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For More Information:

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Attached Images

Filmmakers Steve Dayton and B.J. Hollars (From left Steve Dayton and B.J. Hollars.jpeg)
When the Rubber Hit the Road signature image (WhenTheRubberHitTheRoad_signature image.jpg)

PBS Wisconsin to air documentary tracing Eau Claire's reinvention after Uniroyal closure

More than three decades after the closing of Eau Claire's Uniroyal tire plant, PBS Wisconsin and Fireside Productions will explore the rise, fall and legacy of western Wisconsin's tire industry and the reinvention of its employees and city with the May 20 broadcast of *When Rubber Hit the Road*.

In January 1991, Eau Claire's Uniroyal tire plant employees received devastating news: after 75 years of manufacturing tires, the plant was scheduled to close. As the city struggled to overcome the loss of its largest employer, the former employees struggled to find their footing in a quickly changing world. What would happen next was anyone's guess. But if the city hoped to survive, it was up to its citizens to figure out how.

When Rubber Hit the Road is more than a story about tires. It's the story of a Midwestern city's attempt to reinvent itself in the wake of America's manufacturing decline. It's a blueprint, too, for how a community can bounce back when people commit themselves to embracing change.

"This is not a unique story – these things have happened across Wisconsin and in the Midwest," said filmmaker B.J. Hollars. "But I think what makes our story unique in some ways at least, is the quickness with which our city banded together and got around the same table and got on the same page to try to find a way through despite the difficulties they faced."

"I want to give Wisconsin Humanities a shout out," Hollars added. "They awarded us a major grant, which was incredible. I mean, \$10,000 that we were then able to double and triple back into the creative economy here in Eau Claire."

The documentary premieres 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 20, on PBS Wisconsin and streaming on the free PBS app.

The film is produced by Fireside Productions LLC. Founded in 2023 by Hollars and Steve Dayton, Fireside Productions LLC strives to elevate and amplify stories that could only



happen in the heartland of America. They are driven by a passion for narrative excellence and a commitment to showcasing the vibrant, captivating and often overlooked stories that define the Midwest.

PBS Wisconsin is a service of the Educational Communications Board and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

PBS Wisconsin is a place to grow through learning on WHA-TV, Madison; WPNE-TV, Green Bay; WHRM-TV, Wausau; WLEF-TV, Park Falls; WHLA-TV, La Crosse; and WHWC-TV, Menomonie-Eau Claire.

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