

NORTHERN COMMUNITY RADIO



ANNUAL REPORT

FY22-23

91.7 KAXE - GRAND RAPIDS/IRON RANGE
90.5 KBXE - BAGLEY/BEMIDJI
89.9 - BRAINERD
KAXE.ORG

A WORD FROM THE CE/GM

It was another eventful year at Northern Community Radio. Here's a couple of the highlights.

Last September we hosted the 2nd Annual Grand Rapids Riverfest in partnership with the City of Grand Rapids. This event drew over 2400 people to experience the music of Wilco, Shovels and Rope, Chastity Brown and Wild Horses. Truly an incredible day of music. An event this size couldn't happen without the leadership of Kari Hedlund and Tom Pagel. Thanks also to our sponsors, volunteers, and the entire community, the event was a resounding success, not just for KAXE, but the region.

This year we were accepted into and completed the "Digital Transformation Program" from the Poynter Institute. This 9-month intensive program guides our work to build a robust digital audience through newsletters, podcasts and a renewed website.

Building a solid digital presence was necessary, to create our ambitious new initiative of local news for the region. Heidi Holtan and I wrote grants and worked with funders like the Blandin Foundation and Northland Foundation and hired News Director, Chelsey Perkins to lead the newsroom. In a few short months there is already an increase in traffic to our website and we've partnered with other news sources like MinnPost. Rural people deserve news about where they live. We are thrilled at the progress already, and the potential for the future.

Finally, we continue our replacement of in-studio broadcast and automation equipment. We were optimistic this project would be done in 2 weeks, but like any project of this size we have experienced many setbacks. Your patience has been appreciated as we have undertaken this necessary upgrade.



None of these achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of our donors, sponsors, volunteers, and listeners. Your belief in our mission and dedication to community radio have been instrumental in our success. We are profoundly grateful for your continued support and commitment to Northern Community Radio.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah Bignall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of "S" being particularly large and stylized.

SARAH BIGNALL
CEO/GM



NEW NEWS INITIATIVE

BY CHELSEY PERKINS

When I learned of the opportunity to expand local news coverage by creating a newsroom at the independent public radio station within earshot, the decision to apply was easy.

After graduating journalism school 15 years ago, I aimed my sights at places like New York City and Washington, D.C. I thought I'd work for *Mother Jones* or *The New Yorker*. But life took a different path.

After a layoff from *Utne Reader* magazine, where I checked facts, a few years passed in Minneapolis before I found my way back into journalism. In Pequot Lakes. At an office practically in the shadow of the school I attended from kindergarten through senior year. Not NYC, in other words.

Even then, I thought the move home would be as temporary as I could muster. But it wasn't long before I fell head over heels with community journalism.

I soaked up every moment I could of the experience and soon made the leap to the *Brainerd Dispatch* staff. I learned so much about the lakes area where I'd spent my formative years. I realized I could write about Important Issues (capitalized and all) here, too — because they happen here. And it became increasingly clear that our scrappy little newsroom was likely the only way most of those consequential issues would see the light of day.

The impact of local journalism — or the lack thereof — is all the more apparent as community newspapers struggle to survive. Rural people are bearing the brunt of ever-expanding news deserts. Some Northern Minnesota communities have no news coverage at all, except when a crime or public safety issue deemed worthy of a news release happens.

What happens without local news? People are less likely to know how their tax dollars are spent. They might have no clue who is on their ballot on Election Day or how those people governed. The Important Issues stay in the shadows. Civic life is less robust and neighbors feel disconnected from one another.

Taking the lead on this local news initiative at KAXE isn't just a job for me. It's a mission. And as a longtime public radio listener and nonprofit news fan, I couldn't be more excited to help carry out that mission here.

In the upcoming months you'll see even more new faces around here as we begin to staff our newsroom. Please welcome them to the KAXE family as they help us realize this vision. And remember, this is about you, really. What stories must be told? What do our listeners and readers need to know? Reach me at cperkins@kaxe.org. I'd love to chat.



credit Lorie Shaull

CHANGE IS GOOD

BY HEIDI HOLTAN

Change is good. Change is hard. Change is slow. This is my mantra right now. From staff changes, upgrades to studios and infrastructure, and new funding for news, every day is a new adventure. It's been exciting to be a part of the growth of the KAXE News Initiative. With News Director Chelsey Perkins on board and reporters and producers to be hired in the next month, we're on the right track to serve our communities more.

With leadership from Chelsey, our website and social media presence has already expanded and reached more and more people. How can you help? Share our stories!

Stories like one of my favorites this year, Crystal Gail Welcome, a newcomer to the region hosting a Black Birdwatchers Event. She's the new outreach coordinator for the Mississippi Headwaters Audobon Society. Online the story was even better thanks to new contributing photographer Lori Shaull.

We also brought election coverage to our listeners through partnerships with Lakeland and Duluth Public Television and told stories of people making a difference in their communities like Delina White's Anishinaabe fashion.

My commitment to bring elected officials and local leaders to listeners continued this year with conversations about higher education, taxes, voting, budget surplus, nursing shortages, abortion laws, economic development, clean energy and more.

Much thanks to the contributors to the *Morning Show*, like hosts John Latimer, Kari Hedlund, John Bauer, Scott Hall. And thanks to producers including Sarah Mitchell, Katie Carter, Bill McKenzie, and Max Philbrook. Your good work is appreciated. The great segments we aired this year wouldn't happen without Michael Lyons, Tammy Bobrowsky, Robert Jevne, Julie Crabb, Tornado Bob, Fred Friedman, Kyle Erickson, Mark Jacobs, Long Lake Conservation Center and all the classrooms contributing to our newly expanded phenology program. As the kids remind us, "unplug, get outside, and live connected!"

Special honorable mention this year to all the folks willing to share their breakfasts with us on Friday mornings, especially 9-year-old Cora from Shevlin who put a name to "mom toast" - the best toast in all the land. Sometimes you don't even know what you need - and that morning, I needed to remember being with my mom and eating her perfectly buttered mom toast. Thanks Cora!

UPDATES FROM THE BUSINESS TEAM

BY PENNY HOLCOMB

It has been another busy year in the business office!

I am happy to report that we had a clean audit of fiscal year 2022. A clean audit not only ensures that our financial statements are accurate and reliable, but demonstrates our commitment to transparency, ethical conduct, and sound financial management. It is a point of pride for me to achieve this every year, but especially this year, with so much happening at KAXE and KBXE.

Thank you to our members and business underwriters for supporting the work that we do in the community. We could not do it without you!

BY JENNIFER BARR

Overall membership has stayed static over the past year. However, our sustaining membership continues to grow, and now over half of our donors choose to give this way. We will continue to encourage sustaining membership since this is by far the best way to retain members.

Goals going forward include reaching out more to lapsed members, working on more digital methods of gaining membership, and moving more sustaining members to bank withdrawals for their payment method instead of credit/debit cards. Thanks, as always, to everyone who supports KAXE/KBXE!



ENGINEERING UPDATE

BY STEVE NEU

The biggest news on the engineering front is that KAXE's studio spaces have been completely remodeled and outfitted with new equipment and infrastructure. The new desk formations are more accessible as a result. The new "brain" of our audio operations is a 20-year upgrade that will greatly increase flexibility and improve troubleshooting efforts. We're excited about the next chapter on-air at KAXE!

·Efforts to incorporate best digital practices into the workflow continue at KAXE/KBXE. Everyone is learning new things, and having fun with new tools!

·Integrating new tech into KAXE's Grand Rapids Riverfest was a rousing success. If you attended GRRF, you probably checked in with your digital ticket at the gate, or made a purchase of merchandise using the wireless sales terminals on temporary WiFi. It was an exciting time as we discovered just how much was possible!



DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

BY CHRIS WALKER

I began my new role at the beginning of April and since then, I have worked on developing new underwriting rates & packages, put together a membership plan for the remainder of the year to increase member numbers, and have been a part of helping plan Riverfest and securing sponsorships for the event.

Previously, my wife Ashley and I spent 10 years in the hospitality industry with Zorbaz on the Lake including 7 years as Owner/Operators between Zorbaz on Green Lake in Spicer, MN and Zorbaz on Pokegama Lake here in Grand Rapids.

I'm looking forward to help the station grow its awareness in the communities we serve, make new connections and build relationships in areas we haven't tapped into yet and to cultivate existing partnerships to make sure we're serving our longtime supporters.



MEET THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

BY DAN GANNON

Hello my name is Dan Gannon and I am the Volunteer Coordinator at Northern Community Radio. Since January we have seen a big uptick in on-air Volunteer participation. The calendar has been nearly full week in and week out.

Our Spring training session in Bemidji brought in a vibrant group of DJ's who have increased the diversity on our air waves. We will have another volunteer training in June at KAXE and we hope to continue building a unique and strong base of folks who bring their own perspectives and tastes to Northern Minnesota.

Listener Feedback

We are so impressed with the outreach activities that go so much farther than the weekly phenology report. The team is nurturing minds and souls. The newsletter keeps us connected to happenings up north when we can't be at the cabin.

Thank you!

- Lisa & Hank, Minneapolis

Best radio in the northland to the edge of the wilderness. Makes for enjoyable trips to Cohasset, Deer Lake, and Mesaba Co-op. Thanks so much!

- Randy, Minneapolis

AUDITED FY 2022 REVENUE

Contributions	\$ 301,049
Underwriting	\$ 166,344
Endowment	\$ 15,649
Grants	\$ 880,558
Special Events	\$ 315,753
AMPERS	\$ 12,856
Interest Income	\$ 17,129
<u>Other Income</u>	<u>\$ 29,177</u>

Total Revenues and Support **\$1,721,403**

AUDITED FY 2022 EXPENSES

Salaries/Benefits/Training/Travel	\$ 642,828
Equipment/Supplies/Maintenance	\$ 38,531
Program Acquisition/NPR	\$ 226,335
Utilities/Rent	\$ 89,224
Facility Insurance	\$ 20,937
Dues/Banking/Bad Debt/Misc	\$ 46,158
Event Expenses	\$ 307,251
Professional/Acct/Promotion	\$ 205,624
<u>Depreciation/Amortization</u>	<u>\$ 120,268</u>

Total Expenses **\$ 1,697,156**

Northern Community Radio had another clean audit. Its financial condition is good. Net assets at the end of FY22 were \$2,215,794 which is \$24,247 more than last year.

Cash equivalents on hand at the end of FY21 were \$589,942. The full audit is available at kaxe.org

STAFF AND BOARD

Senior Leadership

Sarah Bignall, CEO/General Manager
Kari Hedlund, Music Director
Penny Holcomb, Director of Business Services
Heidi Holtan, Director of Content & Public Affairs
Chelsey Perkins, News Director
Chris Walker, Development Director

Engineering

Steve Neu, IT Broadcast Engineer

Fundraising, Grant & Business Services

Jennifer Barr, Member & Fundraising Manager
Peggy Stevens, Dev. Associate/Legacy Coordinator

Programming

Sarah Mitchell, Phenology Producer
Malachy Koons, Music Programming Producer
Dan Gannon, Volunteer Coordinator
John Latimer, Staff Phenologist
John Bauer, Friday Morning Show Host

Board of Directors 2022-23

Jennifer Gorman, Grand Rapids, President
Susie Loeffler, Grand Rapids, Vice-President
Chris Bergquist, Grand Rapids, Secretary
Doug Baker, Grand Rapids, Treasurer
Kathleen Hermerding, Brainerd
Bianca Karjalainen, Grand Rapids
Mary Mitchell, Bemidji
David John Scribner, Bemidji
Sean Dunham, Bemidji



DAVE MCMILLAN

HARRY HUTCHINS CONSERVATION AWARD

As manager of Long Lake Conservation Center, Dave has inspired thousands of students across the state to become more connected to nature.

With the help of Dill Prickles the porcupine and a talented group of naturalists, Dave engages students with humor, wonder, and a never-ending curiosity about the natural world.

He even sends us weekly reports on their discoveries! Dave hasn't stopped there: this year, he championed legislation to provide funding for all schools to be able to visit environmental learning centers like Long Lake free of charge.

BRENDA GREELEY

DEBBIE LENTZ SILENT STAR AWARD

What a ray of sunshine is often uttered when talking about Brenda. She stepped up to help us out when we needed it - whether it was filling in as temporary volunteer coordinator or helping to clean up from Riverfest, she was there with a smile and kind words.

She brought a lightness that we all needed.

Brenda is a familiar face to KAXE she has been a staff member, volunteer and supporter. She has an unwavering support for the station and our programming. Her positive texts and words of encouragement keep us going on busy, stressful days.

CATE BELLEVEAU

KATHY DODGE COMMUNITY ART AWARD

This year's recipient of the Dodger Community Art Award is Cate Belleveau of Puposky.

Cate spent the majority of her professional life as the Director of Gifted Education for the Cass Lake-Bena Schools on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation.

Since then, she co-founded the Bemidji Sculpture Walk with her sculptor husband as well as the Mask and Rose Theater and Belle Thalia Creative Arts Space. She recently oversaw a driving tour of the arts through Bemidji and surrounding rural areas, and this summer, will oversee a theater and ecology summer experience for kids at no cost.

SHANNON ANTILLA

PHIL COLLINS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Shannon's enthusiasm for KAXE/KBXE is through the roof.

Not only is she a host for On the River, she is the newest Green Cheese host. No small feat. She shadowed Cheese hosts at both stations to get a feel for how they put the show together before going out on her own.

A frequent attendee at station events, she also volunteers whether it's helping out during the Spring Fundraiser, attending gigs at the Chief Theater or helping out at Record Store Day.

Shannon is also an active member of Great Tail's Animal Rescue in Grand Rapids.

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