

New strategic effort aims to raise profile of public power

In 1987, the National Pork Board launched a national advertising campaign using the slogan “Pork: The Other White Meat” in an effort to pitch pork — which the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture had classified as a “read meat” — as an alternative to chicken or turkey. The campaign was successful in positioning pork as a lean protein and sales increased exponentially as a result.

With that effort in mind, MEUW is embarking on a new strategic effort designed to build awareness of municipal electric utilities and heighten the profile of public power in Wisconsin. Beginning with Public Power Week in early October and continuing through the end of 2021, MEUW will have spots on PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio.

While substantially smaller in scale, like the pork campaign, the goal of MEUW’s effort is to position the municipal utilities as an alternative to the investor-owned and electric cooperatives that are more widely known in the state.

“If we don’t toot our own horn, no one else is going to,” said MEUW Executive Director Tim Heinrich. “Our member utilities have a proud history of delivering reliable power and exceptional service to help their communities thrive. More people need to be aware of the advantages of public power so we can continue to protect and promote the quali-

ties that make community-owned electric utilities special.”

The effort is one of the ideas that surfaced when MEUW’s Board of Directors met in September 2018 to define a long-term strategy for the association. Utilizing public television and radio for this awareness campaign allows MEUW’s messaging to be seen and heard in mediums that are affordable, targeted, and directly align with public power values. The 15-second TV spot and 30-second radio spot will air at times designed to reach a target audience of public officials and influential thought leaders who are regular viewers and listeners.

Heinrich noted that this is not a campaign about or for MEUW. The emphasis of the messaging is on public power. “There’s a lot we

could say, but the time is very short and public TV and radio have some strict guidelines, so we’ve had to be very selective in choosing what’s most important to communicate.”

Additional details about the campaign will be shared in the coming months. MEUW contracted The Creative Company, a woman-owned communications firm based in Madison, to coordinate the details and create the spots. The TV spot will be shown publicly for the first time at MEUW’s 91st Annual Conference in Manitowoc on Aug. 12.



Made-for-TV moment: In July, crews from Jefferson Utilities set up this work zone to allow MEUW to capture video footage for a promotional spot that will air on Wisconsin Public Television this fall.