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PENSACOLA STATE COLLEGE ANNOUNCES NEW WSRE LEADERSHIP TEAM

PENSACOLA, Fla., December 5, 2016—WSRE, the PBS member station licensed to the Pensacola State College District Board of Trustees, has new leadership at the helm with two staff promotions and the addition of Bob Culkeen, who has been named general manager of WSRE and executive director of the WSRE-TV Foundation.

Culkeen replaces Sandra (Sandy) Cesaretti Ray, who has been promoted to associate vice president of community and government relations for Pensacola State College. As a member of the college's senior leadership, Ray will continue to provide administrative oversight for WSRE.

Darrel Harrison, a 14-year employee who has served as the station's chief engineer and director of broadcast operations and facilities, has been promoted to assistant general manager.

Ray joined the station in 1997 as director of development and marketing and was promoted to general manager in 2000. In recent years, she has also served as director of government relations for Pensacola State College.

Culkeen has worked in the public media and education fields since 1979, most recently as interim chief operating officer for Illinois Public Media at WILL-TV/FM/AM and also in past positions at WUFT in Gainesville and WJCT in Jacksonville.

"Under Ms. Ray's leadership, the value of WSRE's services to the public and its educational outreach initiatives have had a tremendous impact on our community and have been recognized nationally. The addition of Mr. Culkeen will only enhance the station's role as a broadcast leader and educational partner for communities throughout the service area," said Ed Meadows, president of Pensacola State College.

During Ray's 15 years as station manager, WSRE began broadcasting in digital format having launched a successful capital campaign to fund the equipment needs for that transition, the WSRE Jean & Paul Amos Performance Studio was built, the Pensacola State College Learning Lab and WSRE Imagination Station opened at Blue Wahoos Stadium, and WSRE productions received three Emmy Award nominations and 15 Telly Awards.

Ray says she has seen WSRE's impact grow beyond educational television to include outreach initiatives like the Raising Readers and American Graduate campaigns, PBS LearningMedia and classroom technology training for teachers, and the Imagination Station early learning activity center. "Helping to secure funding and the delivery of these resources to local families and schools has been the most rewarding part of my job," said Ray.

“It has been a pleasure to serve Pensacola State College, WSRE and the WSRE-TV Foundation in the capacity of general manager and executive director. I have had the great honor of working with a tremendous group of talented and caring individuals—all committed to excellence in their service to the station and our community. Bob Culkeen is a recognized leader in the industry and brings a wealth of knowledge to WSRE. His leadership skills in both public media and education will continue to advance the station’s positive impact, and I join our team in welcoming him to the family.”

Culkeen is a graduate of Fitchburg State University with a master’s degree in education from Westfield State University in his home state of Massachusetts. He began his broadcasting career as a master control operator, engineer and chief videographer at WUFT in Gainesville, and he was engineering manager, director of station operations and vice president of technical operations at WJCT in Jacksonville before joining WILL as station manager in 2012.

“My wife Beth and I are looking forward to being back in Florida and getting to know the communities of WSRE’s viewing area,” said Culkeen. “WSRE is a quality station recognized throughout the PBS system as a leader in education and as an outstanding creator of local content and community engagement. I am thrilled to be named general manager and look forward to building on WSRE’s 50 years with our dedicated staff to deliver even better programs and services for our audience in the future.”

Throughout 2017, the station will be commemorating 50 years of public broadcasting for the Gulf Coast since Channel 23 began broadcasting as WSRE-TV on Sept. 11, 1967.

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About WSRE, Viewer Supporter PBS for the Gulf Coast

WSRE is a Public Broadcasting Service member station, locally owned and licensed to the Pensacola State College Board of Trustees operating as a service of Pensacola State College. WSRE has served the needs of Gulf Coast communities through programming, educational services and outreach since 1967. WSRE produces, acquires and distributes programs that address local interests and reflect the diverse cultural, political, geographic and demographic characteristics of its audience. WSRE Educational Services connects teachers, parents, caregivers and children to PBS’ rich educational resources. Visit wsre.org to learn more.