

[UW-RF Home](#) > [University Communications Home](#) > [This Month's News Releases](#)

# University Communications

For more information contact [mark.a.kinders@uwrf.edu](mailto:mark.a.kinders@uwrf.edu) or [brenda.k.bredahl@uwrf.edu](mailto:brenda.k.bredahl@uwrf.edu).

## Student Experiences the World of Low Power FM Radio

By Meghan Dusek

UW-River Falls University Communications

DEC. 15, 2006--A foray into northern Wisconsin involving vintage radio equipment and a base of a few hundred listeners gave one University of Wisconsin-River Falls student a little insight to a relatively new radio sub-culture.

Thanks to a gift from UWRF alumnus Donovan Rasmussen, a mechanical engineer who retired to his hometown of Dresser, Wis., Nick Hassel, a junior journalism major from St. Paul, completed a paid internship with the low power FM (LPFM) station WPCA FM 95.7 in Amery, Wis.

Lower power FM radio service was created by the FCC in 2000. Stations are allowed for noncommercial or nonprofit educational broadcast, or public safety, transportation or government agencies. Current broadcast licensees with other media interests cannot apply for a permit, and permit holders can only broadcast at 100 watts in a radius of 3.5 miles, according to the FCC.

As a LPFM, WPCA reaches the immediate Amery area--and that's about it. "Once you hit I-94 it turns into a country station," Hassel says.

As current promotions director for the UWRF Wisconsin Public Radio affiliate WRFW FM 88.7 and with two years' experience working with the campus station, Hassel had a substantial background but the internship--as news director--called on different skills.

A typical day began with the newscast at 7 a.m. followed by gathering and writing stories for a later cast and then an afternoon of interviews or press conferences, depending on the current events. Hassel said news in a town Amery's size might equate to a new stoplight, but he recognizes the value of his time in the small town and having to wear many hats.

"I gained a lot of first-hand experience," Hassel says. "With most internships, you follow people around and don't really do anything. I just kind of got thrown into it there."

Despite being one wave of the future, the LPFM station WPCA is working to recapture the "golden age of radio." Recordings of musical presentations from the 1940s play on weekends, and Frank Sinatra and other Rat Packers are staples on the playlist.

Hassel says station owner Bob Zank relies on 'Mom and Pop' underwriters versus commercials for funding. All the equipment at the station is from the 1950s and visitors are invited to view a newscast as it might have looked back in the day when radio shows "Life of Riley" and "The Shadow" and personality Jack Benny were the equivalent to today's "King of Queens" and "CSI" television shows and media maven Dane Cook.

Described as a largely rural phenomena as FCC requirements do not allow LPFM to exist in larger cities with more crowded spectrums, such community stations are credited with bringing back localism and diversity to airwaves. With more than 260 currently in existence in the United States, the stations' platforms range from

religious groups, local neighborhoods, and high schools to "regular" news and music programming like WPCA's.

"They're a good idea for a smaller town," Hassel says. "Older people get involved, and it's really about the community and what's going on there."

**-30-**

*Last updated:*