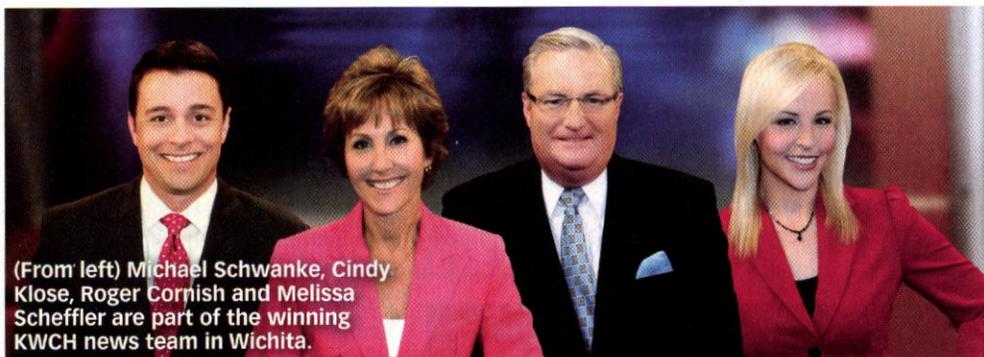




# A Change in the Air

## Boeing going, but new owners energize Wichita stations



(From left) Michael Schwanke, Cindy Klose, Roger Cornish and Melissa Scheffler are part of the winning KWCH news team in Wichita.

**The mass consolidation going on in the local TV business is well-represented in Wichita-Hutchinson, Kan. Sinclair Broadcast Group last year acquired the Fox-MyNetworkTV pair, KSAS-KMTW, in a deal with Newport. And LIN Media picked**

up NBC affiliate KSNW when it snagged the New Vision Television bunch in 2012.

Station general managers in the market are curious how the incursion of two giant broadcast companies will shake up Wichita. Joan Barrett, president/GM at KWCH, isn't giving much away. "Competition is always good," she says. "We welcome the competition."

KWCH is owned by Schurz's Sunflower Broadcasting. The CBS affiliate almost doubled the nearest comer in late news in the November sweeps, its 11 household rating/24 share well ahead of the 6/13 put up by KSNW and Gray TV's KAKE. KWCH won primetime, but other news races are closer: The above three were virtually tied in the 6-7 a.m. derby, while KWCH and KSNW were essentially deadlocked at 6 p.m. KWCH and KSNW were similarly tied in total-day ratings.

While Nielsen has Wichita-Hutchinson as

DMA No. 66, the market is a lagging No. 76 in revenue, according to BIA/Kelsey. Calling itself the Air Capital of the World, the market took a big hit, both economically and psychologically, when Boeing announced it will move out by the end of 2013, ending an 85-year run in Wichita and taking around 2,000 jobs. "That's something you don't want to hear, whether you're involved in aerospace or not," says Wall.

KWCH is far more than a traditional TV station, offering mobile DTV, a quartet of mobile apps and 24/7 weather on its subchannel. "We've gone from a dominant CBS affiliate to a multimedia group," says Barrett.

The competition is making moves, too. KAKE is nearly finished with a 1½-year engineering upgrade that, says GM Dan Wall, will make the ABC affiliate fully HD across all transmitters that carry KAKE's signal in the sprawling market. "We've got a pretty large territory to cover," he

says. KAKE features *Dr. Oz* and *Katie* in daytime.

John Dawson, KSNW VP/GM, says being part of LIN means "an incredible commitment" for the station in terms of technology, personnel, research and training. One tangible effect is its reporters becoming "true multiplatform journalists," says Dawson. "Our focus is to enhance our brand and emphasize the multiscreen experience."

The market is down a few news directors. KSNW's Jason Kravarik moved to LIN sister station KOIN Portland last February. An executive producer has been filling in as news chief, but the station is looking for a full-timer.

KWCH also has an interim news director in Tom Lindner, following John Soares' departure after a four-month stint. Barrett would not comment on Soares' exit, citing it as a personnel matter. A search for a full-time news director is on.

It's a key position. KWCH produces 47 hours of news per week between it, sister KSCW and Univision station KDCU. The latter, owned by Entravision, has a joint sales agreement with KWCH and airs 10 p.m. news weekdays. KSCW plans to add a local 4:30 p.m. show this summer, featuring happenings around town and extended segment opportunities for local marketers.

The stations will forge on. KWCH turns 60 this year and will look back while also looking ahead. "We're very fortunate to have the talent that we do," says Barrett. "People want to be here." ■

**Next: St. Louis**

E-mail comments to [mmalone@nbmedia.com](mailto:mmalone@nbmedia.com) and follow him on Twitter: @BCMikeMalone

### >> WHAT'S WORKING IN WICHITA-HUTCHINSON

KWCH-KSCW is fully committed to its digital business—evident in its four separate websites, including ones focused on high school sports ([catchitkansas.com](http://catchitkansas.com)) and local commerce ([fetchtoto.com](http://fetchtoto.com)), and a dedicated digital team of 20 handling sales, content and technology. The sales folks' function is similar

to an ad agency, doing everything from coming up with creative, creating websites, building up search engine optimization and crafting Google Adwords campaigns for local clients. "It's anything and everything," says Joan Barrett, KWCH president and general manager.

Shawn Hilferty, a former promotions man-

ager, was named director of digital media for the Sunflower Broadcasting stations last year.

Barrett won't divulge digital revenue figures, but says they are substantial. "TV still drives the engine, but digital is the fastest-growing part of our revenue portfolio," she says. "It is significant." —MM