

Exchanging Ideas. Exploring Issues.

A Community Service
of St. Mary's Church,
at St. Mary's Place

Thursday,
January 22, 2004
7:00 – 8:30 PM

There is no charge for this program.

Co-sponsored by:
Greater Rochester
Community of Churches
The Interfaith Alliance
of Rochester

The Dugan Center
15 St. Mary's Place
Rochester, NY 14607-1798
(585) 232-7168
www.dcfrochester.org

Parking: There is free parking in
front of St. Mary's Church and in the
Blue Cross/Blue Shield garage.



Since 1985, the Downtown Community Forum (DCF) has offered an open exchange of ideas along with opportunities to explore important issues in gathering that are ecumenical, nonpartisan, democratic and value-centered. DCF encourages a better-informed citizenry by showcasing the diversity of the Rochester community. Support for these programs comes from the people of St. Mary's Church as well as individuals, corporations and the Rochester Area Community Foundation.



Free Speech and Ethics in Broadcasting

Panelists:

Dr. Darryl Trimiew, Dean of the Program of Black Church Studies, John Price Crozer Professor of Christian Social Ethics and Director of the Program of Education and Action for Responsible Leadership (PEARL), Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

Norm Silverstein, President and CEO, WXXI Public Broadcasting Council

Sharon Stiller, Esq., Partner, Underberg & Kessler LLP

Steve Hausmann, News Director, Entercom Rochester and Local Broadcast Media Personality, WBEE Radio

Freedom of speech is a constitutional right of every American — a right that is often abused in today's world of 24/7 broadcast media. We expect networks to act responsibly in their reporting, but there is a fine line between what is acceptable and what is not.

With modern talk radio, which thrives on controversy, becoming more popular, the issue of protecting freedom of speech while maintaining ethics in broadcasting is more important than ever.

Media networks are motivated to act responsibly because they have to consider whether show content will offend their audience and ultimately, how their sponsors will react to any scrutiny that arises. When on-air personalities offend their audiences, the public outrage that follows forces media networks to take action — or suffer the consequences of poor ratings, cancelled sponsorships, etc. A network's response to the outcry might be anything from a public apology to the firing of the offending on-air talent.

While these types of actions may temporarily eliminate the problem, many feel they are not long-term solutions.

Often, networks fail to set clear guidelines and ethics standards and the popular talk-show hosts are given free reign — as long as the public keeps listening and buying sponsors' products.

Should networks be held more accountable for the content of their shows and if so, who decides when freedom of speech has been abused? And, how do we use our power as listeners to force change when we think it's needed?

Join us as we discuss the competing understandings of free speech and ethics in broadcasting. **Dr. Trimiew** will provide an ethical perspective on how the fundamental value of free speech must be morally exercised. **Norm Silverstein** will present a media perspective and the challenges he faces in balancing free speech for WXXI broadcasters while maintaining ethics at the station. **Sharon Stiller** will talk about the law surrounding the first amendment, including New York State's lawful activities bill and when you can be sued for what you say. **Steve Hausmann** will offer a first hand perspective from his experiences as an on-air personality.