WISCONSIN BROADCASTER

The Wisconsin Broadcaster Association Newsletter • November-December 2026 Edition

Jeff Levering To Keynote WBA Student Forum At Lambeau Field



Milwaukee Brewers radio broadcaster Jeff Levering will present the keynote address at the WBA Student Forum at Lambeau Field on Feb. 27.

Levering has been a play-by-play broadcaster for FOX Sports and the Big Ten Network since 2014, calling a variety of football and men's basketball games.

He joined the Brewers organization in 2015 and joined the television broadcasts for the Brewers in 2022, while continuing to appear on the radio network.

Before joining the Brewers, Levering was the lead broadcaster for the Triple-A Pawtucket Red Sox and worked for the Double-A Springfield Cardinals as a radio broadcaster and manager of public relations.

Levering, a four-year letterwinner in baseball at Chapman University, earned his degree in broadcast journalism. He is also a two-time recipient of the Wisconsin Sportscaster of the Year (2023 and 2020) awarded by the National Sports Media Association.

The rest of the Student Forum agenda will be released soon. It will include a job fair, hands-on experiences with broadcasters, the WBA Student Awards presentations, and a variety of informational sessions. It's for students of all ages.

Registration is open right now, with early bird rates in effect until Jan. 15.



REGISTER HERE:

Early Bird Registration:

$25 until Jan. 17

Regular Registration: $40

On site: $50

FROM WBA'S PRESIDENT & CEO

Thank you to WBA Hall of Fame video director



By Michelle Vetterkind, CAE

Tucker Boyd has told the stories of our Hall of Fame inductees, one video at a time. For 25 years, he's served as the Director of Production/ Editor of the WBA Hall of Fame videos.

Tucker is taking a well-deserved retirement from this work. We are so grateful for his level of dedication to this important project over so many years.

You can find his work in the online Wisconsin Broadcasting

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FROM WBA'S CHAIR

Elections highlight broadcasters role in democratic process



By Anna Engelhart

Political season is upon us! Every election cycle, when it comes to understanding what truly matters in our daily lives, there is no substitute for turning to your local TV or radio station. For months leading up to election day, local broadcasters have been hard at work doing what they do best: Connecting neighbors,

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Broadcasters join job fair at UW-Madison

WBA member stations joined the Communications Career & Resource Fair at UW-Madison on Oct. 6. Students from across campus visited to learn about careers in radio and television.

The on-campus job fair is part of your WBA's effort to boost connections between broadcasters and aspiring broadcasters.











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WBA Board minutes are always available for members. Please email Robin Stephens at rstephens@wi-broadcasters.org to request a copy.

FROM WBA'S PRESIDENT & CEO

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Museum. If you haven't seen one of the Hall of Fame videos before, I encourage you to check it out. These are the stories of the people who've shaped broadcasting in Wisconsin over many years, and Tucker has done a masterful job of capturing these foundational stories.

On behalf of the WBA and the WBA Foundation, we thank you Tucker! *(Pictured above left)*

As I highlighted in last month's issue, the Wisconsin Army National Guard has renewed its partnership with your WBA. At the WBA Board meeting in September, Deputy Adjutant General – Army Commander, Wisconsin Army National Guard, Brion Aderman spoke candidly to board members about the importance of the partnership and how it has helped the Guard overcome a critical decline in enlistments. *(Pictured above right)*

Your WBA is tremendously proud of this time-honored partnership and the work the Guard does to protect and serve the people of Wisconsin.

We're putting a wrap on the 75th anniversary year for your WBA and it's been a blast. The turnout at this year's events was fantastic, including our most memorable Summer Conference celebration at the Grand Geneva Resort in June.

A highlight reel for the 75th anniversary is out NOW! Find a link on page 6.

Our 75th anniversary has provided the perfect opportunity to reflect both on the rich and vibrant history of broadcasting in Wisconsin, but also the future. Technology changes, but the need for community connection doesn't. In fact, it may well be more important than ever going forward.

It's that community-building that makes local broadcasters so valuable, and, quite frankly, necessary. Be proud of the work you do to make a difference in your community. It's what makes you a broadcaster! ●

FROM WBA'S CHAIR

Continued from page 1

highlighting community voices, and informing voters as they head to the polls.

Local broadcasters bring political coverage down to earth. While national networks spend weeks dissecting the latest scandals, our local stations are the ones paying attention to what's happening in our backyard. We cover the school board debates, city council meetings, county ballot initiatives, and state races that directly affect our everyday life. Whether it's funding for local roads, public safety concerns, or changes to property taxes, those decisions hit close to home. By hosting candidate debates and town halls and breaking down complicated ballot measures, our local journalists give us the facts we need to make smart choices when we go to vote.

Whether it's a radio interview during your morning commute discussing a town infrastructure project, an evening TV special report featuring candidates for county sheriff, or a streaming Q&A session with county clerks, local stations ensure that voters get clear, direct insight into the issues that affect their families, schools, and local communities.

What makes local broadcasters so effective is the deep relationship they build with the people they serve. Local reporters, anchors, and radio hosts aren't just voices on a screen or a speaker, they are our fellow community members. You see them at community events and fundraisers, local parades, and high school sporting events. Because of this everyday presence, local stations earn a unique level of trust in our communities. When election season brings in a barrage of conflicting claims and confusing ads, viewers and listeners turn to their local broadcasters for reliable fact-checking, clear guides on voting procedures, and accurate, real-time election night results.

Local broadcasting is also a powerful force for inclusion. By delivering free, over-the-air linear coverage, and a plethora of digital content options, TV and radio stations ensure that everyone in the community has equal access to crucial information. Whether you live within the bustling city limits or a quiet rural township, all it takes is tapping into your local stations to stay engaged with the democratic process.

At their core, local TV and radio stations don't just report the news; they keep the community connected and hold the people in power accountable. By celebrating local democracy and keeping neighbors informed and connected, local broadcasters remain a vibrant, trusted, and essential partner in making our communities stronger every single day. ●

Williamsen named to lead WFRV-TV in Green Bay


Williamsen

Carolyn Williamsen has been named Vice President and General Manager of WFRV-TV in Green Bay, overseeing broadcast and digital operations at the Nexstar-owned television station. She will report to Brandin Stewart, Senior Vice President and Regional Manager for Nexstar's broadcasting division.

Williamsen brings more than three decades of experience in television broadcast sales and management to her new role, serving most recently as Director of Sales at WFRV-TV, a position she has held since April 2025.

"During her tenure Ms. Williamsen and her high-performing sales team drove increases in WFRV-TV's linear and digital advertising sales and established innovative training programs for new sales employees," the news release stated.

"Carolyn is the ideal candidate to lead WFRV-TV," said Stewart. "She's talented, innovative, and during her seven years at the station has forged a deep relationship with the communities of Green Bay and northeast Wisconsin. Her leadership has produced exceptional results for WFRV-TV, and she has the knowledge and skillset necessary to build and lead teams across news and sales. I am looking forward to working closely with her as she begins her new position."

Williamsen joined WFRV-TV in 2019 as head of local sales and has held a variety of broadcast sales positions of increasing responsibility in markets across central and northeast Wisconsin since beginning her career in 1991. She is extremely familiar with the communities of Wisconsin's Fox River Valley and received her bachelor's degree and an MBA from UW-Whitewater.

"I want to thank Nexstar for the opportunity to oversee WFRV-TV as Vice President and General Manager," Williamsen said. "This is a great station with a legacy of service to the Green Bay community and a history of delivering outstanding local journalism across its broadcast, and digital, and social media channels. I understand the needs of both our viewers and advertisers and I believe there is much success ahead."

Tyah Sartler to lead Milwaukee Radio Group


Sartler

Milwaukee Media Group, owned by Saga Communications, has named Tyah Sartler as VP/General Manager after 25 years with the company. Bob Bellini has retired from the company after more than 36 years with the group.

Sartler rose from Senior Account Manager to Local Sales Manager and has served as General Sales Manager since December 2012.

Bellini served as General Manager since May 2020. He originally joined Classic Rock 96.5 WKLH as Program Director in 1989 and added Operations Manager duties for Saga's five station cluster in 2015. Prior coming to Milwaukee, Bellini programmed 101.5 WIBA-FM in Madison and 101.9 KFMQ Lincoln, Nebraska.

Ashworth named PBS Wisconsin, WPR's first Executive GM


Ashworth

Sarah Ashworth has been named Executive General Manager of PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio. She will officially begin in this role Nov. 29.

Ashworth has served as WPR's Director of Radio for more than three years. Ashworth's 25 years of public media experience also includes work as Vermont Public's head of content as well as newsroom roles at Minnesota Public Radio, New Hampshire Public Radio, WAMU, and KBIA in Missouri. Ashworth also served as an Assistant Professor of Journalism at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Under her leadership, Vermont Public and NHPR won national Edward R. Murrow awards for overall excellence.

Raised in Minnesota, Ashworth became interested in public media while pursuing her journalism degree at the University of Missouri–Columbia. She has taught radio journalism in Russia and China and has been a leadership fellow with the Sulzberger program at Columbia University and with Public Media Women in Leadership.

As Executive General Manager, Ashworth will lead both PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio as the services' first unified leader. Under her direction, both services will build on their award-winning statewide educational, cultural, journalistic and community-focused local programming to better serve audiences across Wisconsin.

With offices, transmitters and employees in communities throughout the state, PBS Wisconsin and WPR are the only locally owned and managed statewide media networks serving Wisconsin.

"Public media was invented in Wisconsin," said Jordan L. Siegler, Executive Director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Public Media. "I am excited that Sarah will guide a future of public media in our state that further centers our services' work on our audiences, not on the platform we use to reach them. This combined focus will allow us to better serve the state, tell more Wisconsin stories across all platforms and meet our audiences where they are."

"I am excited to watch Sarah's leadership shape our service to Wisconsin," said Marta Bechtol, Executive Director of the Educational Communications Board. "Sarah is a thoughtful, innovative, audience-focused leader who understands public media's impact – and its possibilities. Under her leadership, we will see educational, cultural and Wisconsin-focused programming thrive and grow."

"I am honored to be named the first Executive General Manager of PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio," Ashworth said. "Our legacy of service is the strongest in the nation and I understand, and am humbled by, the responsibility to lead these two organizations at this moment.

"I want WPR and PBS Wisconsin together to be the place where Wisconsinites choose to spend the majority of their media time and time in person. I want people to love and trust these organizations and find value in them that's worth supporting. And, I want our service to be here working to serve all Wisconsin residents for generations. PBS Wisconsin and WPR working together in new ways will help us keep public media centered on communities and help connect people to each other."

Educator's Column

Spread the word about WBA Student Forum at Lambeau





By Mark Zoromski

Oh, that perfect line. Journalists crave it. So do novelists, poets, and playwrights. Broadcasters too.

Jeff Levering found it. "The Brewers win the pennant! OH MY GOD, the Brewers win the pennant!" Levering's statewide Brewers Radio Network call sent chills, and not just because of the excitement of the moment.

Many saw it as an homage to legendary Brewers announcer Bob Uecker. In the 1989 film "Major League," Uecker played Cleveland broadcaster Harry Doyle. When the underdog Indians beat the Yankees for a playoff spot, Doyle jumps out of his seat and yells, "The Indians win it! Oh my God, the Indians win it!"

Levering found the perfect line at the perfect moment, and he's the perfect keynoter for the 2027 Student Forum at Lambeau on Saturday, Feb. 27, 2027. He'll talk about his experiences and give students practical career path tips.

Reporter extraordinaire Boyd Huppert also knows a thing or two about perfect lines, and in his seminar "The First :30," he will teach us three things you must do to hook your viewers. Huppert is also scheduled to present



the winners of the Boyd Huppert Excellence in Writing contest.

Also on tap: Veteran college media students will help high schoolers learn more about college broadcasting opportunities, and the massive job fair will once again help hook up students with jobs and internships. Back by popular demand are the lunchtime hands-on activities providing experience and tips from the pros, plus free professional headshots.

We've got the content. We've got the storied venue. We've got the guy who made the iconic call. Now it's time to do what broadcasters do best: Spread the word.

Find that perfect line to encourage others to attend. Reach out to your interns, local high schools and colleges. And by all means, consider attending yourselves!

Mark Zoromski is the chair of the WBA Education Committee.

Awards Column

WBA Awards tip:
Be sure to coordinate on shared content



By Anne Paape
WBA Awards Committee

Sharing creative content is smart strategy. It's how sister stations leverage time and talent. Why have four different people at four different stations in the same company working on a severe weather promo or a series of in-depth candidate profiles?

Collaborating makes sense. When it comes time to submit your entries for the WBA Awards, you'll also need to communicate with your colleagues to make sure you're in compliance with rule number 5 which states "Original content aired on multiple stations may only be submitted for one station." This rule requires your station group to assign one owner to a piece of great work. You decide which one station will submit the entry.

Simply editing in your anchors or tagging with your station call letters doesn't meet the bar for original content. We're not trying to discourage stations from sharing. The goal of the WBA Awards Committee is to make sure your best work gets to the judges and not into the disqualification folder when all entries are reviewed.

Geissler to receive WSAE 'Service Excellence Award'



Geissler

WBA Vice President Kyle Geissler will receive the Service Excellence Award from the Wisconsin Society of Association Professionals at the WSAE Summit.

The award is given to a WSAE member "who demonstrates exceptional commitment, service, and leadership through volunteer involvement with WSAE. This award recognizes an individual who consistently goes above and beyond expectations, generously gives their time and talent, and raises their hand to support the association, its members, and the broader association community."

Geissler is the first recipient of the award.

The WSAE Summit will be held Nov. 18-19 at the Ingelside Hotel in Pewaukee.

Five things to do now to prep for 2027



By Chris Brunt

The gales of November are upon us again, which means strategic plans for 2027 are picking up. In recent weeks alone, the broader media landscape has seen big layoffs at Netflix, the consolidation of Warner with Paramount, and a surging creator economy. The stations that move forward will match their unique strengths to these trends. Here are five things to put in your 2027 plan:

1. Help your clients close their AI-search gap

Websites are seeing traffic dip 10-40% (depending on the sector and study) due to AI and zero-click searches. Businesses don't know why their traffic is down, and most are already leery of the Silicon Valley giants causing this disruption. Broadcasters are well-positioned to be their trusted local guide.

The move: Ask your digital fulfillment partner what they offer for AI-optimization and AI-search ads, and how they report results. Get trained up on their solution and get in front of your clients. If they don't have a clear answer, that's a gap to close before your competitors do.

2. Make on-air and online advertising attribution standard

Clients have become used to Meta and Google dashboards declaring their platforms' ROI, and media without similar metrics are getting pushed out. We know broadcast works, but many of our biggest clients now expect proof. Attribution tools that show website or store traffic jumping during an ad campaign are now affordable for independent companies and don't require a coding degree from UW-Madison to configure.

The move: If you don't have an attribution tool, evaluate two or three before budgets are locked. If you do, make it a standard part of the recap.

3. Sell what can't be bought anywhere else

As ad platforms turn optimization over to AI, plain impressions have become a commodity. Your advantage is local: Creative that resonates with Wisconsinites, custom O&O digital inventory, broadcast reach, and local talent your audiences already LOVE, who can voice or endorse digital ads. Digital competitors can't match that.

The move: Build local creative and copywriting into every digital proposal and take stock of which O&O assets can be sponsored, bundled, or customized.

4. Video, Video, Video!

Shocker! Social video advertising is growing faster than connected TV, 13% to 11% (IAB), YouTube Shorts average 200 billion daily views, and 82% of weekly podcast consumers watch video podcasts (Edison Research). Video is TV's sweet spot, and it can be radio's too. Every clip builds audience and creates new inventory to sell.

The move: For TV, cut more short-form versions of what you already produce. For radio, start with a phone, a light, and a few clips per week from each show.

5. Turn talent into creators

Creator advertising is projected to reach $44 billion this year, up from $37 billion in 2025 (IAB). Most local businesses don't know where to start. Your airstaff has loyal local followings, and TV stations have the production expertise to partner with local influencers.

The move: Identify which on-air talent have the personality and followings to work as creators and build a sponsored-content package (FTC compliant) around them.

November's gales always pass, but the waves reshape the shoreline. Pick the moves that fit your station, put them in your 2027 plan, and set your course. Broadcasters have weathered rough seas for more than a century. We'll weather these too.

The WBA Digital Hotline is a free service of the WBA. Contact Paul Jacobs with questions relating to digital revenue, AI, and anything else in the digital space at paul@jacobsmedia.com.

WBA celebrates 75 years throughout 2026



Your WBA marked 75 years of serving radio and TV broadcasters from across Wisconsin during the entire year of 2026. Check out these video highlights. Special thank you to Robert Jarzen for capturing this momentous year!

Membership renewals in the mail, can be paid online

It's WBA membership renewal time.

When 2026 ends, so does your WBA membership. You should soon be receiving your 2027 WBA membership renewal notice in the mail. Sign up now and keep your membership in full force, without interruption, through 2027.

I'm sure you'll agree that membership in your WBA is a bargain. As an organization and as a cooperative of individuals with a common goal, the WBA believes in itself and its members. The benefits of being a WBA member are many, and pride of association with WBA is itself worth the price of admission. We urge you to renew your membership and join your colleagues in continuing to support the WBA.

RENEW HERE:

Renewing your WBA membership means uninterrupted service: You will continue to receive ALL services in WBA's special programs. And best of all, you will continue to belong to the WBA, the only organization in the whole state devoted entirely to the service and promotion of the broadcasting industry in Wisconsin.

Station raises $20K in 'Day of Giving' fundraiser







The latest 'WISN 12 Day of Giving' initiative raised $20,000 for the Daisie Foundation, a Milwaukee area non-profit. The money will be used to support the organization's mission to help underrepresented communities. It will benefit groups including women, children, families, and others across southeastern Wisconsin.

"Yet again, our local communities have demonstrated their deep commitment to helping the people who need it most," said Shawn Oswald, President and General Manager of WISN 12. "This latest collaboration is another example of the extraordinary power of giving, and the impact that even just one day can have."

WISN-TV promoted the fundraiser with coverage both on-air and online. The station collected donations via its website and through a phone bank, which was held on Sept. 30.

The money raised for the Daisie Foundation will assist socioeconomically disadvantaged communities through random acts of kindness. These acts include various programs, holiday activities, surprise celebrations, supportive resources, and more. Over the course of more than ten years, the organization has impacted thousands of people in Wisconsin and beyond.

"The Daisie Foundation's work aligns perfectly with the 'WISN 12 Day of Giving' campaign," Oswald said. "Both are focused on inspiring hope and driving change to positively impact people's lives."

The Daisie Foundation is the latest local organization receiving support through the 'WISN 12 Day of Giving' initiative. The ongoing charitable campaign helps a different non-profit each month in advancing their mission, pursuing their goals, and improving people's lives. To date, the station has raised more than $311,612 for numerous non-profit organizations throughout Wisconsin.







Green Bay station collects food for storm relief

WFRV-TV in Green Bay on Aug. 5 partnered with Festival Foods and the St. Joseph Food Program for a Storm Relief Food Drive.

Through broadcast promotions, WFRV.com, the WFRV+ Streaming CTV App, and live TV cut-ins from 9 a.m.–5 p.m., WFRV-TV talent and staff mobilized viewers to come out and donate.

The results included an 18-foot truck filled, $10,000 in donations and gift cards, and 12,072 pounds of essential items collected, helping more than 300 families.

The station staff also received hugs and heartfelt thank-you's from members of the community who told them they had been looking for a way to help their neighbors.

Young Professional of the Month - October

The WBA Young Professional of the Month is a nominee for the WBA Young Professional of the Year Award. The award seeks to recognize young broadcasters who have made a significant impact on their stations and communities. A subcommittee of the WBA Board of Directors will select the Young Professional of the Year, who will be recognized at the 2027 WBA Awards Gala on May 1 at the Madison Marriott West.

Garett Hagen

A news producer at WBAY-TV in Green Bay, Garett Hagen, is the WBA Young Professional of the Month for the month of September.

The WBA Young Professional of the Month is a nominee for the WBA Young Professional of the Year Award. The award seeks to recognize young broadcasters who have made a significant impact on their stations and communities. A subcommittee of the WBA Board of Directors will select the Young Professional of the Year, who will be recognized at the 2027 WBA Awards Gala on May 1 at the Madison Marriott West.

Hagen was nominated by WBAY-TV anchor Emerson Lehmann who wrote that Hagen works the night shift and does it with "enthusiasm and creativity."

"His communication and composure is done at a level well beyond his years, and his creativity with producing has helped us take our Action 2 News This Morning: Livestream show to a whole new level," Lehman wrote. "Garett is responsible for a lot of wholesome moments on our show every day. He's a true team player, always willing to step in to help during breaking news and has proven that he has the ability to adapt well in high-pressure situations, which can present themselves quite often during a 3-hour live newscast."

How did you get into broadcasting?

I didn't go to college for it but I took a "broadcast production" class and it ended up being my favorite class while I was there! Then after graduation, I saw an open position and realized I could see myself doing the same since I had so much fun doing it back then.

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

I feel like the new generation entering this field has the best grasp at how news travels via social media. I think in this day and age, that sort of knowledge can really help push a story to more people who need to hear it.

What advice would you give to other young broadcasters?

I say this to both talent and production: Try new stuff! You never know how something might look on air until you try it. Whether it's a new standup shot or using certain sounds as NATS, try to find new ways to drive your story.

YP of the Month brings 'enthusiasm and creativity'



What does the future of broadcasting look like to you?

I see both the on air and online presence growing. I feel like more people are saying they see stories while a TV or phone plays in the background. As long as stories continue to exist, I think broadcasting will have a strong impact in people's lives.

Company
Gray TV, WBAY-TV
Position
News Producer
Years at station
Almost three years
Started in broadcasting
2023

Nominate a young pro here:

Dealing with negative public feedback



By Ryan Brahm

As broadcasters, we are always in the public eye. Whether it's people sitting down with their families to watch the evening news, someone turning on their favorite morning radio show on their way to work, or community members reading up on the latest local news, everything we do is always under the microscope of public scrutiny.

With social media being a big part of everyday life, those viewers, listeners, and readers have more ways than ever to have their opinions heard. Many times, those opinions are positive and supportive. But, there will always be people who forget there are real people behind the product and leave a nasty comment.

For me personally, as a news director, one of the hardest things I deal with on a regular basis is tempering my response to public comments. For the most part, over my more than ten-year career, I have gotten pretty good at letting negative comments roll off my back, but every now and then, the personal nature of some comments can get to me. I mean, I am only human. This is much more difficult with stories that I put a lot of time and effort into.

I know I'm not alone in this experience, so I asked some people in the industry how they have dealt with a negative response from the public.

Kori Kay - Program Director and Morning Show Host for NRG Media in Wausau

The thing about Top 40 radio… you don't always have to be serious. And honestly, you don't have to take everything you do on the radio seriously, either.

One of the most fun things I've done on my show is make "songs." And no, they weren't great—but I had a blast doing them. Most listeners loved them, and a lot of people thought it was pretty impressive that I was even willing to do something like that.

And listen, I know I don't have a singing voice. I'm fully aware of that.

But one listener decided he needed to let me know that I was "cringy AF" and "an embarrassment to our race."

So how did I deal with the negative comment and the hate?

I made another song about it—and dedicated it to him.

Sometimes, you just have to take those negative comments, roll them up into a little ball, and turn them into something fun. Make a song. Make a bit. Make it a break on the show.

Because that's the beauty of Top 40 radio. You get to have fun, be ridiculous, and not take yourself too seriously.

And sometimes, the best way to handle the haters is to turn their negativity into your next great bit.

Terry Stevenson – Vice President of Seehafer Broadcasting in Manitowoc

As broadcasters, being in the public eye is simply part of the job. Whether it's our face, our voice, or our name attached to our work, we're in a public-facing industry, and that visibility naturally comes with opinions and feedback.

I started my career as a full-time salesperson at just 18 years old, so I had to learn early how to handle that feedback. For me, that often meant overcoming doubts about my age and proving that I belonged in the room.

As broadcasters, we work hard to establish ourselves as consistently reliable and trustworthy. When we approach our work with integrity, we can respond to feedback with confidence while still remaining open to learning, growth, and the opportunity to become better at what we do.

Gabriella Rusk - Morning Anchor & Executive Producer at WMTV 15 News in Madison

Working in a public-facing industry like broadcasting opens you up to public criticism. If there's a factual error or something that needs clarification, I welcome that feedback in my role as a morning news anchor. However, sometimes viewers are quick to make comments on my physical appearance: Like my hairstyle, make-up choice, or wardrobe.

Early on in my career, I learned that people are quicker to criticize than they are to compliment. My mentality is to "kill them with kindness" and write back when there are mean or degrading comments posted on my social media pages or our station accounts. I've found that often times viewers or social media users don't realize that we read these posts or emails too, and that can (sometimes) bring back the humanity that we are human too.

You build a thick skin in this business and can find others within the broadcasting space who can relate to what you're going through on a particularly tough day or story.

Summary

The easy answer to dealing with public criticism is to simply don't let it bother you, but as we all know, that is sometimes easier said than done. The important thing to remember is that you are amazing. Keep doing what you do and good things will come.

If it continues to bother you, find someone within your organization to talk to about it. In my extensive experience with mental health struggles, I have learned, at least for me, the best thing to do is to let it all out. Even if you don't get any help addressing the issue, just letting your feelings out can be a huge help.

If you need someone to vent to, I would be more than happy to help. Send me an email, and we can talk it out.

Ryan Brahm is the news director at WOMT Radio Manitowoc. You can reach him at Ryan@SeehaferNews.com.

Names in the News



Merz

Meteorologist **Emily Merz** joined its First Alert Weather team at WSAW-TV NewsChannel 7 in Wausau on Sept. 14. WSAW-TV said Merz is known for her engaging on-air presence and ability to break down complex meteorological data. Merz joins WSAW from sister station WBAY-TV in Green Bay where she served as a weekend morning meteorologist since January 2025.



Ezeir

Cameron Ezeir is joining CBS 58 (WDJT-TV) in Milwaukee as a sports reporter. He was previously at WFRV-TV in Green Bay for three years before coming to Milwaukee where he covered the Packers, Bucks, and Brewers playoff games along with numerous local college and high school teams.



Hagwood

WISN-TV in Milwaukee has named **Kayland Hagwood** as the station's new co-anchor of WISN 12 News at 4 p.m. and WISN 12 News at 5 p.m. on weekdays. Before coming to WISN 12, Hagwood served as a weekend morning anchor at WCNC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina. Prior to that, she was a weekend evening anchor and an investigative reporter for WLTX-TV in Columbia, South Carolina.

WBA Foundation chair reflects on successful year



By Chris Bernier
WBA Foundation Board Chair

The WBA Foundation has wrapped up another successful year! Hi, I'm Chris Bernier your Foundation Chair.

We were very excited to announce a new fund earlier this fall, "The Young Broadcasters Development Fund." Through the generous contribution of Terry and Sandy Shockley it is off to a great start. It is a passion of the Shockleys and the Foundation to develop the next generation of broadcasters in Wisconsin. We welcome your suggestions and contributions to further this cause.

The 75th anniversary of our Association was a great success at Lake Geneva and the Hall of Fame was again a very special night.

On this spread are this year's winners of our various scholarships, grants and awards.

The WBAF needs your financial support so that we can continue to help establish a lasting legacy for our Foundation and its members. As part of your financial planning, please consider a contribution to the WBA Foundation and or becoming a member of our Legacy Club. All levels of giving are needed and are beneficial to our mission.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be your chair. For this privilege, I am honored.

Local Broadcast Legends



Randy Allen



Dave Luczak



Rod Perry



Susan Siman

These new members were welcomed at the Summer Conference in Lake Geneva.

Hall of Fame Inductees



Dave Magnum



Kelly Radandt



Jeff Tyler



Steve Wexler

We topped off the Summer Conference with this year's inductions. Since 1989, the Hall of Fame has grown to more than 170 members. Nominations are now open for the 2027 Hall of Fame induction. The deadline is Jan. 15

The Walker Broadcast Management Institute Graduates

B.J. DeGroot
Woodward Community Media

Adam Hargrove
Educational Communications Board

Nicole Ehlers
Woodward Community Media

Ken Lundberg
Mid-West Family

Mikayla Browne
WNWC-FM

Katie Stevenson
Seehafer Broadcasting

Cristina Kay
WNWC-FM

The Walker Broadcast Management Institute returned for its 28th year to the UW-Madison campus. Listed on left and pictured on right are the 2026 graduates. The next Institute courses will be held April 20-22, 2027, on the UW-Madison campus.



Grant Recipients



Ashley Washburn from WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee was awarded the Results Broadcasting Student Debt Relief Grant. Bruce and Don Grassman had the vision to establish the grant. The grant was increased to $4,000 last year thanks to an additional contribution from Bruce Grassman. The idea for the grant is being replicated by many other state broadcast associations.

Ashley Washburn
WTMJ-TV

The first ever Boyd Huppert Education Debt Assistance Grant was awarded in 2025. This year's award was given to Breanna Reinhart from WFRV-TV in Green Bay.



Breanna Reinhart
WFRV-TV



In 2026 the Foundation also took over managing the Eric Miller PantherVision Education Debt Relief Grant from the Milwaukee Press Club, which operated the fund for many years. The fund is aimed at helping Wisconsin television professionals who demonstrate an outstanding commitment to excellence in news producing, video photojournalism, video editing, and/or the use of visual technology for journalistic storytelling. This year's recipient was Emmanuel Espino from WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee.

Emmanuel Espino
WTMJ-TV

Scholarship Recipients



Lexi Hull,
UW–Stevens Point
WBA Foundation Scholarship



Makenna Thompson,
UW–Oshkosh
Morgan Murphy Media Scholarship



Annelise Dahnke,
UW–Oshkosh
David L. Nelson Scholarship



Kayla Dembiec,
UW–Madison
Howard Gernetzke Scholarship

WISCONSIN BROADCASTERS FOUNDATION

APRIL 20-22, 2027 AGENDA

See backpage for more information about the institute

Walker Broadcast Management Institute

Day 1

Financial Management



*Presented by **Tom Walker***

- 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 Number Mean?
- How Do I Stop the Accountants from Talking Down to Me?

Whether you are an emerging leader, an experienced professional, or someone who wants to contribute more to your team's success, this program equips you with tools to enhance both your own growth and the growth of those you work with.

Join us for a day of learning, reflection, and skill-building that will help you bring out the best in yourself and in others.

Day 2

Strategic Thinking & Planning



*Presented by **Jeff Russell***

In a time of tumultuous change, where should leaders turn for guidance and direction as they lead their companies into the future? How might leaders better understand the environment in which their business functions? Strategic thinking and planning provide a template for seeing the world and building a forward-looking plan to move your company toward its vision and financial goals. An effective strategic business plan enables leaders to answer the core questions about organizational identity and direction. In this session, you will learn how to build a strategic thinking mindset within yourself and your team, develop a strategic plan that meets the challenges of tomorrow, and engage key stakeholders in translating the plan into your future success.

We'll explore such topics as:

- What strategic planning is and its essential components.
- The role that strategic planning plays in enabling long-term company success.
- The importance of building a strategic thinking mindset at every level of your company.
- The four phases of the strategic planning process.
- Methods for creating a shared vision that inspires your leaders and your frontline employees.
- How to conduct PESTLE and SWOT analyses.
- How scenario *planning* fits into developing a strategic plan.

Day 3

Building High Performing Teams: Effective Communication



*Presented by **Sarah Smyrk***

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

Walker Broadcast Management Institute

SPEAKERS



Tom Walker, MBA MBA, CPA, is the President and General Manager at Mid-West Family Madison.



Jeff Rusell, (MS, UW–Madison) co-director of Russell Consulting, Inc., specializes in helping organizations achieve their goals by successfully responding to the challenges of continuous change. With a focus on leadership, strategic thinking, leading change, and performance coaching, Jeff has guided organizations as diverse as Fortune 500 firms, social and public sector organizations, and small family businesses toward their goals. Jeff received his Masters Degree in Industrial Relations from the UW–Madison where he teaches for the Small Business Development Center. Jeff also is an adjunct faculty member for UW-Madison's School of Engineering and at UW-Milwaukee's School of Continuing Education.

Jeff and his wife and business partner Linda have co-authored nine books. Recent publications include: Strategic Planning Training, Change Basics, Strategic Planning 101, Ultimate Performance Management, and, most recently, Fearless Performance Reviews (McGraw-Hill, 2013). For more information on Jeff and his work, visit Russell Consulting, Inc.'s website at www.RussellConsultingInc.com



Sarah Smyrk is the Assistant Director of Multi-Year Strategy Orchestration. Sarah's career is driven by her desire to understand and relate to people. Throughout her career, she has worked in many roles to help business leaders drive product and program strategies that are rooted in strong relationships, made by data-driven decisions, and centered around the holistic customer experience. She is passionate about working closely with individuals to help them achieve top levels of success and take their business to the next level while providing an outstanding client experience. Using her leadership skills and experience as a Registered Corporate Coach™ (RCC), she helps teams build and implement programs that strengthen and reinforce goals and top priorities.

Sarah joined Northwestern Mutual in 2016 and has held several leadership roles across the organization. In her current role, Sarah leads Enablement and Consulting for the Field Performance Team, where she is responsible for developing, implementing, and managing field leader consulting practices. She focuses on helping enterprise teams effectively execute on multi-year strategy initiatives and ensuring alignment on change readiness plans across business partners and the organization.

Previously, Sarah was with Trustage (formerly CUNA Mutual Group) in Madison, WI (2007-2016), where she was responsible for leading the strategy and execution of training initiatives for CUNA Brokerage Services, Inc. (CBSI). In addition, she also led the training strategy for the Annuity Product Sales Team. While at Trustage, she developed and led CBSI's Women of Distinction program, a group of the company's top female financial advisors. The group focused on mentoring advisors who were either new to the organization or to the industry.

Sarah currently holds several industry designations, including FINRA Registrations Series 7, 63, 9, and 10, and her Chartered Leadership Fellow (CLF®) through the American College. She is certified through PROSCI as a Change Management Professional (CCMP®) and LaMarsh Global as a Certified Change Practitioner. In December 2023, Sarah graduated from The University of Alabama with her master's degree in organizational leadership.

The Institute fee is $595 for the first two people from the same company and $400 for those over three from the same company. Fees include the classes and evening presentations, all materials, daytime meals and two evening meals. No cancellations within a week of the Institute.

Register Today!

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.

The WBA Hall of Fame Committee made a number of changes to the process starting with the 2025 cycle:

- A nominee for the Hall of Fame can now be a person that has contributed to the growth and success of broadcasting through areas such as teaching, technical development, consulting, and service to the broadcasting industry.
- Nominations can now be made by the general public for the Hall of Fame and Local Broadcast Legends.
- To be eligible for the Hall of Fame, nominees must have served a minimum of 20 years in, or in support of, Wisconsin broadcasting.
- To be eligible for the Local Broadcast Legends, nominees must have served a minimum of 20 years at one specific Wisconsin station, or in one specific Wisconsin community or market.

Nominations for both recognitions must be submitted through an online form. Those forms are available by scanning the QR codes on right.

Nominations are due on Jan. 15. The 2027 Hall of Fame inductees will be recognized at the WBA Hall of Fame dinner on June 17. The 2027 Local Broadcast Legends will be recognized at a luncheon on June 17.

Both events are a part of the WBA Summer Conference which will be held at the Stone Harbor Resort in Sturgeon Bay.

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, 168 broadcasters have been inducted.

The Wisconsin Broadcasters Association Local Broadcast Legends Award was established in 2015 under the direction of Bruce Grassman, who at the time was 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.



Hall of Fame nomination forms:

wbafoundation.org/hall-of-fame/hall-of-fame-nomination-form

Legends nomination forms:

wi-broadcasters.org/awards/local-broadcast-legends

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. The nomination letter must include specific examples when citing how the student meets the following criteria:

- Is actively involved in a student broadcasting community;
- Demonstrated instances where they provided a positive influence;
- Demonstrated instances where they motivated others to accomplish a mission, despite challenges or obstacles;
- Encouraged others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of a broadcast-related organization or project;
- Goes consistently above and beyond the scope of their job or project assignment;
- Demonstrated the ability to lead in an ethical and moral manner.

The student must also submit a 2-3 page paper describing how their experiences in student media have shaped them as a leader or helped them develop a leadership style.

WBA Student Leadership Award nominations should be sent by Jan. 15, 2027 directly to: Kyle Geissler at kgeissler@wi-broadcasters.org.

WBA Foundation LEGACY CLUB List


Joe Moen (1927-2014)


Lee Davis


David Sanks


Michelle Vetterkind


Paul LeSage


Terry Baun (1947-2022)


John Laabs


Al Lancaster


Tom Koser


Chris Bernier


Bob Barry


Laurin Jorstad


Jack Hackman (1933-2018)


Ed Hinshaw (1940-2016)


Mike and Patty O'Brien




Paul and Gloria Cameron




Perry Kidder


David L. Nelson (1921-2017)


Nate Goetz (1926-2018)


Dick Record


James Schuh (1938-2021)


Scott Lopas


Bruce Grassman


Don Seehafer (1935-2020)

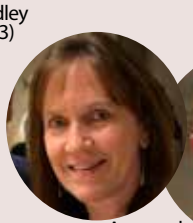

Duke Wright (1939-2022)


Kelly Radandt


Richard Dudley (1923-2013)




Chuck and LuAnn Roth




Amy and Steve Wexler


Sandy Shockley


Terry Shockley

The Legacy Club was formed in 1998 to provide a formal procedure and recognition for those who make bequests or agree to make bequests to the WBA Foundation in their wills.

For more information on how to join the Legacy Club, please contact Foundation President Michelle Vetterkind.

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WISCONSIN BROADCASTERS FOUNDATION

Enrollment open for 2027 Walker Management Institute

This year's session will be held April 20-22 in Madison

The Walker Broadcast Management Institute is now in its 28th year. The 2027 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 2027 session will be held April 20-22, 2027 in Madison. Registration deadline is April 1.

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

Register Here

Your WBA Calendar

Nov. 17, 2027
You're New-ish. Now You're Helping Someone New.
Susan Thomson moderated sharing session

Jan. 20, 2027
WBA State Legislative Day
Wisconsin State Capitol

Feb. 27, 2027
Student Forum at Lambeau Field
Lambeau Field, Green Bay

April 20-22, 2027
Walker Broadcast Management Institute
UW-Madison

May 1, 2027
WBA Awards Gala
Madison Marriott West

June 16-17, 2027
WBA Summer Conference
Stone Harbor Resort, Sturgeon Bay

June 16, 2027
Golf Outing at WBA Summer Conference
Cherry Hills Golf and Lodge

More details at wi-broadcasters.org/events

June 15-17, 2027
WBA Duke Wright Media Technology Institute
Stone Harbor Resort, Sturgeon Bay

Sept. 14-15, 2027
Midwest Regional Broadcasters Clinic
Madison Marriott West



Stay on top of how AI is affecting broadcasters

Follow developments from Jacobs Media Director of AI, Chris Brunt, and sign up for his weekly newsletter