



# wisconsin broadcaster

## Making a Difference This Holiday

A \$263K radiothon, \$152K raised for a food drive, 20K toys collected and other impressive numbers from local station initiatives



*More stations making a difference, stories and photos on pages 10-11>*

**Deadline Reminder!**  
Get your  
WBA Awards  
submissions in by  
**Jan. 10**

### CHAIR'S COLUMN

## Thoughtful Innovation

AI is great, but don't forget to keep the human touch in broadcasting

As the year comes to a close, I am filled with excitement and gratitude. I am excited to see where the future of the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association is headed with our updated image and dedication to ushering in a younger generation of broadcasters. I am also grateful to be able to step into this role again as the chair and to all the helping hands over this past year, as I took a leave of absence for my family. Thank you for your compassion and support.



**By Lupita Montoto**  
WBA Chair

The end of the year brings thoughts of the new year and new goals. When I think about what is ahead for 2024, I see technology continuing to grow and impacting our lives, especially artificial intelligence (AI). AI is a great tool to help us do our jobs. It can help find the right

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### PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

## Broadcasters making themselves heard from Lambeau to the Capitol

We hope you've had a relaxing holiday season, because your WBA is off to a running start in 2024!

You've no doubt already heard a lot about our Student Forum at Lambeau Field on Feb. 24.

We're hearing from schools in all corners of the state planning to send students to learn about careers in broadcasting at Wisconsin's monument to NFL football. We're excited to be in this new venue and from the reaction we're getting from students, faculty, and our members, it sounds



**By Michelle Vetterkind, CAE**  
WBA President and CEO

like you're excited too!

Thank you to the many stations participating in the event. If you're not signed up to be at the job fair or in speed networking, please consider it. It's a great way to connect with aspiring broadcasters, and we'll send you a letter for your public file for participating.

You can read more about this on page 9.

I'm pleased to report that you, our valued members, are coming out to be a part of State Legislative Day at the State Capitol on Jan. 24. Right now, we have at least one broadcaster visiting every lawmaker in the Capitol, but we have room for more! If

*Continued on page 2>*

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Continued from page 1

you've never done it before, this would be a good year to tag along and experience these important legislative calls. We'll team you up with a fellow broadcaster who knows the ropes, and perhaps next year you'll come and make some calls of your own! It's a terrific leadership opportunity.

Interested? Just contact Kyle at [kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org](mailto:kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org).

Your WBA has already been busy at the State Capitol and recently met with Rep. Todd Novak to talk about open government with our partners from the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council. Thank you for meeting with us!



L-R: Michelle Vetterkind, Beth Bennett, Rep. Todd Novak, Bill Lueders, Kyle Geissler, and Christa Westerberg pictured in Rep. Novak's office.

And we're also already making plans for our WBA Summer Conference June 19-20 at the beautiful Hotel Retlaw in Fond du Lac. If you've never been to Fond du Lac, or haven't been there in a few years, you'll be in for a treat. Hotel Retlaw is in the heart of downtown Fond du Lac and surrounded by amazing food, drink, and retail.

Our friends at Destination Lake Winnebago Region, Hotel Retlaw, and Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts are going the extra mile to make this an extra special event. As you may know, this is a new venue for the Summer Conference and one we hope you will enjoy!

Your WBA Conference Committee will soon finalize the agenda, so watch for that to be released sometime soon. There's a lot in store for you. Please plan to be there.

Take one last moment to take a deep breath at the end of 2023, and make yourself ready for a wonderful 2024! As we say at your WBA, "It's never boring!" ■

## CHAIR'S COLUMN

Continued from page 1

words, after you have written a radio script for the third time, or it can even edit a video as a deadline approaches. It does save time and can make the parts of our jobs we struggle with easier. However, I also see a risk in the use of AI. Again, it is a great tool, but it is exactly that. A tool to help do our jobs. It can become easy to use AI for even more parts of our job and soon, we might lose our personal touch on our media and it can contribute to unemployment.

It is these personal touches that connect us with the community we serve. AI does not remember when there was a restaurant across the street where an apartment complex now stands. AI never interviewed the elderly couple that had managed the restaurant for more than 30 years and how they always offered a free cup of coffee for those in need.

I agree that AI is here to stay,

and we have to take advantage of it. Another good example is automation or data analytics. These are great uses for broadcasters, but at the same time it is important to remember that being a part of the community is still critical. AI is unable to be present in the com-

**AI cannot replace your voice. Your voice is part of what makes you, you! ... Our voices make the difference.**

munity, physically and emotionally. These are the traits that make us human and able to make a human connection. It is these that make a difference on who people tune into to listen or watch. Let's keep a balance and understand that AI is there to assist you, but don't use it as a replacement for a human.

AI cannot replace your voice. Your voice is part of what makes you, you! As we move forward, using tools to help us do our job are always welcomed. However, we have to make sure we stay a part of the community and use our voices. Our voices make the difference.

Our voices are what bring the human perspective to our days and bring the interest and personal touch.

As we welcome in the new year, let us set strong goals, and be bigger parts of our community. We have the privilege of serving a diverse community where we call

home. So as you welcome the new year, celebrate your success, set new goals, and embrace the tools and technologies that can help you achieve your goals.

I too look forward with anticipation and excitement to 2024 and wish you all the best wishes for the holiday season.



## Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Officers & Board of Directors

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### WBA Team

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Vice President

**Kyle Geissler, CAE**

[kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org](mailto:kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org)

WBA Board minutes are always available for members. Please email Kyle Geissler at [kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org](mailto:kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org) to request a copy.

### WBA Diversity Statement

The WBA supports initiatives that improve diversity in broadcasting and creates new opportunities for women, people of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other underrepresented communities. Our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is evident in our programs and partnerships with diverse leaders through the WBA's Diversity Committee as well as other organizations and leaders in the state of Wisconsin.

# Your Feedback Makes the WBA Awards Program Better

Hello and Happy New Year to all of you who work in this great industry. I hope your 2024 is off to an awesome start.

And now that we've turned the corner on a new year it's my duty to start reminding you to keep your calendar open and make plans to attend the much anticipated, never duplicated, and always fun, Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Awards Gala. As usual, it's coming up the first Saturday in May (May 4) and will be held in the friendly confines of the Madison Marriott West.

For me, the time after submitting entries and waiting to be notified which ones have made the finalist list, can be both a slow moving and drama building couple of months. But it doesn't have to be a total down time waiting game.

I'm sure you and/or your staff have already been busy doing outstanding work in 2024 and it's not too early to start putting pieces away in your awards file that very well might be the winners in one category or another in 2025. I've been on both sides of that challenge. Some years I've been well organized when it comes to collecting entries from our news department and kept up on the monthly files. Yes, it made the entry deadline during the already busy holiday season much less stressful.

But I've also fallen into the rut of 'out of sight, out of mind' where the months have piled up with no dedicated organization and I find myself scrambling in December to put things together. Not a fun experience. I've heard people's horror stories of the heartburn it has caused them, to say nothing of the risk you run in letting some potentially award-winning work fall between the cracks because they were done in January, February, March, and you weren't keeping them aside in your awards file.

I would be the last person to tell you how to run your newsroom or make your programming decisions...but, if you already haven't, you won't regret starting today when it comes to putting that 2024 file together.



**By Robert Kennedy**  
WBA Awards Committee Co-chair

The last point I want to make today is the mission of your WBA Awards Committee. Yes, with the invaluable assistance of the multi-talented WBA staff, planning and carrying out a successful awards gala is the ultimate goal of this group. And we meet soon after each one to talk about what went right and what went wrong, and then act accordingly.

But another way to grow things like participation and make changes to the categories that we can enter and bring them up to date is to hear from you. Our industry is full of imaginative and forward-thinking people who might have ideas worth exploring that can help make the awards program better. We need to hear about them. I think I speak for the rest of my colleagues on the Awards Committee when I say if you have an idea, concern, or observation to share, do not hesitate in reaching out. We can only get better if you're involved.

Thank you for the privilege of your time,  
Robert Kennedy  
Co-chair, WBA Awards Committee



## SAVE THE DATES

**Jan. 10: WBA Awards Submission Deadline**

**May 4: WBA Awards Gala in Middleton**

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# 2023: The Year of the Rocket Ship or the Tortoise?

As we come to the end of another interesting, yet challenging year for broadcasters, we are constantly asked to try to put things in perspective. Unlike many years, 2023 had two main themes. One was like a rocket ship, potentially rapidly upending a lot of the ways we do business. The other was like a tortoise – slowly and steadily marching along, with progress barely noticeable.



By Paul Jacobs

At the beginning of 2023, AI, or artificial intelligence, was noise in the background. When we attended the Consumer Electronics Show in January, people were talking about it, but it was more in theory than actual practice.

By February, ChatGPT hit the market and we were off to the races. All of a sudden, there was technology that was going to make our lives easier, escalate the quality of our work, take over jobs normal humans do, and – shades of “The Terminator” – end life as we know it.

By March, Futuri announced the release of Radio GPT (now AudioAI) – AI that can replace live DJ’s. And the media world exploded. At a time when many are looking to cut costs, here was technology that could make that move easy. Our phones blew up – some people were intrigued and energized; others were repelled. Some broadcasters experimented with the technology, and the trades were full of stories about the promise, the ethics, and the efficacy of using this technology to replace humans.

Not surprisingly, there was an uproar, and while that was happening, others began to take a more serious look at AI and how it can actually help and uplift broadcasters. Once the smoke cleared, it was apparent AI could actually help on the sales side – writing copy, creating audio spec spots, creating lead generation models,

managing email databases, and more. As an AI expert said at a conference I attended in May (yes, within months there were “AI Experts”), AI will replace the 30 percent of people’s jobs they don’t like, freeing them up to be more creative and interactive. That resonated with me.

We don’t know where AI is going, and we are heading to CES in a week to check in on its progress, but the lesson learned is grabbing onto a rocket ship too quickly isn’t always a smart practice. Or as legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden famously said, “Be quick, but don’t hurry.”

Which brings us to the other side of the media world – the tortoise. Or, the slow, inexorable shift away from consuming broadcast media terrestrially to digital platforms, and the dollars that have followed.

This shift is like climate change – if it’s happening, you can’t actually tell because the change is so slow and incremental.

P1 Station Listening Platform Trend: Traditional vs. Digital



In our annual Techsurveys, we’ve been tracking this change in radio listening for a decade, and the pattern is clear:

While digital consumption isn’t going to overtake terrestrial any time soon, you don’t have to live in the north to see where the puck is going. Consumer behavior is changing whether we like it or not.

And the dollars have fol-

lowed. In markets large and small, advertising agencies and small business owners are asking about digital solutions, even if they aren’t particularly well-versed in how to buy it.

The good news is that many broadcasters have begun to pivot, streaming their content online, in mobile apps, smart speakers, and even on smart TV’s (another trend to look for in 2024). Even better, they are creating content for people outside of their listening or viewing audience, not only expanding their reach and relevance, but creating new revenue streams at the same time.

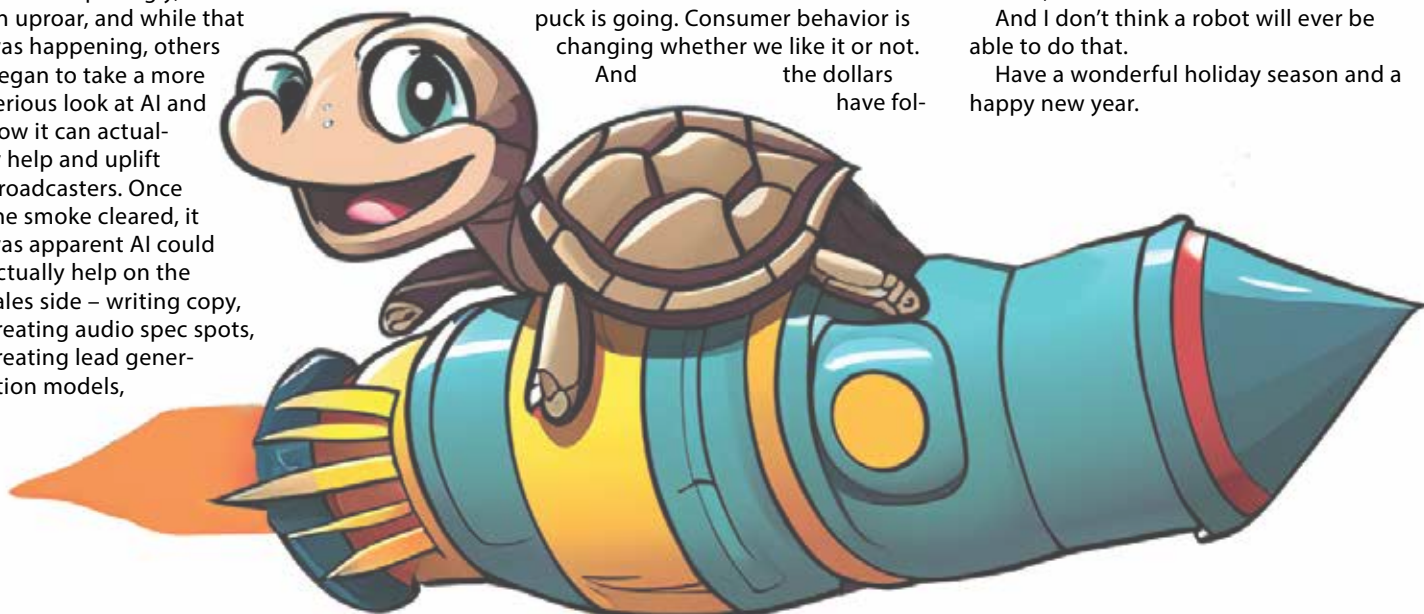
In Wisconsin, a shout-out is due to Midwest Family’s station in Eau Claire with their “Around The 715” events guide and directory (full disclosure: our mobile app company, jacapps, developed this with them). It’s a great example of how a local broadcaster can serve their community in unique ways while growing their business.

Like green shoots, we are seeing efforts like this across the country in cities large and small. Broadcasters are studying their markets, identifying holes they can fill, and then slowly building these new initiatives. This is the future for broadcasters.

So, as we enter 2024, my advice is don’t get all tied up with jumping into the next big thing – the rocket ship. But don’t ignore the important shifts taking place. We believe broadcasters are poised to grow their businesses by investing smartly in steadily in products and services that are focused on what we do best – serving our communities with quality content, information, and entertainment.

And I don’t think a robot will ever be able to do that.

Have a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year.



## THIRD THURSDAY WEBINARS FOR 2024

JAN. 18

Media Habits of Streamers

FEB. 15

AI's Role, Impact and Future on Local Broad-  
casting: A Conversation with the NAB

MARCH 21

All Things ABIP: A Deep Dive into the Alterna-  
tive Broadcast Inspection program

APRIL 18

Breakthrough Sales: Practical Tips for Creating  
a Successful Sales Culture in Your Operation

MAY 16

Election Coverage Down the Backstretch:  
Get Off the Track

JUNE 20

Understanding More About Your  
Listeners in the Connected Car!

SEPT. 19

Seek To Resonate, Not Just To Be Seen:  
Social Media + Video in 2024

OCT 17

Psychological Safety in the Workplace

NOV. 21

The Election is Over – What It Means for  
Broadcasters for 2025 and Beyond

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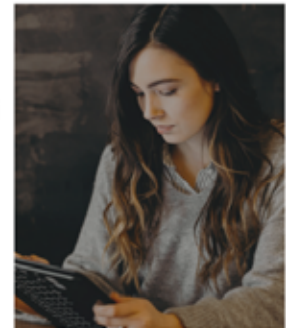
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# Meekins to retire from TMJ4 News



Meekins

Carole Meekins retired from TMJ4 (WTMJ-TV) on Nov. 30 after 32 years at the station and more than 40 years in television.

Meekins is an award-winning journalist and the most veteran anchor in the Milwaukee market. She is well known for the station's Positively Milwaukee franchise and helped launch the annual Positively Milwaukee Awards and the weekly Positively Milwaukee show on TMJ4.

"It's time to focus on more than work. I want to spend more time with my family," said Meekins. "I look forward to still contributing to the Milwaukee area – but I will focus on other passions including music, teaching, and writing."

Meekins received an Emmy at the Chicago/Midwest Emmy ceremonies in 2020. Her Positively Milwaukee specials have won three first place awards from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association as well as recognition from the Milwaukee Press Club. Meekins was inducted into the Wisconsin Silver Circle by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in 2014. She is a member of the Milwaukee Press Club Hall of Fame and received an Award of Excellence

from the Wisconsin Black Media Association. She was also inducted into the Mascoutah High School Hall of Fame, the Illinois school where she graduated.

Meekins has also received numerous awards for her community service. Some of her other honors include a Sisters of Mercy Spirit award by St. Catherine Residence; a

**"I look forward to still contributing to the Milwaukee area — but I will focus on other passions including music, teaching, and writing," says Carole Meekins.**

Living Legend award by the founders of the Milwaukee Black Inventors Gallery; a Women on the Move award by the Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc; a Leadership Award by the Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast; a Media Award of Excellence from the St. Vincent de Paul Society; a Milwaukee Community Journal Lifetime Service Award; and a Milwaukee Streets of Peace Award. Meekins also received a leadership award from Delta Chapter, Delta

Kappa Gamma, a sorority for educators.

Meekins was selected to carry the Olympic torch in conjunction with NBC's coverage of the 2000 Olympics during her tenure at TMJ4. She has served as honorary chairwoman of the AIDS Walk Wisconsin and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Race for the Cure and has helped raise money to fight childhood cancer for the Midwest Athletes Against Childhood Cancer (MAACC) Fund.

Her first television job was as co-host of "God's Musical World" on KTVI-TV in St. Louis – a fitting entry into the television world for Meekins, a former music teacher. Her first television news job was at KPLR-TV in St. Louis. She also worked at WAKA-TV (CBS) in Montgomery, Alabama, WRIC-TV (NBC) in Richmond, Virginia and WEWS-TV (ABC) in Cleveland, Ohio. Throughout her career, Meekins has conducted several memorable interviews. They include President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Oprah Winfrey.

"The Milwaukee area is better and richer for Carole's years of dedication, loyalty, and hard work to uplift others. We will miss her presence and her contribution in the newsroom," said TMJ4 News Director Tim Vetscher. "We wish Carole all the best on her next chapter and thank her for all she has done for TMJ4 and for our community."

## Ryan Scott named station manager at WGBA-TV



Scott

Ryan Scott has been tapped to help lead WGBA-TV in Green Bay as station manager.

Scott launched his career in local TV broadcasting in 1999 at WTMJ-TV, Scripps' NBC affiliate in Milwaukee.

There he led news content operations and production in various ascending roles.

He has been the news director at WGBA-TV since December 2021. In that time, he implemented a content strategy dedicated to neighborhoods throughout the market. As station manager, he will help with day-to-day operations and lead news operations. Joe Poss will continue to oversee WGBA-TV in his role as regional vice president.

"Ryan is a recognized leader with a keen understanding of WGBA and the

northeast Wisconsin community it serves," said Dean Littleton, senior vice president of local media for Scripps. "That hyperlocal expertise, combined with his commitment to the value of local news, makes him a great fit to continue leading the station in this new role."

Scott graduated from UW-Madison and has called Wisconsin home for his entire professional career. Originally from Greater Milwaukee, he said the opportunity to serve his home state has been incredibly rewarding.

"Wisconsin is my home," Scott said. "I went to school here, launched my career, started a family and, most recently, I've gotten to know the people and places that make northeast Wisconsin so special. I've helped cover some of the biggest news stories in the state for more than two decades. I'm committed to making sure the NBC 26 team continues to serve its viewers and advertisers in the best way possible."

## Wexler to temporarily lead Illinois group during leadership change



Wexler

Good Karma Brands Leadership Coach and former GM Steve Wexler will serve as interim leader of an Illinois media group during a change in leadership at the company.

Neuhoff Media President and CEO, Mike Hulvey, is leaving the company next spring, taking on a new role leading RAB, the trade association representing America's broadcast radio industry.

Wexler will begin his role in January.

Hulvey will be succeeding Erica Farber as President and CEO of the RAB, who recently announced she will be stepping away in April 2024.

"I am thrilled for Mike and am honored to serve as interim CEO for this legendary company and look forward to working with the talented, committed team at Neuhoff during this transition," said Steve Wexler.

Neuhoff Media owns and operates 24 licensed radio stations in six communities across Illinois and Indiana. Neuhoff also operates a digital services business along with the daily publication of local content on owned and operated websites and social media channels.

## Names in the News



Zollar

FOX 11 (WLUK-TV) and CW 14 General Manager **Jay Zollar** is marking a milestone anniversary. As of Dec. 8, Zollar marked 25 years at the stations.



Israr

WKBT-TV reporter **Duaa Israr** has moved from La Crosse to Milwaukee. She's taken a job as a journalist at CBS58 (WDJT-TV). Israr made the announcement on Nov. 9.



Day

**Otis Day** is back on radio in northeast Wisconsin as a weekday morning host on 95.9 KISS FM (WKSZ-FM) in Green Bay. Day had been working outside of radio since March of 2022. He started at the station on Dec. 18.



Moore

Meteorologist **Tyler Moore**, a native of Brookfield, is joining WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee. He will join Storm Team 4 and will be part of the TMJ4 News Today team, weekday mornings from 5-7 a.m. Moore started his meteorology career at WJFW-TV in Rhinelander before working in Fayetteville and, most recently, WTSP in Tampa Bay. As a Wisconsin native, Tyler said he is excited to return to his hometown with his fiancée. He started at the station Dec. 4.



Hopman

**Cameron Hopman** is joining 27 News (WKOW-TV) as the station's chief meteorologist. Hopman's debut appearance will be on Jan. 8. Hopman comes to WKOW with more than 15 years of forecasting experience. He was the chief meteorologist at WEVV in Evansville, Indiana for the past five years. Prior to that, Hopman forecasted the weather for WLFJ in West Lafayette, Indiana, including as chief meteorologist for three years. Hopman is originally from the Chicagoland area and was raised in Tinley Park, Illinois. He holds a degree from Eastern Illinois University and has his National Weather Association Broadcaster's Seal of Approval.



Carson

Midwest Communications has named **Chris Carson** host of the WIXX morning show in Green Bay. Carson is an 18-year radio veteran who was born and raised in northwest Wisconsin. His most recent radio positions were at 101.9 WDEZ in Wausau and 99.5 Nash FM (WPKR) in Oshkosh. Carson will be taking over for Murphy in the Morning, who concluded in his 32-year run on Nov. 28th. Long time Murphy show co-hosts Katie Schurk and Nick Vitrano have decided to leave the show as well. The station is seeking a co-host to join Carson.



Gutiérrez

**Diana Gutiérrez** is the new co-anchor of "WISN 12 News at 10:00 p.m.," effective Nov. 20. On weeknights, she is now working alongside co-anchor Patrick Paolantonio, meteorologist Mark Baden, and Sports Director Dario Melendez. Gutiérrez is also serving in an enhanced reporting role on "WISN 12 News at 6:00 p.m." Since January 2021, Gutiérrez has served as co-anchor of "WISN 12 News This Morning," as well as the anchor of "WISN 12 News at 11:00 a.m.," on weekdays. The move for Gutiérrez follows the September decision by Joyce Garbaciak - the previous co-anchor of the 10:00 p.m. weekday newscast - to co-anchor "WISN 12 News at 6:00 p.m." exclusively.

## WISC-TV's Gary Cannalte to retire after 33 years



Cannalte

WISC-TV Chief Meteorologist Gary Cannalte will retire at the end of February after 33 years at the station.

Cannalte has been with the Madison station since 1990. He was previously a meteorologist at WJFW-TV in Rhinelander for two years.

Just over two months after he joined WISC-TV, the most significant winter storm in Madison's history dumped 17 inches of snow. Shortly thereafter he teamed up with news anchor Joe Champ to start Madison's first weekday morning newscast.

Cannalte said he intends to spend more time with his loved ones and at Wrigley Field cheering on his beloved Chicago Cubs.

# WUWM producer dies after traffic crash



Heikenen-Weiss

WUWM radio producer Eilee Heikenen-Weiss died Oct. 31 after being a passenger in a car involved in an Oct. 29 traffic crash in Verona.

Heikenen-Weiss was a producer for the Milwaukee radio station's Lake Effect program.

She was 39.

Heikenen-Weiss began her career in public radio at WBEZ in Chicago as an intern in 2007 on their Eight Forty-Eight magazine show. Over the next seven years, she advanced in producing roles on Eight Forty-Eight, Morning Shift, and Afternoon Shift before becoming the director and producer on Worldview, WBEZ's international affairs show.

After WBEZ, Heikenen-Weiss took a nearly 10-year break from public radio. During this time, she led adventure trips and experiences for Backroads, an active travel company, becoming their Peru expert. She also spent time traveling throughout the United States.

In the summer of 2023, she briefly worked as a staff reporter for Adams

Publishing Group in Sun Prairie before being hired as a producer on Lake Effect.

Eilee started at WUWM in October and quickly began to make a mark on her Lake Effect team and the WUWM staff. She said being a producer on Lake Effect was a dream job because it was an opportunity for her to get back to public radio and audio storytelling, two things that she learned in her time away that she greatly missed and loved.

Heikenen-Weiss quickly threw herself into the job and the Lake Effect team. She started a list of more than 20 story ideas, joined a committee, and began establishing roots in Milwaukee.

An obituary from WUWM said, "Eilee represented and lived the best qualities of all of us at WUWM. She was intensely curious, generous of spirit, full of care for her community, and so vibrant and full of life. She was most interested in telling the stories that helped our friends and neighbors get to know each other and our region better. Eilee was one of us."

Her family is asking that any gifts or donations be made to a public radio station or to a local animal shelter in her honor.

## Bjorson to lead Audacy stations



Bjorson

Jason Bjorson has been named Senior Vice President and Market Manager of Audacy's Milwaukee market. In this role, Bjorson will oversee the market's portfolio of stations, which includes 99.1 The Mix (WMYX-FM), 1250 AM The Fan (WSSP-AM), 103.7 KISS FM (WXSS-FM), Hot 105.7 (WXSS-HD2) and CHANNEL Q (WXSS-HD3).

"I am excited to welcome Jason to lead our Milwaukee cluster," said Rachel Williamson, Regional President, Audacy. "His experience across radio, video and digital combined with his deep knowledge and relationships throughout the Milwaukee market brings an increased expertise to our cluster and clients."

"I'm thrilled to join the Audacy Milwaukee team, with some of Milwaukee's

most iconic brands and an innovative broadcaster," said Bjorson. "I've competed with this team and tried to recruit them for years, so I know how much talent is here. I'm looking forward to working with them to win big here in Milwaukee!"

Bjorson is a media veteran with over two decades of experience in the industry. His career in radio includes time at Cox Radio in Jacksonville, Florida, and Journal Broadcast Group in Knoxville, Tennessee, where he rose from the role of account executive to lead the company's flagship station, WTMJ-AM in Milwaukee and the Green Bay Packers and Milwaukee Brewers radio networks.

He joins Audacy after leading a new business sales team for an HR Tech company in the SAAS space and overseeing advertising sales teams for Spectrum Cable.



# WISCONSIN BROADCASTERS STUDENT FORUM AT LAMBEAU FIELD

Educational Sessions | Career Fair | Networking

## HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Interview  
Celebrities

Read from a  
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Make the call in a  
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Packers Radio Network Broadcasters  
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**Wayne Larrivee**  
**Larry McCarren**



Scan to learn more and register!

## Student Award Presentations

## Speed Networking with our Broadcast Professionals



**Saturday, February 24th**  
Registration Opens at 8 a.m.

# Milwaukee Station's Food Drive Raises \$152K

Milwaukee TV station WISN 12 (WISN-TV) partnered with Hunger Task Force on the 12th annual Food For Families Food Drive. The 2023 campaign raised \$152,207 to provide healthy meals for local families over the holidays. This equates to more than 10,000 turkeys, or 1,200 holiday meal boxes, for those in need. WISN 12 viewers, bolstered by both corporate and individual matching funds, made generous donations online and through a multi-day phone bank.

"For more than a decade, people have come out in droves to support those in need in our community. It's awe-inspiring to witness each year," said Jan Wade, president and general manager of WISN 12. "We're so proud of this initiative with Hunger Task Force and grateful for the viewers and companies who are making sure families don't go hungry."

The drive was held Nov. 21-22. During each day, viewers submitted donations online and called in to the WISN 12 phone bank from 6 a.m. – 9 a.m. and from 3 p.m. – 7 p.m. to support the campaign.

The donations were amplified by corporate matching funds from both Zurn Elkay Water Solutions and SVA Certified Public Accountants. In



addition, two anonymous donors also each matched donations up to \$10,000.

"I want to share our deep gratitude to everyone who contributed this year," Wade said. "You're putting

much needed food on families' tables, which otherwise may have been empty. What an incredible way to show the giving spirit of the season!"

Since its launch in 2012, the Food For Families Food Drive has raised \$1,765,583.



## Radio group in Janesville raises \$41K for charity

The stations of Big Radio in Janesville raised \$41,000 in toys, food, and cash donations for two local charities.

The stations held an online auction on Dec. 1 and an all-day "Kids Helping Kids" donation drive-thru event on Dec. 8.

The donations were split between

E.C.H.O. and the Salvation Army of Rock County.

The Big Radio stations in Janesville include WBEL 92.3 and 98.9, The Beat (1380AM), WCLO 1230 AM and 92.7 FM, WGEZ 101.9 FM and 1490 AM, 99.9 WJVL, and 105.9 The Hog (WWHG).

## WBAY-TV Helps Gather Toys For Tots



Green Bay TV station WBAY-TV recently gathered thousands of toys through a holiday partnership that's existed since 1988.

The station works with the Marines on a Toys for Tots campaign. The station called this year's campaign an incredible success.

The number of toys collected required about 20 man-hours to remove them from the station. Distribution is handled through The Salvation Army of Greater Green Bay, which says about 2,400 families are signed up to receive toys this year in Brown County.

## 20K Toys Collected with Help From Madison Station



Madison TV station WKOW-TV collected more than 20,000 toys to help for more than 8,000 children in the community through an annual toy drive.

WKOW has partnered with the Marine Corps Reserve and Toys for Tots for more than 30 years. Every year the station helps collect toys for children in the Madison area to help make the holidays a little brighter for families in need.

This year was the third year of an additional partnership with United Way of Dane County which assists in determining which families are most in need. They implemented a new toy distribution process that ensures the project is achieving its greatest potential to help others.



## Radio Group Helps Hundreds of Central Wisconsin Children

A group of radio stations in the Wausau-Stevens Point area is serving more than 650 disadvantaged children through "Christmas is for Children."

Muzzy Broadcasting Group is in its 35th year of the program, which aims to help children have a special Christmas. Working in conjunction with community agencies, local groups, and hundreds of volunteers, children's names were gathered, extensive lists were compiled, and gifts were purchased and distributed in time for Christmas morning.

Different from some toy drives, the local Christmas is for Children program focuses on providing specific gifts that children request, which often include living necessities. On an average year, a cumulative total of donated time for the program exceeds more than 1,000 hours.

All contributions stay local and go directly for gifts for children.

Muzzy Broadcasting Group, LLC owns and operates the following stations in Wausau and Stevens Point: B104.9-Country's Greatest Hits (WCWB), WSPT 97.9- Wisconsin's Greatest Hits, and True Oldies 92.1 and 1010 AM WPCN.

## Green Bay station gathers 22K pounds of food

Green Bay TV station WLUK-TV gathered 22,572 pounds of food and \$3,368 in donations during a three-day food drive.

The FOX 11 Food Project gathered items like canned meats, canned fruit, canned vegetables, and canned soup for pantries in Green Bay, Menasha, and Oshkosh.

The drive ran Nov. 14-16 at locations in all three cities.



## Radiothon raises \$263K for Children's Hospital



The 2023 Marshfield Children's Hospital and Y106.5 (WYTE) Children's Miracle Network Radiothon brought in a record \$263,585 on Dec. 7-8.

Every year, these two days are filled with a lot of hard work, organization, and emotions, but the entire station staff pulled together to make miracles happen. The Wake-Up Call with Big Red and Dana, and afternoon drive personality Joe Malone were on hand for 12 hours both days to ensure a successful radiothon.

"Events like these are the reason we love doing what we do – you see businesses stepping up, and a huge outpouring of community support to help kids in the area," Station PD Big Red said. "It doesn't get more rewarding than that!"

## Station gathers toys, supplies for 2K kids

Madison radio station Life 102.5 (WNWC) gathered almost 2,000 shoeboxes for children filled with toys and essential school supplies for the holidays.

The shoeboxes were wrapped and dropped off at numerous designated locations across Madison. Volunteers of Life 102.5 picked up the shoeboxes from all the locations and took them to Fountain of Life Covenant Church in Madison.

"We are so thankful for this ministry, and I would like to personally thank all the listeners who make this ministry possible," said Jackie Hunt, a church member who led the distribution effort.

# Get To Know First Two 2024 YP Honorees

Young professionals are making their mark on broadcasting in Wisconsin and the WBA is recognizing them.

The WBA Young Professional of the Year Award seeks to recognize young broadcasters who have made a significant impact on their stations and communities. A sub-committee of the WBA Board of Directors selected five young professionals to recognize in 2023, and one of those five has been identified as the "Young Professional

of the Year."

Two honorees are profiled here. The three other honorees will be identified and profiled in an upcoming WBA newsletters and the Young Professional of the Year will be announced in the May/June newsletter and awarded at the WBA Summer Conference on June 20 at Hotel Retlaw in Fond du Lac.

Our first two honorees are Keith Heisler and Briggs LeSavage.



Heisler

## Q&A with Keith Heisler

### How did you get into broadcasting?

I'd wanted to be on the radio for as long as I can remember. In 6th grade when we were asked what we wanted to do when we "grew up" my answer was "I'm going to be on the radio." When was a freshman in college, my aunt worked at the performing arts center in town and they had a weekly interview segment at the station at the time. She kept telling the program director about me and I think he gave me an interview as an intern just to get her to stop asking! I've been lucky enough to be here ever since.

### How do you view the role of young professionals in broadcasting?

We're brand ambassadors, We're the future of the industry. We're the ones who need to ask questions and push for innovations. We're the ones who need to challenge the system and continue to improve it. In addition to being some of the people who will keep our companies going strong, we're the ones who are radio's current and future audience members. We need to think about our audience whenever possible. It's ok to put a name and face to those internal conversations because it helps you to connect.

### What advice would you give to other young broadcasters?

The most valuable gift a broadcast veteran can give you is their time. Don't waste it.

Ask questions, take notes, and be an active listener. Challenge yourself daily to continue to learn and try new things. One of my good friends and mentors in the industry always told me to "eat your frogs for breakfast" meaning do your toughest task first. I do that as much as possible because it allows me to be hyper focused on my most difficult daily challenge.

On a personal note, be present and active in your community. Do all you can to be an effective communicator. Regardless of your role, broadcasting is all about effective communication, brand building, and community engagement.

All that said, broadcast is wonderful but can be stressful too. Take time for yourself to reflect and disengage when necessary. Most importantly, you are going to screw up and that's ok! Give yourself the grace to learn from the missteps you've taken because they'll make you better in the future.

### What does the future of broadcasting look like to you?

The future of broadcasting is constantly changing. We're in a world of instant gratification. We need the people who want to engage with our content wherever they are at in whatever way it works best for them. We need to deliver relevant, personality-driven, locally-focused content to them as much as possible. We need to continue to engage in decision making that is relevant to the lives of those we're trying to serve and we need to be good community partners and relationship builders.

Company  
**Radio Plus Inc.**

Position  
**Program Director and IT Director**

Years at station  
**19**

Started in broadcasting  
**2004**

# Recognize your Young Professional in broadcasting

Nominations are open year-round for a WBA award to recognize the young professionals forging new paths in broadcasting.

The WBA Young Professional of the Year Award seeks to recognize young broadcasters who have made a significant impact on their stations and communities. Nominees must be under the age of 40 at the time of their nomination and must have spent a minimum of two years at a radio or TV station in Wisconsin. Finalists will be selected based on their contributions to the industry, spirit of innovation, and community involvement.

The award was established by the WBA Young Professionals Committee and nominees will be judged by a subcommittee of the WBA Board. In the fall, the subcommittee will select the six finalists and the winner from those finalists. All six will be profiled in WBA publications and recognized at the WBA Summer Conference. The winner will be awarded at the following Summer Conference.

Anyone can make nominations. Nominations will be accepted in the form of a letter of recommendation not to exceed 500 words. Nominations are due Sept. 30 at 5 p.m.

Submissions can be made here.  
[wi-broadcasters.org/ypaward](http://wi-broadcasters.org/ypaward)

The recipients of the Young Professional of the Year Award are:

2020: Terry Stevenson of Seehafer Broadcasting in Manitowoc

2022: James Groh of WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee

2023: Kyle Wallace of Good Karma Brands in Milwaukee

Questions? Contact Kyle Geissler at [kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org](mailto:kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org).



LeSavage

## Q&A with Briggs LeSavage

### How did you get into broadcasting?

My interest in journalism stemmed from my time working for my high school's student newspaper. I wrote an article about our school's special education department and how the students were starting a "Cookie Club." I interviewed a student named Sean for that piece. After the story published, his family was overcome with pride. They talked about

how much it meant to Sean and their entire family to see his accomplishments highlighted like this. After that, I knew I wanted to make a difference by sharing people's stories, especially those who may not often find themselves in the spotlight.

In college, I earned a communications and journalism degree from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. I started my career working in broadcast television after graduating. I have spent my entire broadcasting career working in the Duluth/Superior market, which is my hometown!

### How do you view the role of young professionals in broadcasting?

I see young professionals as a very important asset in the broadcasting industry. We bring a different perspective and can help guide the industry into a new age, something that is very important as news-consuming habits continue to evolve.

### What advice would you give to other young broadcasters?

I would suggest taking on every day with an open mind. The best part about this job is that almost every day we get to learn about something (or meet someone) we may have never had the opportunity to without this career. The more you can embrace the unknown and

open your mind to learning, the happier you will be! Also, be curious!

If you are first starting out in your career and are wondering what position might suit you best, I would recommend starting as a producer. Some of our strongest reporters started in that role. It gave them the chance to see how the newsroom operates and what makes a good story before they headed out the door with a looming deadline (and likely a bundle of nerves!) It also gave them more time in the building to learn from our veteran anchors and newsroom staff, especially when it came to news judgement and storytelling.

### What does the future of broadcasting look like to you?

I see a lot of exciting changes ahead for the future of broadcasting. My station has seen the benefits of longer form reports (which we call targeted special reports, or TSRs) first-hand. We air them weekly on Thursday nights and they have driven viewership significantly. They are generally investigative-style stories or ones that take the viewers along for an experience. Basically, these stories are relevant content that they won't be able to get anywhere else. Today, anyone can go online and get the latest headlines in a matter of minutes. So realizing what we can do to advance those stories in our newscasts is key.

I also see content like locally-produced lifestyle shows taking off dramatically. We recently started a similar show at our station and the viewers have really resonated with it. It's another example of taking viewers along for an experience, as we often go out and show people the fun they can have right where they live. It's also a great way to engage our audience and connect with them on a more personal level, which has helped us develop some loyal viewers. The more light-hearted show can help engage a younger audience, as it almost mimics the connection they feel to social media influencers (all while including a news-related element, of course!)

Company  
**Northern  
News  
Now/Gray  
Television**

Position  
**Managing  
Editor, 5 p.m.  
Co-Ancor,  
Lifestyle  
Show Co-  
Anchor**

Years at  
station  
**7.5**

Started in  
broadcasting  
**2014**

# Submit Your Names by Jan. 15

## Nominations open for WBA Hall of Fame, Local Broadcast Legends

Nominations are now open for the WBA Hall of Fame and the Local Broadcast Legends, and there are changes to the nomination process.

The WBA Hall of Fame Committee will now require all Hall of Fame nominations to come from a WBA member station, a retired Wisconsin broadcaster, member of the Foundation Board, or Hall of Fame inductee. Nominees must have served a minimum of 25 years in Wisconsin broadcasting. Nominees will be evaluated based on their "integrity, leadership, and impact on their station(s), communities served, and the state of Wisconsin broadcast industry."

For Local Broadcast Legends, nominations must be supported by the manager of the station or group employing the nominee, and the nominee must have 25 years of service in one specific Wisconsin market or community.

Nominations for both recognitions must now also be submitted through an online form. Those forms are available here:

Hall of Fame:



Legends:



Nominations are due on Jan. 15. The 2024 Hall of Fame inductees will be recognized at the WBA Hall of Fame dinner on June 20. The 2024 Local Broadcast Legends will be recognized at a luncheon on June 20. Both events are a part of the WBA Summer Conference which will be held at Hotel Retlaw in Fond du Lac.

The Wisconsin Broadcasters Hall of Fame was established in 1989 and formally dedicated by then FCC Chairman Alfred Sikes. Its purpose is to honor individuals who have dedicated their professional lives to the advancement of broadcasting in Wisconsin. Since then, 160 broadcasters have been inducted.

Nominations for the WBA Hall of Fame must be submitted annually. The committee will only review Hall of Fame nominations submitted for the current year. Nominations submitted in prior years must be resubmitted for consideration. If you wish to check whether an individual has been nominated, direct inquiries to Liz Boyd in the WBA Foundation office at (800) 236-1922 or lboyd@wi-broadcasters.org.

The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Local Broadcast Legends Award was established in 2015 under the direction of Bruce Grassman, owner/president of Results Radio. The Local Broadcast Legends Award is a great honor and recognition for individuals that work behind the scenes and within their communities fulfilling the commitment broadcasters have made to serve their local communities. They are individuals that exemplify localism. This award is a means to extend recognition of these individuals beyond their local communities.

The Local Broadcast Legends Award Committee, which is a part of the Hall of Fame Committee, may select a nominee from each of the four (4) districts of the state represented on the WBA Board of Directors. The number of awardees will be determined by the Committee.

## Grant offers college debt relief for broadcasters

Applications are now being accepted for the Results Broadcasting Education Debt Assistance Grant to help broadcasters pay off their student loans. This \$3,000 grant is available to individuals currently employed in Wisconsin broadcasting or related media.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Must be currently employed at a Wisconsin broadcast radio, television or related media company
- Must have completed a minimum of one year employment with a Wisconsin broadcast radio station, television station, or related media company
- Company must be a dues paying member of the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association

• Must submit a letter of support from the current employer signed by the local manager

• Must provide proof of attendance at a university, college, technical school or broadcast school by supplying a copy of transcripts or degree certificate

• Must provide proof of current loan balance (documentation will remain confidential).

Applications will be accepted Jan. 1 through Feb. 28. The grant will be awarded at the WBA Summer Conference.

"Results Broadcasting is so proud

of the dedicated men and women in the Wisconsin over the air radio and TV industry working in all phases of the business," wrote Results Broadcasting owner and WBA Hall of Famer Bruce Grassman. "It is an opportunity

to help people with some of their student debt and to let them know they are part of the greatest state of broadcasters...Wisconsin. Results Broadcasting is proud to continue this award for many years to come."

Thank you to the Grassmans for their support of broadcasting in Wisconsin.

For more information and to apply, visit [wbafoundation.org](http://wbafoundation.org).



### Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Foundation Officers & Board of Directors

[wbafoundation.org](http://wbafoundation.org)

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# Walker Broadcast Management Institute's

2024 Agenda ● Start of New Three-Year Cycle ● 25th Year

The Walker Broadcast Management Institute is now in its 25th year. The 2024 Institute marks the first year of another 3-year cycle (although you may join the cycle at any time) and is designed for broadcast managers and those seeking or being prepared for broadcast management positions.

The 2024 session will be held April 23-25, 2024 in Madison.

For registration information please call the WBA office: 608-255-2600

## 2024 AGENDA

### Day 1

#### Financial Management



*Tom Walker  
MBA, CPA,  
President  
and General  
Manager Mid-  
West Family,  
Madison*

Congratulations, you are in senior leadership! Nobody warned you about dealing with the accountants, budgets, or all of that business stuff! You got into broadcasting because you were too cool to take accounting courses when you had the option. Now who's laughing? Take heart! It may be too late for you to actually learn what accountants do, but you can still learn enough to ask the questions that need to be asked and keep you in control of the decisions that you need to make.

As broadcasters add digital capacities and operations to our portfolio of client services, there are even more complexities to properly managing our market's operations. This module is completely rewritten for leaders in an integrated broadcasting/digital world.

If I'm making money, why don't I have any cash?

How do we make money in this new world?

How do I measure my success?

What do all these numbers mean?

How do I stop the accountants from talking down to me?

You are dreading a day of accounting talk at a management institute. I promise the material presented won't be like anything you've ever seen before. I also promise it will be presented in an interactive, conversational manner.... and yes, even a bit edgy at times (to keep you engaged).

This year I focus on the basic operating statements accountants use, show you how they interrelate and answer you questions. We will also talk about setting budgets and discuss the business of broadcasting and the business of providing digital services.

### Day 2

#### Building High Performing Teams



*Sarah Smyrk,  
Assistant Di-  
rector, Multi-  
Year Strategy  
Orchestration*

Taking on new supervisory responsibilities is a great opportunity and challenge. Many in supervisory roles have learned either by trial and error or by following what was done by their predecessor. In most cases, this is not a very effective strategy. This course will start you in the right direction with fundamental communication skills and ideas for how to continue your growth as a supervisor and leader.

Key topics addressed:

- New role = new mindset
- Basic supervisory responsibilities
- Dealing with co-workers in your new role
- Improving communication in your team
- Effective delegation
- Recognizing and motivating team members
- Planning your future leadership development

### Day 3

#### The Brain Science of Optimal Leadership



*Paul  
Riehemann,  
Senior Trainer  
and Coach,  
Life Ecology  
Organization*

Your brain has evolved to help you survive, and its primary job is to keep you safe. The challenge is that your brain rarely distinguishes evolutionary threats (e.g. avoiding a lion) from the everyday – and ever-changing! – stressors of our chaotic and complex modern world. If left untrained, the brain will regularly trigger survival responses to mundane challenges like wading through email or even exciting opportunities like speaking in front of an audience or piloting a creative new solution to an organizational challenge.

The good news is that with understand-

ing, intention, and practice, you can reprogram your brain to capitalize on principles of neuroscience. In this session, you'll take a journey of brain optimization that teaches you – through evidence-based techniques – how to shift from the reactionary, survival-focused "Lower Brain" to the analytical, rational "Higher Brain," – a source of creativity, empathy, and strategic thinking. This shift – achieved through targeted brain hacks that can actually strengthen desired neural pathways over time.

Leadership begins from within. The impact you make starts with you and ripples outwards. By using these brain hacks to bring intention to your own responses, you'll not only enhance your own leadership abilities but create a culture of success by modeling.

Key topics addressed:

- The normalization of experimentation as a "courageous scientist"
- Embracing authenticity, vulnerability, and transparency in support of a growth mindset
- More confident, nuanced conversations around difficult or risky topics
- Fostering teamwork and innovation
- The embodiment of a culture of learning
- Increased risk tolerance
- Normalizing feedback and resilience
- Supercharged productivity through decreased fear-brain responses (e.g. anxiety, distraction, tunnel vision, and gossip)
- Personal ownership and accountability
- An innovative and agile culture

## Applications accepted for Student Leadership Award

The "WBA Student Leadership Award" is given to a broadcasting or broadcast journalism student of junior standing or above at a Wisconsin college or university who has most noticeably developed and exercised effective and creative skills in leadership.

The student must be nominated in writing by an adviser, supervisor or faculty member.

WBA Student Leadership Award nominations should be sent by Jan. 15, 2024 directly to: Kyle Geissler at [kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org](mailto:kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org).



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## Your WBA Calendar of Events

**Jan. 24, 2024**  
**WBA State Legislative Day**  
Madison Club/State Capitol

**Feb. 24, 2024**  
**WBA Student Forum**  
Lambeau Field

**April 23-25, 2024**  
**Walker Broadcast Management Institute**  
UW-Madison Campus

**May 4, 2024**  
**WBA Awards Gala**  
Madison Marriott West

**June 19-20, 2024**  
**WBA Summer Conference**  
Hotel Retlaw, Fond du Lac

**June 18-20, 2024**  
**WBA Duke Wright Media Technology Institute**  
Hotel Retlaw, Fond du Lac

**Sept. 10-11, 2024**  
**Broadcasters Clinic**  
Madison Marriott West,  
Madison

More details  
registraton at  
[wi-broadcasters.org  
/events](http://wi-broadcasters.org/events)

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[www.instagram.com/wibroadcasters](https://www.instagram.com/wibroadcasters)



## 2024 Election Windows for Lowest Unit Charge

Elections	Dates	Window for LUC begins
Spring Primary	Feb. 20, 2024	Jan. 6, 2024
Spring Election	April 2, 2024	Feb. 2, 2024
Presidential Primary	April 2, 2024	Feb. 17, 2024
Partisan Primary	Aug. 13, 2024	June 29, 2024
General Election	Nov. 5, 2024	Sept. 6, 2024



**How strong is your station's digital strategy?**

Schedule a free **Digital Checkup** with **Seth Resler** of Jacobs Media at

[JacobsMedia.com/WBA-checkup](http://JacobsMedia.com/WBA-checkup)

**Jacobs media strategies**