



2023 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

"Thanks for providing unbiased truthful news! It has never been more important to preserve our fragile democracy. Keep up the great work!"
– William Barbaria

WGCU's mission is to inspire, educate, inform, engage and entertain through the power of public media.



WGCU is a valuable part of the Southwest Florida area's advancement.

As the region grows and newspapers decline, WGCU is growing its local news service to fill the gaps. We provide in-depth local and statewide reporting online and during Morning Edition, midday, and All Things Considered while Gulf Coast Life is WGCU's signature radio talk show. Local TV news minutes air nightly and online news and engagement has grown three-fold in fiscal year 2023.

In 2023, WGCU provided a lifeline to the community before, during and after Hurricane Ian.

WGCU Public Media provided live news coverage of Hurricane Ian, a category four storm that devastated coastal areas in Southwest Florida starting on September 28, 2022. WGCU FM was the only radio station producing in-house, local reporting during the hurricane which was a lifeline to the many residents who did not evacuate.

If you had a battery or crank operated radio, you had WGCU News.

WGCU's work with community partners had deep impact in the region.

Live, in-person and virtual events, public screenings, content initiatives and educational workshops reached new audiences. Key partners helped WGCU make an impact in local communities and groups that are isolated, under-served and under-resourced.



2023 LOCAL SERVICE REPORT

IN THE COMMUNITY

WGCU Public Media Has Notable Reach

WGCU is Southwest Florida's source for PBS and NPR, and a member-supported service of Florida Gulf Coast University. WGCU broadcasts quality programming 24 hours a day, serving all or parts of 12 counties in Southwest Florida with five distinct digital TV channels, three radio services, and multiple digital and social media platforms. WGCU reaches a monthly average 350,000+ TV viewers across 5 channels; 200,000+ FM listeners, 120,000+ unique digital visitors to WGCU.org. WGCU TV was ranked in the top 10 most-watched public television stations in the country.

WGCU Public Media Features Educational Programming and Engagement

WGCU produced more than 210 hours of local content from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023 that aired on WGCU-TV, FM/HD radio, and multiple online platforms. Local television programs such as Untold Stories were re-distributed to county schools and aired on local government television channels. All news posts and programs are archived on wgcu.org for access by teachers and students 24 hours a day.

The **Florida PBS LearningMedia** portal provides teachers, parents and home schoolers free, web-based curriculum aligned materials that are engaging and effective. The public media videos, lesson plans, and activities on the site help make learning fun. Through local grants, WGCU provided 15 educational workshops to educators, caregivers and families in both English and Spanish. These workshops teach attendees how to utilize **Florida PBS LearningMedia** resources at home and in the classroom.

PBS Kids television programming, online streaming and interactive games prepare Southwest Florida's youngest residents for formal education to help kids enter kindergarten "ready-to-learn."

WGCU's Be My Neighbor Day is the station's annual free family-centered event that provides Southwest Florida families an opportunity to explore WGCU and its three "neighborhoods"; Arts & Education, Science & the Environment and Meet the Helpers. Families meet neighbors from nonprofit education, arts, and environmental organizations as well as public safety organizations. Daniel Tiger is also on hand to meet his Southwest Florida friends. Finally, at the heart of this event is the importance of being neighborly, so WGCU hosts activities throughout the day to promote community kindness. The 2023 event was held Saturday, March 11, and had more than 1800 attendees.

WGCU.org Monthly Average Video Streams (FY23)

PBS Kids – 1 million

Florida PBS Learning Media – 22,826

General Audience Programming – 70,833

WGCU FM – 150,000

WGCU marked many important content milestones in coverage this year.

Voices increase

Philanthropic gifts investing in local news allowed WGCU to increase the number of on-air reporters and contributors. Added to a stable of six local voices were 10 others, among them six staff members and four freelance contributors. Hiring a managing editor and additional full-time and freelance reporters helped WGCU News increase the average number of stories published by 100 each month.

Three Song Stories

WGCU's Three Song Stories celebrated its fifth anniversary in March. What started out as a weekly podcast is now a mainstay on WGCU FM on Saturday and Sunday at 10 a.m.

Investigative unit

WGCU's investigative team, Eileen Kelley and Andrea Melendez, released its first multimedia report uncovering post-Ian evictions at a Bonita Springs RV home park by the new owner. The story was published on a full page of Florida Weekly, a WGCU partner, then covered by other local media.

Environment

WGCU's Senior Environmental Reporter Tom Bayles covers topics from climate change to water quality to environmental impacts on wildlife. His position was made possible with three consecutive years' support from the Volo Foundation and the Brico Fund.

Arts

Tom Hall is WGCU's arts reporter. His stories about local theater performances, artists, exhibits and organizations often reflect the human experience and dig deep into critical issues relevant to our audiences. WGCU also produced Spotlight on the Arts, short digital videos highlighting local arts and culture.

Three documentaries

WGCU produced three new local television documentaries that aired on Thursday nights, when local and state content consistently gets strong ratings: Under Pressure: The Changes and Challenges of Higher Education; I Walked with Heroes; and With a Made Up Mind: The History of the Black Vote in Southwest Florida.

YouTube channel

WGCU Public Media hit 25,000 subscribers on YouTube in May. David Oquendo was assigned oversight for the channel just two years ago when we had only 1,700 subscribers. This year, WGCU News launched a new YouTube channel to support news-focused content.

WGCU Provided Critical Hurricane Ian Coverage

A few days before tropical storm Ian became one of the deadliest hurricanes on record in Florida, most forecasts projected that Ian would make landfall north of Tampa. Even before local county officials announced mandatory evacuations, WGCU was on high alert with live breaks every hour in partnership with the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network (FPREN). Even after moving to wall-to-wall coverage as Ian made landfall, WGCU never went off the air. WGCU also provided a safe haven for the Fox TV affiliate and The News-Press newspaper staff since their buildings were under threat.

The next day, reporters dispersed to hard-hit areas. They were the eyes and ears for the community. A WGCU photographer and reporter flew over coastal areas reporting what they saw to local and national audiences.

On-air reporting quickly pivoted to recovery efforts, informing the community where to find food, water and shelter, and how to get city, county, state and federal assistance. Officials from nonprofit and government agencies were featured regularly to share vital information for our listeners.

When the power is out and cell towers are down, you can count on WGCU News.



Matlacha was just one of the coastal areas devastated by Hurricane Ian.



WGCU Wins Multiple Awards for its Hurricane Ian Coverage

WGCU was recognized for its Hurricane Ian coverage with local, statewide and national awards for multiple hurricane reports and two overall Radio Station of the Year awards:

- (3) Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists
- (1) Florida Society of Professional Journalists
- (1) Florida Press Club and PRSA Chapter Award
- (2) Regional Edward R. Murrow Awards
- (2) NETA National Public Media Awards including Best Overall Content.

“The storytelling was exceptional in all aspects and the continued coverage provided a view point of the journey that the community is still on today.” --NETA judge’s comment



WGCU won three FABJ awards including Radio Station of the Year.

With a Made-Up Mind: The History of the Black Vote in Southwest Florida

WGCU produced a half-hour documentary that explores Jim Crow legislation at the turn of the century through today's push to return civil rights to citizens who have served their felony sentences. This short film, funded by a Florida Humanities grant, follows the fight for ballot access and examines the history of voter suppression of African Americans since Reconstruction.

Reach in the Community:

Six community screening events were planned but rescheduled due to Hurricane Ian. These free public events took place in multiple rural and coastal areas including Clewiston, LaBelle, Punta Gorda, Naples, and Dunbar, the historical Black community in Fort Myers. The final screening was virtual to reach a broader area and each screening was followed by a panel discussion with audience participation.

The premiere broadcast of the documentary was in primetime on May 18, two days before Florida's Emancipation Day commemoration on May 20, 2023.

Partnerships Included:

Lee County Black History Society
Florida Gulf Coast University Archives & Special Collections
Collier County Libraries
Charlotte County Libraries
Hendry County Libraries
Dunbar Community School
SWFL Alpha Education & Leadership Foundation



Veronica Shoemaker was the first Black woman to be elected to Fort Myers City Council. She ran 17 times before winning the seat.

“The counter-history dialogue is out there. I personally believe the story that actually happened has to be told. This documentary needs to be seen and the details that are in it, I’m sure are not known. This is a chronological narrative that paints a complete picture.”

-Rev. William Glover
*Senior Pastor,
Mount Hermon Ministries,
Fort Myers*



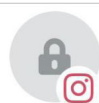
"As in any fiscal year, public media stood apart, offering a depth of news coverage, inspirational storytelling, arts and culture and education reporting, historical perspective, and health and science information to enrich the lives of each member of our community. But this was no ordinary year. What began with the lingering tide of a country divided ended locally with Southwest Florida coming together to navigate the devastation of Hurricane Ian and heroically weather the storm. WGCU was proud to be a primary force in charting a course toward recovery. WGCU supported our community, and in turn the community supported the station."

*-Corey Lewis,
WGCU General Manager*

"I'm so impressed by the depth of conversation WGCU and especially Gulf Coast Life are bringing to our community in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. My donation is a vote of confidence in the direction to keep bringing important, Southwest Florida stories to all of us, without fluff or bias. We have many more stories to tell, and I look forward to WGCU telling them! THANK YOU!

– Darcy Eikenberg, Bonita Springs

Social media posts directed to WGCU after Hurricane Ian



@keek.dah.geek

3wk

So sad to see the devastation on our community...but I'm glad WGCU is reporting it ❤️



@wgcupublicmedia

Hurricane Impact on
#CharlotteCounty: Mobile Home Park
in #Placida...



91.7 WVXU @917wvxu

1mo

Thinking of our radio friends in FL today who are risking their own safety to keep listeners informed as Hurricane Ian approaches. ❤️🖤💙

@WLRN @wmnf @wgcu @wdnaradio
@wmfeorlando @wusf @wqcsnews
@WUFTNews @WJCTNews @WFIT895FM
@WKGCNews @WUWF @WFSUmedia
<https://t.co/tWc5lxUU9>



WGCU is proud to serve the Southwest Florida Community. We will continue to strive for excellence in the pillars of public media: education, civic engagement and public safety.