

## Station channels family matters

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by Jerry Shottenkirk  
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OKLAHOMA CITY – Fans of the Gaither Vocal Band liked the old KSBI-TV just the way it was, but in four years of station ownership, Brady Brus has given quite a few more options.



Brady and Angie Brus are the owners of KSBI-TV.

Formerly a division of the plumbing wholesaler Locke Supply Co., Channel 52 was devoted to religion, and when Brus and his Family Broadcasting Co. took the reins, he wanted to keep the station as a family channel but wanted to offer much more than what had been.

KSBI, which is on Channel 9 on the local Cox Communications cable dial, has made some major changes along the way and is preparing for more. Brus and company officials broke ground for a new facility at 9802 N. Morgan Rd. near Northwest Expressway and the Kilpatrick Turnpike.

“The reason we chose that piece of property was the frontage view from the Kilpatrick Turnpike,” said Brus, president and general manager of the station. “Most of the other stations are kind of buried back off neighborhoods or off the Broadway Extension and you can’t really see a lot of them when you’re driving around. We wanted a highly visible location and with northwest Oklahoma City being one of the fastest-growing parts of the area, we chose 10 acres out there.”

The first building will be 13,500 square feet. Brus said other phases will follow in the next few years. The station is expected to be ready to go in March and will be about three times the size of the current studio, which is at 1350 SE 82nd.

“It’s been difficult to launch more newscasts and bring in more production staff,” Brus said. “We’ve done well with the space we’ve had. We just ran out. We’re growing and the plan has always been to build, but the time has just finally become right.”

Brus said the facility and the equipment involved will run about \$2 million.

When Family Broadcasting secured the station, changes were immediate.

“The plan was always to start focusing on syndicated programming and local programming,” he said. “Mr. Locke’s desire was to serve not only the state but the region with Southern Gospel music. Literally, when we took over the station, most of the broadcast day was the Gaither Vocal Band. When we went in and took the keys to the station, we immediately began working on phases of a business plan. We wanted to find a niche and start to fulfill it.”

Smack in the middle of a sports-loving state, Brus made high school games a priority. KSBI enters its fourth season of broadcasting high school football and basketball games as well as special events such as volleyball, soccer and swimming.

“The feedback’s been great,” he said. “We’re doing 18 football games this year, including some Thursday night games. It’s been great because we have started to get ‘good’ complaints. When you have someone in Fairview, Cordell or Madill call and say ‘Can you do our game?’ or ‘Why aren’t you doing our game?’ those are good complaints.”

KSBI also has beefed up its syndicated programming over the years, and that, Brus said, hasn’t been easy.

“A lot of people think you can put on whatever programming you want to, but relationships have to be built with national syndicators,” he said. “Now we have good relationships with Paramount, Sony and all these others. You can’t just go in and say you want X, Y and Z programs. Those contracts sometimes run four to six years. A program we want may be under contract with another station.”

KSBI has some first-run syndicated programs, he said. Among the programs are Lost, American Chopper, Deadliest Catch, King of Queens and Tyra Banks.

“These are big wins for the station,” he said. “We’re proud to have them on the air, considering that syndicators didn’t know KSBI existed 4.5 years ago. It’s been a lot of work to get where we’re at.”

KSBI has improved its ratings. For some postseason football games, the station had as much as a 10 share.

“When we took over we didn’t even show up in the Nielsen ratings,” he said. “Now on any given night on overnights, we are outperforming many in this market.”

KSBI started with eight employees. Four were full-time, four were part-time and a few were contract employees. Today, the station has a staff of more than 50.

Brus said the station got a boost 1.5 years ago when executives Tom Ward of SandRidge Energy and Aubrey McClendon of Chesapeake Energy bought into the station.

“We’re very happy to have them on board,” Brus said.

“They’ve enabled us to accelerate some of the things we’ve been wanting to do and we’ve been very appreciative of them being part of the company.”