WMPH radio returns bigger, better-equipped

Recording studio, TV part of new gig

By MIKE CHALMERS
The News Journal

WMPH, the student-run radio station at Mount Pleasant High School, is back on the air after a one-year hiatus, sporting new equipment, a new signal tower, a new manager and a new role in the school's curriculum.

The 42-year-old, 100-watt station has joined the school's television station and music-recording studio to become part of the Broadcast Engineering and Communications Program.

"We're starting slow," said station manager Paul Wishengrad, who spent 18 years at commercial station WJBR.

"I'm basically a DJ turning into a teacher," he said. "There's no high school radio curriculum for me to crib from."

Station manager Paul Wishengrad works in the studio of student-run radio station WMPH, which reopened after a yearlong renovation project.

The program will lead directly to careers for some students, but every student will learn writing, teamwork, computer skills and other topics, such as journalism and intellectual-property rights, said Alexis Andrianopoulos, spokeswoman for the Brandywine School District.

See WMPH, Page B3

WMPH: Courses impart broadcasting knowledge

Continued from Page B1

"There's a lot to it, other than just studying broadcasting," Andrianopoulos said. "It's another way to teach them skills they can apply elsewhere."

The station broadcasts in northern New Castle County at 91.7 FM and on the Internet at www.wmph.net. It began at the high school in 1969 and for most of its life has been an outlet for community members and students in the school broadcasting club.

It went off the air in June 2010 for a top-to-bottom renovation project and returned June 3, 2011.

Wishengrad had planned a community open house for October, but heavy snow caused him to postpone it. An open house Saturday, in conjunction with the school's final home football game, brought a handful of people to the studio, including a few graduates who had worked at the station in the 1970s.

Wishengrad -- who still works part-time as disc jockey Paul Lewis on country station WDSD -- has eight students this fall who are learning the basics of radio broadcasting. He'll later have two eight-student courses.

The station plays classic rock and pop music, as well as school announcements. The broadcasts are generally automated, but Wishengrad is slowly adding student-produced content.

He wants them to produce two to seven-minute features on people, events and topics that interest them and their listeners.

The station has equipment for digitizing music from cassette tapes and vinyl albums, though most of those come from Wishengrad's collection, not the students. There's a small newsroom where students can report and write stories for broadcast. Production rooms allow students to record and edit announcements, station breaks and other segments.

Wishengrad said students will rotate among the jobs.

"By exposing all the kids to the different disciplines in radio, some will rise to the top," he said.

Later this school year, Wishengrad hopes to start a radio club that would be open to students from the district's other high schools, Brandywine and Concord.

Contact Mike Chalmers at 324-2790 or mchalmers@delawareonline.com.