

# COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

## WESTMAN COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

# SERVING THE COMMUNITY COMES FIRST

BY IAN HITCHEN

*Westman Communications Group was the recipient of the 2022 Brandon Chamber of Commerce Community Impact Award, which recognizes the company's outstanding effort and commitment to community through meaningful contributions to the well-being and quality of life in Westman. Westman Communications Group Marketing Team (L-R) Jojo Fermin, Tammy Crepeele, Brandi Crowe – Marketing Team Lead, Courtney Baxter – Marketing Manager, Amanda Chambers, and Bailly Naherniak*

*The 2022 #ConnectingWestman Tour in Minnedosa last June 30, 2022. (L-R) Jessica Brady – Marketing and Communications Manager of Heritage Co-op, Dominique Hampton – Vice-Chairperson of the Minnedosa and Area Food Bank, Gail Janz – Board Member of Westman Communications Group, Courtney Baxter – Marketing Manager of Westman Communications Group, Carol Brown – Chairperson for Minnedosa and Area Food Bank*

**W**estman Communications Group's power to reach people extends beyond its fibre-optic, cable, TV, and radio networks. It also lies in its people, specifically its staff and their desire to help and improve the communities they serve.

That's shown in the fact that WCG is the winner of the Brandon Chamber of Commerce's 2022 Community Impact Award.

Community work is one of the most important things that the company does said President and CEO Bud Keys, so receiving this award is particularly fitting.

"If we had to pick one, this was probably the one we would want," Keys says. "We do a lot of things that maybe aren't necessarily recognized, so it's nice for that."

You're probably aware of the business aspect of Brandon-based WCG as a provider of internet, digital TV, home phone, and business services to 57 communities.

Or, perhaps you know the company as

owner-operator of the 94.7 Star FM and Q Country radio stations and non-profit WCGtv. What you may not be aware of is the extent of community work WCG and its employees perform.

The business is a community service in itself, in a sense. Keys notes that in many of the communities it serves, WCG is the only provider of high-speed internet service that supplies educational and business opportunities.

As a co-op, Keys says WCG is responsible to its members, but its work isn't solely based on the bottom line. Providing a service to the community is top of mind when it expands into a new area.

"We don't go in saying, 'We're going to make a million dollars in that community,'" Keys says. "We go and say, 'How can we service the people within the community and improve quality of life.'"

The Community Impact Award recognizes an



individual or business for their outstanding community service to business and community endeavours.

WCG contributes more than \$100,000 annually to education, technology and community initiatives.

Among those initiatives is its Award of Excellence, which WCG provides to students at each of the high schools in its coverage area. The program has run for more than 20 years, and this year more than \$18,000 in scholarships were given to nearly 40 students.

The company also offers the Westman Communications Group Scholarship to outstanding students at the School of Music at Brandon University.

As a public service, WCG also provides free Wi-Fi in 30 public areas within its service zone, including the Keystone Centre in Brandon.

Then, there are the partnerships, sponsorships and donations, such as the sponsorships it provides groups like the YMCA and the Helping Hands Centre.

In addition, the company donates radio time for public service announcements and, through WCGtv, television broadcast time and production services for its regional community channels.

WCGtv works with local volunteers to provide content for the channels, which broadcast public announcements and keep citizens up-to-date on happenings in their community.

"We actually donate a fairly substantial amount of our revenue towards the community stations," Keys said. "That's all done as a public service to the communities we serve."

Community-minded employees motivate WCG's efforts by volunteering for events such as charity hotdog lunches, or by sitting on charity-related committees, Keys added.

Staff support more than 80 initiatives annually and collectively volunteer more than 4,000 hours each year. The groups they support include the United Way, YWCA, Kinsmen Club of Brandon and the Brandon Humane Society, to name just a few.

And the #ConnectingWestman Tour travels to WCG communities where money is raised for local causes.

"I think, as a co-op and doing all the things that we do, I think that the impact on the community is probably one of the most important things to us." ●

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*Westman Communications Group,  
President and CEO Bud Keys.*

PHOTOS BY MATT GOERZEN