

KTVO sale progresses

Ian Vickers
for the Index

KTVO has a new family. Barrington Broadcasting Corporation recently purchased Kirksville's ABC affiliate KTVO and 11 other stations from Raycom Media Inc. as a package deal for a combined price of \$292 million.

Both companies are satisfied with the purchase.

"Raycom is pleased to have completed this transaction with a long-term broadcaster such as Barrington," said Paul McTear, Raycom president and CEO, in a press release.

Barrington CEO K. James Yager said in a press release, "We look forward to building upon the foundation that Raycom's management has established with these stations and working with the Raycom employees and managers at the stations we are acquiring."

KTVO went on the market in November 2005 and spent February addressing corporations in the process of bidding on the station, general manager Crystal Amini-Rad said. KTVO made presentations to seven corporations and chose early March as the deadline. Barrington, which already owns six stations, won the bidding process for KTVO and 11 other stations.

"That was exciting for us because Barrington was our No. 1 choice as a management group," she said. "We knew we had seven possibilities, and we prioritized. And Barrington was at the top of our list, so we were thrilled when that happened."

The sale, which is undergoing FCC approval, could take three to six months, Amini-Rad said. KTVO hopes to be working with Barrington by July 1 but knows it would be quick.

"That would be extraordinarily fast for the FCC under typical schedule," she said.

Because of the wait for the approval and other factors, KTVO is waiting as well.

"We're not able to visit too much with Barrington about the plans," Amini-Rad said. "We can't get too in-depth in planning until they actually begin operating the station."

Raycom bought 15 stations in the southeast region of the United States prior to selling 12 of its stations. While trying to adapt to these 15 new stations, it also is trying to sell its other stations to three different ownership groups. Most of its attention has become focused on its new stations, Amini-Rad said.

"We have this period of where a lot is not happening with KTVO in terms of relationship with corporate because our old owners are trying to draw back, and our new owners really can't jump in yet," she said.

Even though it is waiting, KTVO still has plans in the works.

"I think you can expect to see some exciting things happening at KTVO," she said. "Having new corporate ownership with adjacent markets provides us with opportunities we didn't have a year ago even."

Amini-Rad said she is excited and anxious to move forward with everything despite the wait for the next couple of months.

"I feel like a racehorse that's in the gate," she said. "We can't do anything more until that gate opens up. We're all ready for the race, and we're all ready to go. We have everything we need to do it, and we just need the gate to open up."

KTVO has long-term strategic plans created from information and feedback it obtains from viewers and advertisers. The information comes from surveying and talking with its viewers and advertisers, Amini-Rad said.

She said the company can't release full details until it finalizes new ownership. This is the sixth ownership of KTVO, and most employees are familiar with transitions between companies, she said.

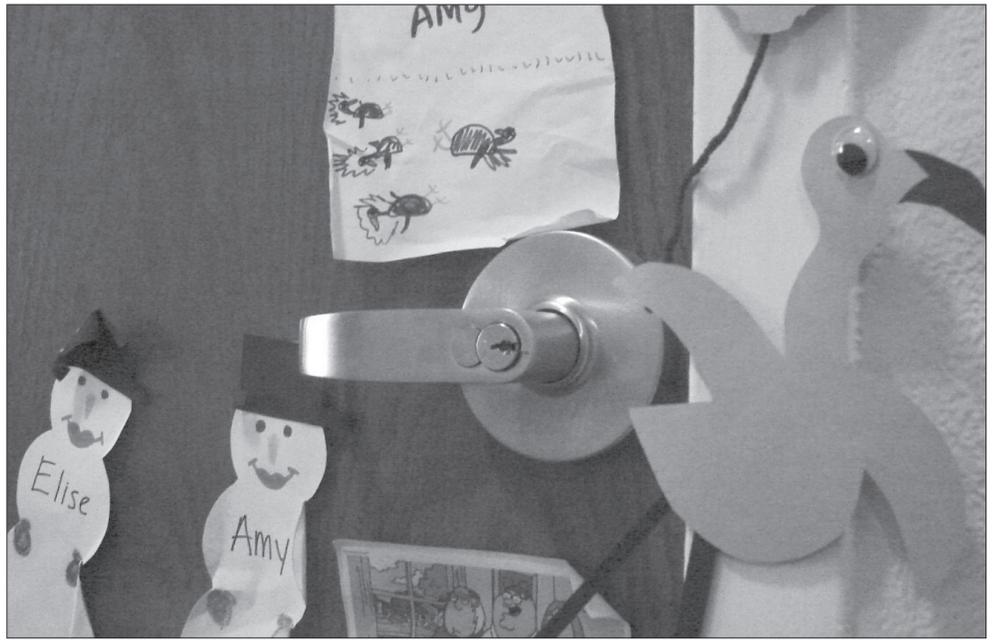
"Because Barrington is an established company and has stations that are in the markets adjacent to us, we're fairly familiar with the impact that's going to have on employees, and we feel good," she said. "We feel good about the way things are going to go."

Amini-Rad, however, does recognize concerns some might have.

"There's a little anxiety when there are unknown factors, but this is a normal practice for this business and [employees] recognize that, and they're all professionals," she said. "We wouldn't have had seven corporations interested in purchasing KTVO if [employees] didn't do a really great job at what they do."

With Barrington already owning three stations in Hannibal, Mo., Jefferson City, Mo., and Peoria, Ill., it will help eliminate acclimating the new company to issues, which is very appealing, Amini-Rad said.

"The exciting thing about this from KTVO's perspective is that Barrington knows the market," she said. "They understand the market, they understand the people, they understand the business needs."



Lisa Margetis/Index

Door decorations, such as these in Ryle Hall, should be seasonal or holiday-related, according to Residence Life.

Festive decor finds balance

Kelly Albright
for the Index

With the approaching holiday, students and Kirksville residents might see some Easter decorations around campus and town.

The problem is not everyone celebrates Easter.

As the United States become more diverse, more religions have entered the picture, and some people aren't happy with the focus on Christian holidays.

Steve Collins, president of the Kirksville Downtown Improvement Committee and owner of Washington Street Java Company, is not one of these people. He said the arguments about holidays, such as the appropriateness of saying "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays," are ridiculous.

"I think they've gone overboard with all of that [political correctness]," Collins said.

He said the KDIC only decorates the Square for Christmas, but Collins decorates the coffee shop for Christmas, Halloween and sometimes Easter. When he decorates, he mainly sticks to secular representations of the holidays, such as Santa Claus or the Easter bunny because they're more traditional and familiar, he said.

"We want it to look festive more than anything else," he said. "We don't really try to squeeze a certain meaning out of it."

He also said the city doesn't have rules regarding how or for which holidays he

decorates, in the store or downtown, and he doesn't think there should be.

Greg Hudson, director of Dobson Hall, said he thinks rules on decorating in the residence halls are good to have.

According to the Office of Residence Life's guidelines, decorations should be related to the season or include different holidays. During the winter season, decorations should be seasonal, such as snowflakes, or include major winter holidays, such as Christmas, Hanukkah, Ramadan or Kwanzaa.

"I think it's a good policy," Hudson said. "I think it prevents halls from just focusing on one major holiday."

He said these rules also apply to decorations student advisers put on residents' doors. The door decorations also cannot be religious, but SAs have a lot to choose from, not just holidays, Hudson said.

"I think it's important just to be mindful of all residents, ... be mindful of diversity and be mindful that as ResLife, we're neutral," Hudson said.

Senior Eran Feintuch, president of Jewish organization Hillel, said he sometimes feels uncomfortable seeing holiday decorations in public places.

"When I begin to get the sense that the government or a school, somewhere in the public, is endorsing specifically the Christian faith, it tends to make me feel like an outsider," Feintuch said. "It violates my sense of separation between church and state."

Feintuch said he has no problem with

decorations on people's homes, however, because he understands that people are celebrating their religions, just as he likes to do. He said that ideally, if a public place is decorated for holidays, it should try to include as many religions as possible or not involve any symbols having to do with religion at all.

"I think people just need to use their common sense and think of what promotes tolerance, pluralism and acceptance," Feintuch said. "... I think people should just try to follow the guideline of what's going to bring people together versus what's going to drive people apart."

The Rev. Bill Kottenstette, chaplain of the Newman Center, also promotes tolerance of others' religions. He said that although he doesn't think decorations in public places force beliefs on anyone, he recognizes that people need to be aware of the diversity of religion in America.

"We have to understand that we're not the only people on the planet," Kottenstette said. "We should extend some sensitivity."

Junior Corey Bennett said that, as an atheist, he isn't bothered by public decorations.

"I don't find any offense in [decorating]," he said. "It's just a representation of the season."

People should have free choice in how they decorate as long as the decorations aren't outrageous, Bennett said. When he sees holiday decorations, he usually doesn't consider the current meaning of them, he said.

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