

Battling back

WGN anchor Allison Payne considers ministrokes a 'wake-up call' to health

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BY **ROBERT FEDER** Sun-Times Columnist

Allison Payne, the veteran news anchor at WGN-Channel 9, is battling back from a series of ministrokes that has kept her off the air for more than three weeks.

Officials of the Tribune Co.-owned station have refused to comment on Payne's absence from the 9 p.m. newscast she has anchored since 1990. Substitute anchors have been filling in for her alongside Steve Sanders.

Payne, 43, disclosed Tuesday that when she sought treatment for numbness in her right arm, doctors discovered that she had suffered two ministrokes within the last year.

Ministrokes are temporary blockages of blood to the brain.

"I haven't really felt like myself for the last year," she said, citing frequent headaches and fatigue.

Two of Payne's colleagues, Dina Bair and Robert Jordan, had commented to her about her speech and on-air performance before her diagnosis earlier this month, she recalled.

Although she still is unable to use her right arm, Payne said she expects to return to work next week in time for coverage of the primary election and the start of the February ratings sweeps.

"There are a lot of things that I've taken for granted about my health," she said. "I feel blessed to have had a wake-up call."

Payne, a native of Richmond, Va., grew up in Detroit, and founded a scholarship fund at the University of Detroit Mercy in memory of her mother, who died of a blood clot.

TRACKING:

Randy Salerno's funeral

- **Randy Salerno's** funeral from Immanuel Lutheran Church in northwest suburban Crystal Lake will be carried on www.cbs2chicago.com, starting at 11 a.m. today.

Salerno, who was morning news anchor at CBS-owned WBBM-Channel 2, was killed last week in a snowmobile accident in northern Wisconsin. His death at age 45 shocked the local media community and elicited an outpouring of emotion from viewers.

- **Mike Adame**, sports anchor at NBC-owned WMAQ-Channel 5, debuted Sunday as backstage announcer for World Wrestling Entertainment. He'll be a regular on WWE's "Raw."

In addition to sportscasting for three Chicago stations, Adame also was a co-host of the original "American Gladiators" series from 1989 to 1996.

- Congratulations to **Judy Hsu**, morning news anchor at ABC-owned WLS-Channel 7, and her husband, **Tracy Leddy**, on the birth Monday of their third child, **Caitlin Brooke**.

DIALING:

Dick & Jerry to recap vote

- WCPT-AM (820), the Newsweb Radio progressive talk station, will preempt its usual syndicated lineup from 7 to 11 a.m. Feb. 6 for a live, local recap of Tuesday's primary results, to be hosted by **Dick Kay** and **Jerry Springer**.

Kay is a former political editor who retired in 2006 after 38 years at Channel 5. Springer, best known as ringmaster of the Chicago-based syndicated TV talk show that bears his name, also spent two years hosting a progressive talk radio show.

"This will be the single most important day in the history of WCPT," declared **Harvey Wells**, vice president and group station manager for Newsweb Radio.

- It's official: **Joaquin "El Chulo" Garza**, morning personality at KHHL-FM in Austin, Texas, has signed on to host mornings at WLEY-FM (107.9), the Spanish Broadcasting System regional Mexican outlet.

Starting Feb. 7, Garza and his sidekick, **Raul "La Bola" Bernal**, will succeed **Jesus "El Peladillo" Garcia**, whose last day at "La Ley" will be Feb. 6.

- With the arrival of **Marc Young** at alternative WKQX-FM (101.1), Emmis Communications is boosting his job title and that of his

counterpart at classic rock WLUP-FM (97.9), **Bill Klaproth**, to program director.

Both report to **Tisa LaSorte**, director of brand and operations at Emmis Radio Chicago.

- • **Craig Dellimore**, political editor at CBS Radio all-news WBBM-AM (780), has been elected president of the Chicago local of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

He previously chaired the union's Chicago broadcast steering committee and served on the local board of AFTRA.