

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**TELEVISION ACADEMY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES  
LARGEST EDUCATION PROGRAM DONATION TO  
CREATE INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP INTERN INITIATIVE**

**\$3 Million Endowment Fund Honoring Late Broadcasting  
Pioneer to Establish New 'Bob Bennett Future Leaders' Program**



**Robert M. (Bob)  
Bennett**

*(Photo credit: Casey Bennett)*



**Kelly Bennett**

*(Photo credit: Leslie Haber)*

**(LOS ANGELES – May 17, 2023)** — An inspiring expansion to the Foundation’s internship program focused on developing future television industry leaders, “The Bob Bennett Future Leaders” initiative — made possible by a \$3 million gift from The Robert M. and Margie Bennett Foundation — was announced today by the Television Academy Foundation.

The **Bob Bennett Future Leaders** program honoring the late broadcasting pioneer will commence in summer 2023 and provide additional opportunities for 10 college students from the Television Academy Foundation’s Internship Program annually. The endowed fund supports paid, eight-week internship placements at major television production companies as well as housing, transportation, professional development and special leadership training.

Inaugural participants will be selected from the college students already confirmed as 2023 Television Academy Foundation summer interns. To be considered for the program, applicants must submit a 350-word essay on what innovation and

leadership mean to them and how they plan to apply those qualities in their internship and future roles in television.

“We are deeply grateful for the generosity of the Bob Bennett family,” said Cris Abrego, chair of the Television Academy Foundation. “Given Mr. Bennett’s extraordinary contributions to our industry, it seems especially fitting that his family would choose to develop a new generation of visionary leaders who will shape the future of this industry as well. All of us at the Television Academy Foundation are deeply honored to be part of Bob Bennett’s transformational legacy.”

Philanthropist and actress Kelly Bennett, head of The Robert M. and Margie Bennett Foundation, said, “The chance to honor my father with this legacy fund supporting and mentoring television’s future leaders through education programs is extremely satisfying. I look forward with great anticipation and enthusiasm to this new, rewarding relationship with the Television Academy Foundation in hopes that it will flourish for many years to come.”

Paul Rich, CEO of BoPaul Media Worldwide and a member of the Bennett Foundation board with Kelly Bennett, helped shepherd the gift in honor of the late Bob Bennett’s inspirational, innovative and dynamic leadership style. “Bob was a true visionary who understood the more you learn the more you increase the likelihood of becoming a leader. He prided himself especially in the development of young workers at every stage of his career,” Rich said.

Robert “Bob” Bennett’s 50-year distinguished television career left an indelible impact on broadcasting nationwide. An industry pioneer and Broadcasting and Cable Hall of Famer who passed away in 2016, Bennett spearheaded the launch of WCVB-TV in Boston and guided the nation’s then largest broadcast station group as president of Metromedia Broadcasting, often referred to as the “fourth network,” with its three-nights-a-week lineup of stations in 75% of U.S. TV households.”

The Metromedia entertainment empire included powerhouse television stations in New York; Los Angeles; Chicago; Boston; Houston; Dallas; and Washington, D.C.; 22 radio stations; as well as the Harlem Globetrotters, Ice Capades and Metromedia Producers, which distributed all of famed producer Aaron Spelling’s television series. WCVB was sold to Metromedia for a record price of \$220 million in 1981. Along with legendary media tycoon John Kluge, Bennett helped build Metromedia Broadcasting, including KTTV-TV (channel 11) in Los Angeles; it eventually formed the backbone of the Fox Broadcasting television network when the company was sold in 1985 to Fox’s Rupert Murdoch.

Bennett conceived WCVB-TV as a model of what local television broadcasting could be in America, producing not just local news and occasional documentaries but award-winning scripted programs.

Born in Pittsburgh and raised in Altoona, Pennsylvania, Bennett began his career in 1948 as a page at CBS Radio in Hollywood. He is a past president and board member of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), which had telecast The Jerry Lewis MDA Labor Day Telethon to millions of U.S. homes until the television program's expiry in 2014. Bennett helped launch the telethon and Lewis' national MDA Network when he was general manager of WNEW-TV in New York — the only station then carrying The MDA Labor Day Telethon. He contacted his many colleagues and convinced them to carry the weekendlong program, making it an annual nationwide event on their TV stations and famously labeling it the Love Network.

The recipient himself of many awards recognizing his personal contributions to the field, in 1985 Bennett was presented one of the broadcast industry's highest honors: the President's Award of the National Association of Television Program Executives. As a philanthropist, significant donations in his and his wife's names have been made over the past 30 years to MDA; the American Film Institute; and Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach, California.

Until his passing, Bennett served as chairman of the board of Bennett Productions.

### **About the Television Academy Foundation**

Established in 1959 as the charitable arm of the Television Academy, the Television Academy Foundation is dedicated to preserving the legacy of television while educating and inspiring those who will shape its future. Through renowned educational and outreach programs such as [The Interviews](#): An Oral History of Television Project, [College Television Awards](#) and [Summit, Student Internship Program](#), and the [Media Educators Conference](#), the Foundation seeks to widen the circle of voices our industry represents and to create more opportunity for television to reflect all of society. For more information on the Foundation, please visit [TelevisionAcademy.com/Foundation](http://TelevisionAcademy.com/Foundation).

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