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“Wild About Animals” and “Awesome Adventures”

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Steve Rotfeld produced 65 episodes of ESPN’s Lighter Side of Sports, which is when things began to take off. Perhaps the best indication: He and his team were forced to move out of his house after a neighbor complained. “We had grown from one car [in the driveway] to four or five,” he jokes. **Steve Rotfeld Productions, which celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year**, is now a well-respected independent production company. It has branched out from sports to children’s and family-friendly programs such as *Wild About Animals* and *Awesome Adventures*, both of which currently air on FOX Owned-and-Operated stations. Rotfeld began developing kids programming in the mid-’90s, when stations received a mandate to carry three hours of educational shows a week. “The only business that was left to a niche player was this weekend morning [slot] children’s FCC-friendly programming,” he says. Thus, Wild About Animals, hosted by Mariette Hartley, was born. Sixteen years later the show endures, with Animal Planet picking it up for a three-year run. Away from the cameras, Rotfeld is an avid tennis player and golfer (he is better at the former than the latter), and began playing the guitar 10 years ago after watching Eric Clapton’s legendary performance on MTV Unplugged .
