

CRIS Radio marks 30 years of broadcasting to the blind

By Amanda Cuda
STAFF WRITER

Until she began volunteering with CRIS Radio, Kathleen Miranti had no idea how important obituaries and store advertisements could be to people.

Miranti is studio manager for the Trumbull branch of CRIS, a radio station that bills itself as a talking newsstand for the blind, visually impaired and others who can't read or access newspapers and magazines. The station broadcasts full articles — read by volunteers like Miranti — so that listeners can “read” publications they might not otherwise have access to.

Over roughly a dozen years of volunteering with CRIS (which stands for Connecticut Radio Information System), Miranti has learned that listeners rely on the service to get information others take for granted.

For instance, it's a way to learn which items are on sale at which stores. And it's a source for more serious information as well. “CRIS Radio is really important to the homebound,” Miranti said. “There's no other place that they can get the obituaries, and that's really important.”

This year, CRIS, which is based in Windsor, is celebrating its 30th anniversary. Though the radio station started in 1979, CRIS operations director Scott Baecker said he and other staff were unable to organize a 30th anniversary celebration last year, so the commemoration got pushed back.

Regardless of its tardiness, the station is planning to recognize this milestone with a variety of events, including a fundraising luncheon to be held 1 p.m. May 2 at the Hartford Marriott in Rocky Hill.

The station is also opening a new broadcast center, at 315 Windsor Ave., in Windsor. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new facility at 9 a.m. May 17.

When CRIS first began in Hartford, it aired a daily, two-hour broadcast that could be heard primarily in the Hartford area. Now, CRIS broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from studios in Trumbull, Danbury, Norwich, West Haven and the broadcast center in Windsor. The news is read by about 350 volunteers, and heard by roughly 4,000 listeners.

CRIS programming is provided free of charge and is available on specially tuned radios (provided free), and other sources, including online.

Baecker said the radio station has survived all these decades because it provides a service that those with visual impairment, and other issues, crave.

Regular news radio and television stations don't provide the lengthier, in-depth news that newspapers do, Baecker said.

And many people, even in today's sound-bite obsessed culture, still want to get the full story on the issues that matter to them. “News and information drive our society,” he said. “Access to that is important. You can't get all the information you need in (short) increments.”

Miranti agreed. “We fill a void that TV and radio can't fill,” she said.

Volunteers at the Trumbull studio, based out of Trumbull High School, and the other satellite stations specialize in reading news that is local to their region. Aside from local news, CRIS offers world, national and state news, as well as readings from magazines, such as Reader's Digest, and other

print publications. As the news industry has evolved to include an increasingly large role for electronic media, Baecker said CRIS has rolled with the times. Volunteers sometimes read stories from Yahoo! and other online sources. But Baecker said print is the preferred medium for reading.

CRIS dedicates blocks of programming to certain topics and publications, and Baecker said each listener has his or her favorites. “People tend to listen to us the way they watch TV,” he said.

But Miranti said the radio station provides something far more meaningful than access to Reader's Digest articles.

She first began working with the Trumbull studio, which is based out of Trumbull High School, after reading a Connecticut Post article about the service.

“I was in the radio business before I got married and had children, and I loved it,” Miranti said. She also had some experience reading books for the blind, and knew how rewarding that experience could be.

A lot of CRIS's audience members are homebound adults who might be lacking in companionship, Miranti said.

Thus, the voice on the radio provides them not just information, but company. “We don't talk at the listeners,” Miranti said. “We talk to them, as if we're in their living room.”

For more information on CRIS Radio and its 30th anniversary events — or if you are interested in volunteering — visit www.crisradio.org. If you are specifically interested in volunteering at the Trumbull studio, call Kathleen Miranti at 203-452-1574.

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He Declared, "These Are The Times That Try Men's Souls"

A Commoner Lays Out A Common Sense Plan For You To Get So Much For So Little That Only Someone With No Sense At All Would Pass It Up

Dear Connecticut Residents,

My name is Jill Merriam and I'm writing this letter because these days common sense ain't so common...and I'm ready to start a revolution!

Back in 1776 Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet called "Common Sense" that openly asked for American independence from Britain, a challenging idea at the time. Paine used plain language to speak to Americans and in the pamphlet he declared: "These Are The Times That Try Men's Souls."

As a local business woman, (I'm the Owner of Key Hyundai), I have first hand knowledge of how trying the past few years have been for everyone. I want to help ease the pain and do something to make your life a little bit better. As a car dealer what could I do?

My Promise:

I'm on a mission to put the fun back into buying a car and bring respect and responsibility back to the car business. I'm fighting for you. I'm challenging my fellow dealers to clean up their acts and put truth and honesty first and profits second.

I'm a firm believer that if you treat people with courtesy and educate them with the most complete information available, they'll be em-powered, they'll be more informed and they'll become your customers for life.

Bottom line, you deserve to be treated with respect and honesty when buying a car. And that's what I'm promising. I'm not in business to sell cars to make a quick buck. I'm in business to sell cars to find great people who will stay with me for life.

I want to build a relationship with you... a relationship that adds value to your life... one built on trust and mutual respect... a relation-ship that will end your search for an honest car dealer and finally give you a dealership you feel comfortable doing business with for life.

My name is Jill Merriam...and I'm A Dealer FOR The People.

Through some research I've found that 93 percent of Americans have NEGATIVE FEELINGS about car sales process and I believe the industry as a whole is headed in the wrong direction. What a shame! So I'm changing the process and I've created a common sense deal that makes good personal financial sense at a time when so many things seem to make no sense at all.

This letter is meant to layout my new plan and also to be a wake up call to other dealers about how they treat people...a challenging idea at THIS time.

Here's my Common Sense Plan in plain language!

Here's What You Need To Know:

- BRAND NEW "Promise" that is radically different from anything you've ever seen in the car business
- "Car Buyer's Bill of Rights" and posted it on the wall at my dealership
- Pay off your trade no matter what you owe when you upgrade to a nicer, newer vehicle - extended by popular demand!
- Guaranteed \$2,000 paid on any trade-in, regardless of condition (this helps you turn a worthless old car into cash for a down payment)
- Our goal is 100% credit approval in April
- This offer is only good for the first 87 customers who buy a car this month!
- Call 800-470-1813 to talk to Kellie Jo, my appointment coordinator.
- Visit us at Key Hyundai - 566 Bridgeport Ave., Milford, CT

I'm dedicating myself to a BRAND NEW "Promise" that is radically different from anything you've ever seen in the car business. And I've created the "Car Buyer's Bill of Rights" and posted it on the wall at my dealership...so that everyone knows our commitment to a better process and a better experience. Bottom line...we're becoming a car dealer "For The People."

Primarily, my entire staff and I are rededicating ourselves to being PROBLEM SOLVERS rather than PRODUCT PUSHERS. So whatever problem keeping you from enjoying life a little bit driving a nicer, newer car...we want to help.

And right now I'm tackling the three biggest problems are people face when buying a better car. **9 out of 10 people face at least one of these problems:**

BIG PROBLEM #1:
You're Driving A Car You Hate...
But You Owe More Than It's Worth

No problem. Right now pay off your trade no matter what you owe when you upgrade to a nicer, newer vehicle.

BIG PROBLEM #2:
You're Driving A Car That's Unreliable...
But You Don't Have Enough Money For A Down Payment On Something Better

No problem. Right now, we'll pay a guaranteed \$2,000 for any trade, running or not, regardless of condition. You can use that extra money as your down payment on a vehicle that's more reliable.

BIG PROBLEM #3:
You're Making Mistakes In The Process...
And Can't Get Approved For A Car Loan

One of the reasons we've been successful over the years is because we've built and maintained strong relationships with forgiving lenders all around the country. We know which banks can help with certain credit situations...so we can match your application with the bank or banks that are most likely to approve you. I'm calling this my "For The Pre-Approval Process" and I am certain it's more effective than any other approach out there.

My goal this month is 100% approval of all applicants! Wouldn't that be amazing?

So there it is...that's my plan. What do you think? Do you think it will work?

Here's what you need to do next:
come see us in person at 566 Bridgeport Ave., Milford, CT or call us ahead and set an appointment at 800-470-1813. Make sure to

Common Sense Plan

tell us that you have "Common Sense" and that you're ready to join the revolution!

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