Frank Calandra received the Charles M. Wise Volunteer of the Year award at our Volunteer Recognition Event. This award is given to an individual who exemplifies the same enthusiasm and dedication to the station that Charles had. Frank has been volunteering in many capacities for WXXI for approximately 35 years. We had the opportunity to talk with him about his long history with the station.

How did you get involved with WXXI in the first place?
A group I belonged to was asked to take pledges during a TV membership drive. I thought, “Sounds like fun!” It was.

Share a couple of your favorite volunteer stories
Whenever volunteering for a radio drive, I always chose the 6am spot during Simon Pontin’s shift on Classical 91.5. Back then, the phone banks were right inside Simon’s studio. When he put a record on, we could talk, and Simon would always join in the conversations. He’d have us laughing, and then when a call came in or the music stopped, we all had to stifle our laughter.

WXXI’s Auction was a huge event years ago, broadcasting live, with a high excitement level. Once someone called in a rather high bid, but would only place it if a certain talent got a pie-in-the-face on the air. So they did it, taking him by surprise and he laughed harder than anyone.

Sometimes volunteering leads to opportunities, like when I met Bruce Austin while assigned to WXXI’s Appraisal Fair. I shared that I enjoyed old cameras and was part of a club that hosted the PhotoHistory Symposium. Bruce had been to it, and was disappointed when I told him we stopped hosting them. That’s when he got his employer, RIT, to take over the event, and it was a huge success.

Tell us a little about yourself
I spent many years as a special machine designer & manufacturing engineer for Rochester companies. That led to a decade of working for design software companies in the San Francisco Bay area and NYC. I retired in 2001. I live in Webster with my wife Karen, who recently joined me in retirement. We have two grown children — my daughter is a Senior Associate Registrar at Temple University in Philadelphia and my son manages a heavy equipment service and rental business in Sarasota.