

Celebrating 75 Years of KRVN

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture extends a heartfelt congratulations to KRVN and the Nebraska Rural Radio Association on the remarkable milestone of 75 years. Through their dedication and hard work, relevant news and weather updates can reach the entire state of Nebraska, including those in the most rural areas. To help celebrate this achievement, NDA is sharing this glimpse into KRVN's rich history.

Radio has a way of connecting people. For years, those living miles away had no other way of receiving news than through a local radio station, but even that may not have been an option. In dispersed areas the only way of receiving vital news or information was through word of mouth from neighbors, miles apart, or newspaper perhaps days after the fact. The truth is, agricultural and rural communities in Nebraska needed a radio station designed just for them.

In 1947, it wasn't that radio stations didn't exist outside of the Lincoln and Omaha metro area. In fact, there were thirteen radio stations, but they were limited to 1,000 watts, which will only reach up to fifty miles, leaving many outside of this bubble. Farmers and ranchers wanted, needed, their own radio stations, especially after a blizzard had damaged much of central and western Nebraska, all having only been reported by eastern radio stations calling it a 'small storm.' They needed stations that were for them, near them, by them. In October of that year, they held a Co-op Council meeting, placing the first steppingstone towards filling this gap in the industry... but what were the logistics of creating such a broad span radio station?



Those present at the meeting determined that a radio survey would be conducted, determining the legal, economic and engineering possibilities of a farmer-owned radio station. With funding provided by forty-four local cooperative and three state farm organizations, the survey was held, and the results were reported in March of the following year. Three main points stood out from the survey.

1. Radio frequencies were available to be used in Nebraska.
 - a. But a one tower radio station would not completely cover the state
2. Advertising slots would have to be sold to maintain the station financially
 - a. The station would cover all of Nebraska and reach many families, making it a prime station for advertising
3. There is no legal reason why a radio station could not be formed and run entirely by farm people

Having weighed the survey results and the pros and cons, a decision was made to move forward with creating the radio station. On June 2, 1948, after having voted on different articles and naming the NRRA Interim Board of Directors, the Nebraska Rural Radio Association was formed under the non-profit laws of the state of Nebraska. Their purpose? "To establish an agricultural radio station, organized and operated for education purposes and the promotion of social and economic welfare of rural areas."

The Nebraska Rural Radio Association's dedication to serving the public is shown in its desire to not be owned by one single person or entity, instead being established through membership certificates. It is set up in such a way that "no individual owner can receive any personal profit from the income of the station." In fact, no matter the number of membership certificates owned, a member only receives a single vote, preventing the station from falling under the control of one or more members. Under the law, all profits cannot be reverted to the owners and must be used for

1. Better radio facilities and programming and
2. In the field of agricultural education, rural youth, the College of Agriculture and agricultural research.



*Max Brown: Co-op Council 1946-50
Manager 1950-79*

Between 1947-1950, the main goal was promoting the radio station and gaining more members. In these years, 320 meetings were held and over 100,000 pieces of literature were distributed. Much of the conversations were had around dining room tables, over coffee with rural folks, enlisting their support. It was because of this work that there were 4,719 members when the station hit the air on February 1, 1951.

But why KRVN? The letters were chosen to stand for the 'rural voice of Nebraska' with the K added as required by FCC for all stations west of the Mississippi River. Originally, Nebraska Rural Radio Association filed an application with the FCC for the radio station to operate on 1010kc, with 10,000 watts of power, but this would be during the daytime only and would not cover the entirety of Nebraska as they would have liked. The application was later amended and accepted for 25,000 watts of power. Still, they wanted to expand further, but it was a start.

Come February 1, 1951, the towers were in place, \$185,000 had been raised and the FCC had given their final approval and signed NRRA on to 1010. Listeners tuned in from around the state to listen to the first broadcast designed just for them. Support flooded in by way of telegrams, letters and flowers. Finally, rural Nebraska had a radio station.

In an attempt to expand their reach to the entire state, NRRA decided to build an FM station. They erected a 600-foot FM tower, which collapsed in a storm only 22 days after the station opened. The tower was rebuilt, but over the years it collapsed a total of four times before they switched to a 300 foot tower, and was eventually upped to 100,000 watts of power.

But still this wasn't enough. The true goal was to cover the entire state with one radio broadcast that could reach even the furthest of rural communities. One of the largest hurdles was finding a clear frequency they could use for broadcasting. These channels already had stations linked to them, for example the 880 was the dominant station of WCBS in New York City. This meant that if KRVN were to be awarded 880 they could have the full 50,000 watts of power both day and night but would need to divert power at night and hold it from going east so as not to interfere.

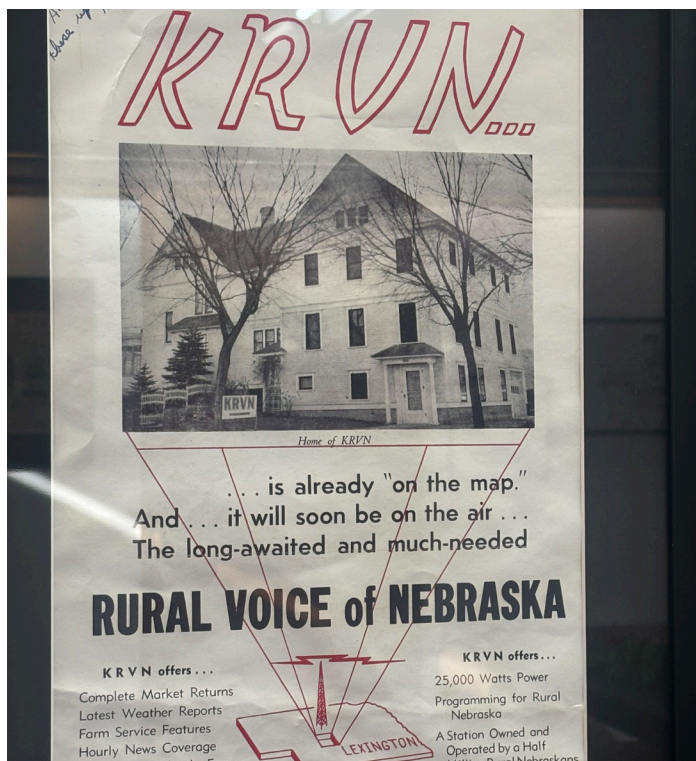
After 15 years of debating, the FCC decided to break down twelve of the clear channels and the 880 frequency was assigned to Nebraska, North and South Dakota. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to apply for the channel, no matter how impossible it seemed to be obtained. Finally, the board agreed and filed an application in January of 1962. Through application standstills and bargaining to get them to withdraw their application, KRVN stood strong and six year later the 880 frequency was allocated to them.

Finally, NRRA had the reach they wanted, serving more rural families than ever before. Additionally, they went from a day-time station to a full-time station all on the 880. Despite bumps in the road, storms and outages, KRVN continued their mission of establishing an agricultural radio station, for education purposes and promotion of social and economic welfare of rural areas. In line with this mission, each year since 1991, KRVN has contributed funds to the 4-H Public Speaking Contest as well as establishing the Leadership Education Action Development program in 1982. The LEAD program became one of the top two in the country, and its success was heavily influenced by the publicity provided by KRVN.

In the following years, KRVN worked to secure coverage over the panhandle area as well as eastern Nebraska during the night. They also began work on a new studio building, which was equipped with three thousand feet of coax cable and miles of audio wiring, more than 60,000 connections and controllers for ten satellite dishes and a new computer system. Part of their continued expansion was branching into the internet market and in 1996 the first KRVN website was launched.

Today, in 2026 as KRVN celebrates 75 years, they are one of two 50,000-watt stations in Nebraska, boasting one of the largest coverage areas in the Western United States, radiating the transmitters full power to almost all of Nebraska, half of Kansas and Northeastern Colorado. It is Nebraska's primary entry point station for the Emergency Alert System.

KRVN continues to be the voice of Rural Nebraska and serves its communities just as they planned, 75 years ago.



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Resources:

Brown, M., Brown, E., & Brown, R. (2002). *KRVN: The first 50 years of service to agriculture: A history of the best farm station in the nation, KRVN, the rural voice of Nebraska*. REB Pub.

Wikimedia Foundation. (2025, November 2). KRVN (AM). Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KRVN_\(AM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KRVN_(AM))

Photos Courtesy of KRVN