



Gary Hackler Returns to His Vermilion County Roots



Vermilion County native Gary Hackler is back where he always intended to be. Hackler, who started his career at WITY radio in May of 1982, returned as Station Manager/Sales Manager for WITY 99.5FM & AM980 in December of 2019.

“It’s really been part of my plan since departing here in 1990,” he says. “After 30 years in sales and management at both TV Stations in Champaign, it’s nice to be back home. I have always maintained local roots, growing up in Ridge Farm and living in Georgetown for the past 37 years.”

In his new role, Hackler oversees sales for the station and works with the staff on programming, promotions and remotes. He also hosts “The Drive,” the station’s afternoon live show from 4-6pm, Monday through Friday. When he’s not on the air or working with the staff, he’s out meeting with clients, helping friends and neighbors and working with local non-profits.

The Stations

For 66 years, WITY radio has provided listeners with good information and entertainment. “We take pride in providing over three hours of farm news and market reports every weekday; interspersed with Adult Contemporary and Country

Crossover Music from the 1960’s, 70’s, 80’s and 90’s,” he says. “We also feature syndicated programming like *The Dave Ramsey Show* and *Under the Hood*. We also are proud of our religious programming line-up from area churches each Sunday.”

The AM980 signal reaches from Kankakee to the North, Lafayette, IN to the east through Crawfordsville, IN to Terre Haute, IN, Charleston-Mattoon to the south and Bloomington-Normal to the West. The FM 99.5 signal currently reaches a 25-mile radius around Danville. Their parent company, Illiana Communications, also owns WBYS 93.7FM, AM1560 and WCDD 107.9FM in Canton, IL.

Getting Started

Music has always been a passion of Hackler’s. He grew up wanting to be the next Larry Lujack, the legendary Chicago radio personality. From the moment the teenaged Hackler walked into WELH, the campus radio station at Eastern Illinois University, he was hooked. “Music is a universal language that crosses all platforms,” he says.

His love for what he does has expanded beyond the music as he’s worked in the industry. “At the end of the day it’s about

working with people, groups, non-profits and promoting the benefits of what we do, why we do it and how we can help make our communities better, stronger and live together in unison,” he says. “Ag reporting and marketing is our forte. No one does it better than WITY. I also enjoy working with local businesses on their marketing plans and growing their business. It doesn’t work for us unless it works for you!”

Personal Ties

Gary and his wife La Donna, a teacher at Georgetown-Ridge Farm High School, have been married for 37 years. They have two sons, a daughter-in-law and new granddaughter, Maydelle Rose. They’ll be adding a new daughter-in-law later this year.

Hackler is looking forward to helping local businesses grow, maintaining a genuine connection to the local communities and growing the station and local radio. “I plan on joining more local boards to help champion the cause here in the county and volunteering in a greater capacity than I was able to do before,” he says. “Vermilion County is a jewel. More people need to realize that.”