of its nearly 400 volunteers, who provide on-air talent and administrative support, allowing CRIS to operate at its current level of service.

Respectfully,

Diane Weaver Dunne  
Executive Director

## **Mission**

The CRIS Radio mission is to provide high-quality electronic readings of news and information published in newspapers and magazines. We do much more than providing audio versions of published text. We offer our listeners independence and knowledge. We reduce their isolation. We create a lifeline to their communities, helping the print-handicapped stay connected to their towns, state and nation.

## **2011 Highlights**

### **Administrative**

CRIS operates its 24-hour, seven day broadcasts with two full-time and three part-time employees, a grants consultant, and a programming administrative assistant, whose services are contracted for. CRIS hired its first director of finance to improve upon and tighten financial controls. The new accounting initiatives included:

- Adopting Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)
- Implementing improved controls of restricted funds (fund accounting)
- Establishing indirect cost rate
- Developing children's program budget
- Determining functional allocations
- Enhancing internal control policies in conjunction with the newly adopted CRIS Radio Financial Policies and Procedures manual adopted by the board in 2011.

In other administrative highlights, the Board of Directors adopted revisions to the CRIS Employee Handbook and CRIS Radio Bylaws, which revised board officer positions and term limits.

### **Long-Term Planning**

A key accomplishment of 2011 is the board's development and adoption of a long-term, multi-pronged strategic plan with the focus on developing sustainable revenue streams and improving CRIS Radio's programming and service. Those goals include: adding new technologies to enhance broadcast service to listeners, developing new programming for children and Spanish speaking listeners, improving public awareness with the development of a signature event, and increasing outreach opportunities.

The long-term strategy was the basis for the development of a CRIS business plan, which included a timeline for implementation and potential

revenues associated with each new endeavor. The plan was adopted by the board at a regular board meeting.

The long-term strategic plan guided the CRIS executive director on the development of new fee-for-service programs and the CRIS Radio signature event, Dining & Dancing In The Dark, a multi-media outreach presentation, and CRIS color brochures to enhance outreach efforts.

Funders have been very receptive to CRIS Radio's long-term strategy and business plan with its focus on leveraging donations with a sustainable and diversified revenue model.

### **Technology Improvements**

CRIS Radio embarked on an ambitious plan to develop new technologies that would improve access to its programs. CRIS listeners-on-the-go can now hear CRIS broadcasts live streaming or on-demand from their smartphone, or downloaded onto a personal computer, tablet/iPad, or iPod/ MP3 player.

### **Operations**

Day-to-day operations continue to run smoothly. There were no major issues during the year at the regional satellite studios or in Windsor. Installation of new hardware and recording software in Windsor was completed early in FY 2011. Volunteers were individually trained on the new system and the learning curve was fairly quick for most. The new system is more user friendly and has the added benefit of greatly increasing the speed at which programs can be edited and loaded into the daily log schedule for broadcast, and then uploaded to the website for on-demand listening.

Volunteer involvement remains strong at all of our five studios. Personal, job, and health issues did result in a few volunteers leaving us, or adjusting their frequency of volunteering. Their positions have been filled either by new volunteers or by current volunteers who wanted to contribute more of their time and talent to CRIS.

## **Media Coverage**

CRIS was featured in a number of statewide media organizations, including the following

- WFSB Channel 3's Better Connecticut segment with Kara Sundlun
- WTIC 1080's "Living Well Connecticut" with Bill Pearse
- Clear Channel's My Community Access with Renee DeNino
- WSTC/WNLK Healthy Aging Show with Dennis Patouhas/  
Dawn DelGreco
- Winsted Cable Access TV
- Windsor Patch video coverage of the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual CRIS Radio Golf Classic
- Hartford Courant [iTowns Sunday paper and Java column]
- Hartford Business Journal
- The Prospect magazine
- Hartford Magazine

## **Fundraisers**

CRIS held three fundraisers in 2011: two golf tournaments and Dining & Dancing In The Dark, raising about \$23,000 in net profit. The three events generated media attention, helping CRIS raise money and awareness about our mission. All three events were emceed by WFSB Channel 3 meteorologist Scot Haney, who also promoted the CRIS events on-air, helping to generate additional attendees and donations.

CRIS is very thankful to Mr. Haney and to our event sponsors, including Dominion as title sponsor of both golf tournaments. Other sponsors and event donors of CRIS fundraising events include:

- Windsor Federal Savings
- William H. Austin
- FML CPAs
- Walmart
- The Computer Company
- Vision Dynamics
- A Closer Look
- Optelec
- The Rock 106.9 WCCC
- Kearns & Kearns
- Total Vision Eye Center
- United Illuminating
- Charlie Wynn
- Lions Clubs of Connecticut
- Paul Young
- Wayne & Sharon Mulligan

- ITN (North Central Connecticut)
- Jim Battaglio
- Art Stewart
- Carol Taylor
- Carter's Companion Care

### **Collaborations**

CRIS Radio established several new collaborations as well as renewed existing partnerships with various nonprofit, business, government and media organizations as a way to leverage its operations. New collaborations include:

- ESPN
- Cumulus Radio
- Everybody Wins CT!
- Aetna
- Hartford Business Journal
- WCCC
- Arthur Murray Dance Studios of New Britain
- Goodwill
- Ad Club of Connecticut

In addition, CRIS continued and in some cases, enhanced several ongoing collaborations. They include:

- BESB
- Connecticut Volunteer Services for the Blind and Handicapped
- Connecticut Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
- National Federation of the Blind
- Lions Clubs of Connecticut
- Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut
- University of New Haven
- Trumbull High School
- Connecticut Public Television
- Radio distribution partners: WDAQ-FM, WJMJ-FM, WPKN-FM, WHUS-FM, WNHU-FM and WCNI-FM.

### **Outreach**

CRIS participated in a number of outreach opportunities, providing presentations about our service to members of various businesses, civic groups, assisted living facilities, and at community expos. CRIS also provided

tours of our broadcast center in Windsor to potential volunteers and interested funders. Our outreach list is extensive, including:

- NBC Health & Wellness Fitness Fair
- Hartford Aetna Volunteer Council
- Senior Disabilities Expo, West Haven
- LEAP, Oakhill
- Veterans Administration, Low Vision Group, Rocky Hill
- Veterans Administration, Low Vision Group, West Haven
- Disabilities Expo, Hartford
- Red Robin, West Hartford and Enfield
- BESB, Tech Fair
- Aetna
- Seabury, Bloomfield
- The Retreat, Hartford
- Parkway Pavilion, Enfield
- Avery Heights, Hartford
- Duncaster, Bloomfield
- Saint Mary's, West Hartford
- Brookdale Place, West Hartford
- Crosby Commons, Shelton
- Jerome Home, New Britain
- Lord Chamberlain Nursing, Stratford

### **In-Kind Donations**

CRIS is grateful to the in-kind contributions provided by The Computer Company, which donated \$14,000 in professional services to advance our mission. The company donated \$7,500 towards a Web redesign, \$1,500 towards the development of a mobile design accessed by a smartphone, and \$5,000 towards the development of a subscription model for on-demand programming.

### **Volunteer Reception**

With nearly 400 volunteers contributing their time as on-air talent or providing administrative support, CRIS thanked them by hosting a reception at the Governor's Mansion in Hartford. During the event, long-serving volunteers achieving special anniversaries marked in five-year increments were recognized for their invaluable service.

### **State of Connecticut Support**

The state of Connecticut continues to be a major supporter of CRIS Radio. CRIS closed on a \$500,000 bond approved by the State Bond Commission, which retired CRIS Radio's mortgage on the construction of its new broadcast center in Windsor, completed in 2009. It also paid down the line of credit established to fund other capital needs associated with the new building,

including signage, technology upgrades and office furnishings. The balance of the bond funds are designated for technology improvements at the CRIS regional satellites.

In addition to the bond, the Connecticut Board of Education and Services for the Blind awarded a \$73,210 to CRIS.

### **Grants**

CRIS Radio is deeply thankful to all of its funders for helping enhance the lives of people with disabilities. Our grants consultant, who completed her first full year with CRIS in FY 2011, increased grant funding by 36.5 percent, to \$166,849 as compared with \$122,211 in FY 2010. Of the 37 foundations and businesses awarding grants to CRIS in FY 2011, nine were new (\*) funders that donated \$22,000 or about 13.2 percent of CRIS Radio's total grant revenue. The foundations donating to CRIS are listed below:

- Ahearn Family Foundation
- Alstom Power
- American Savings Foundation
- Andrews, Ray Fund
- AT&T Central
- AT&T CSF Headquarters
- Auerbach (Beatrice Fox) Fund
- Bank of America
- Bauer (Anthony) Foundation
- Bigelow
- Bissell (J. Walton) Foundation
- Blackford Memorial Fund
- Bristol-Meyers Squibb\*
- Community Foundation of Greater New Haven\*
- Connecticut Association of Realtors
- Connecticut Broadcasters Association
- Connecticut Community Foundation
- Connecticut State Medical Society
- Culpeper (Daphne Seybolt) Fund
- DeDominicus (Aldo) Foundation
- Dime Savings Bank Foundation
- Dominion
- Eastern Federal Bank Foundation
- Ebay
- Ensworth Charitable Trust
- Fund for Greater Hartford\*
- Goodrich Employee Fund\*
- Help for the Blind of Eastern Connecticut
- Lapedes (Ethel & Abe) Foundation\*
- Lego Children's Fund\*
- Martin Foundation
- Meserve Memorial Fund
- McDonald Family Trust
- McPhee Foundation
- Mortensen (William & Alice) Foundation

- New Alliance Bank
- Putnam Bank Foundation\*
- SBM Charitable Foundation
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- Union Savings Bank
- Valley Community Foundation\*
- Walmart Foundation, East Windsor\*
- White (Linford & Mildred) Trust\*
- Xerox

### **Children's Programming (Pilot)**

CRIS Radio introduced children's programming in partnership with Everybody Wins CT!, a nonprofit literacy group that provides in-school and after-school services. The pilot primarily focuses on award-winning children's magazines that feature science, technology, the environment, and math. CRIS is the only radio-reading service in the nation to provide extensive on-demand audio versions of children's magazines.

The magazines featured on CRIS Kids On-Demand aim to educate, inspire and inform children and teens with disabilities about the world around them, providing them with access to the same magazines and classroom weeklies their friends and classmates enjoy. Audio versions of children's magazines will make a difference for children and teens that are print-handicapped, providing them with independence with homework and timely access to news and current events.

Among the magazines featured on Kids On-Demand are:

- Ranger Rick
- Big Backyard
- Know
- Muse
- Yes Mag
- Imagine
- Click
- Current Science
- Science Spin
- Ask
- National Geographic Kids
- Weekly Reader
- DynaMath
- Sports Illustrated Kids
- SuperScience
- Science World
- Iquana (Spanish)

## **Lions Clubs**

CRIS Radio significantly benefits from its long-standing support from the Connecticut Lions Clubs. In 2011, the Lions Clubs donated \$36,182 to CRIS Radio, thanks in large part to the organization's dedication to low vision causes. The Lions Clubs promote CRIS Radio's broadcast service within the community, through local social service agencies and the Lions Low Vision Centers located at the Yale Eye Center in New Haven and in New Britain.

In tribute to the Lions Clubs of Connecticut, CRIS dedicated a wall at its Windsor broadcast center to recognize the organization's support by displaying the local clubs "flags" in matted frames.