FY2021
Local Content & Service Report
To the community from WGCU

July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

WGCU Public Media
Updated 2-14-22
“I listen to WGCU every day. NPR and PBS are my lifelines to truth and factual information and thoughtful analysis of the news that matters. You give me hope during a time when it is increasingly hard to find.”

– Nancy, Marco Island

Introduction

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I. Local Value, Key Services, and Local Impact

The Mission of WGCU Public Media is to inspire, inform, educate, engage and entertain through the power of public media.

WGCU Public Media is a vital part of Southwest Florida.

WGCU’s news team provides in-depth local and statewide reports during Morning Edition, All Things Considered, and Gulf Coast Life. Primary topics were COVID-19 vaccinations, environment, elections, racial injustice, and continued reporting about inclusion as part of Move to Include.

In FY2021, wgcu.org served over 507,993 users, averaging 45,061 users per month. The WGCU mobile app saw an increase in engagement, serving over 9,860 users (up 1.7% from FY2020).

WGCU continued its coronavirus town halls and included a congressional candidate debate and a voter information program.

In FY21, WGCU Public Media provided key local services.

WGCU serves all or part of 12 counties in South and Southwest Florida with five digital TV channels, two FM radio channels, two HD radio channels, and one subcarrier for print-challenged listeners. WGCU delivered national and international programming including relevant, informative, and educational local programs to the Southwest Florida community.

WGCU’s programs, community-based engagement, and events were virtual but allowed more people to participate and provide a valuable service to Southwest Florida citizens.

Move to Include videos featured local people with disabilities telling their own stories with the organizations that serve them.

WGCU Public Media local services had a deep impact in Southwest Florida.

II. In The Community

WGCU Public Media Local Productions & Engagement Efforts

During the last fiscal year, from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021, WGCU Public Media produced more than 220 hours of local content that aired on WGCU-TV, FM/HD radio, and multiple online platforms. Local television programs were re-distributed to county schools and aired on local government television channels, as well. All news posts and programs are archived on wgcu.org for access by teachers and students 24-hours a day. Highlights of our TV and radio productions, digital platforms, and community outreach efforts are featured in this report.

WGCU’s Notable Broadcast Reach

WGCU-TV was ranked in the top 10 most-watched public television stations in the country. WGCU consistently ranked as one of the highest-rated public television stations in the country on Thursdays from 8 pm - 9 pm with its vintage series, Untold Stories. *(Source: Nielsen, TRAC Back Tracs 2020-21.)*

WGCU FM has a weekly cumulative of more than 214,000 listeners. *(Source: Radio Research Consortium, July 2021.)* The news team aired 125 hours of local content, including news posts and *Gulf Coast Life*, and garnered 15 regional awards.

Local Productions & Engagement Efforts

**Award-Winning Election 2020 Coverage**

In partnership with the local daily newspapers, WGCU produced a debate with Florida’s 19th Congressional District candidates. Reporters from the newspaper and WGCU asked questions developed with input from readers and listeners for this live, hour-long primetime broadcast that reached audiences on TV, radio, and online. Leading up to the debate, WGCU produced an hour-long multiplatform primetime show, *Election 2020: The Vote* in partnership with the daily newspapers. The goal of the program was to help inform voters about local races, voter security, and the six amendments on the ballot that would change the Florida constitution. WGCU was awarded a Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists Award for local election day radio team coverage competing with all markets in the state. Reporters visited coastal and rural polling sites helping to elevate local voices about regional and national issues and races.
Vital Health News Continued for Farmworkers via WGCU Noticias en Español

WGCU Noticias en Español elevated its audio reports to video this year to provide a more visual news product for social media. FGCU student reporter Michelle Alvarez recorded weekly video and audio news briefs in Spanish about issues important to immigrant communities. Noticias continued to report on critical health information including COVID-19 testing and vaccine information for rural farmworkers. WGCU is responsible for the editorial content of the briefs which were shared on social media and aired weekly on Radio Conciencia, a low-powered community-based station in Immokalee, Florida.

WGCU's COVID 19 Town Halls

WGCU produced three multiplatform town halls for TV, FM and online that were focused on the impact of COVID-19 on education, business and mental health in our communities. The TV broadcasts included live hosts and pre-recorded virtual conversations with experts and real people impacted by the pandemic. Back to School utilized unique tools like Mentimeter for polling providing live results, and Streamyard to pre-record virtual discussions with the show hosts. WGCU held Facebook Live events immediately after the broadcast with all of the experts so users could ask questions. By partnering with local daily newspapers, our reach and engagement numbers increased exponentially by cross-posting on their platforms.

Key Initiatives & Community Outreach Efforts

Move to Include Integrated Community Engagement and Education

WGCU continued its local work on the national Move to Include initiative. WGCU hosted two events: a Hurricane Preparedness Workshop for persons with disabilities and a screening and discussion around the PBS documentary, The Life Autistic. In addition, WGCU’s daily radio program, Gulf Coast Life highlighted partner organizations that serve our community and shared first-person stories about topics that included life for the visually impaired during a pandemic, the growth of Best Buddies in southwest Florida, and the positive effect for both employee and employer when hiring a person with a disability, to name a few.
Community Engagement and Education Highlights

Lifelong learning is a hallmark of public media. WGCU’s community engagement and education programs include preschool and school-age PBS Kids programming, sharing PBS LearningMedia with educators and parents, community screenings, and events. Although hampered by the pandemic, WGCU was able to engage its audiences through in-person and virtual events. One of the highlights of FY21 was taking donors out for a half-day Eco Boat Tour. Led by *With the Wild Things* host Dr. Jerry Jackson, attendees learned about the ecology and wildlife of the region and also had the opportunity to explore the sands of Keewaydin Island.

WGCU also hosted PBS’ *Places to Love* host Samantha Brown for a virtual screening and discussion about the show’s Sanibel and Captiva episode. More than 200 attendees from all over the country tuned in to hear Samantha speak about her time on Sanibel and Captiva as well as her thoughts on travel recovery post-pandemic.

Outreach by the Numbers:

- 337 educators, caregivers, and parents were taught how to use PBS Kids and PBS content to educate children in grades Pre-K through 12th grade.
- 5 virtual screenings of PBS programs/specials, including *Age of Nature*, *Blood Sugar Rising*, and *Speaking Grief*.
- 5 tours of the WGCU-Myra Janco Daniels Public Media Center.
III. Gulf Coast Life

_Gulf Coast Life_ is WGCU's locally produced, flagship show, giving Southwest Florida listeners a chance to share their thoughts and connect to their community. Airing four days a week at 1 p.m. and 9 p.m., _Gulf Coast Life_ covers a range of topics including environmental and political news, trends, arts, and community features. Examples of the radio program follow.

**Lee County Educators Express Concerns About School Reopening Plans**  
**JULY 13, 2020**

Schools across Florida closed down back in mid March as the new coronavirus began spreading. Schools developed remote learning programs on the fly, and students finished out the school year from home. The School District of Lee County has been working on its reopening plans for the fall semester for months, but as the outbreak continued to spread there was no major focus being placed on bringing back students for full-time, five days a week schooling. Read more >>

**Critical Race Theory 101**  
**APRIL 19, 2021**

Over the past year or so, as protests against police violence and for a more racially just society erupted in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, the term critical race theory (CRT) has begun entering the public discourse. Former-president Donald Trump described it as "divisive and un-American propaganda," and Governor Ron DeSantis's proposed civics curriculum would explicitly exclude CRT in Florida. Read more >>

**Marie Myung-Ok Lee and Amy Green**  
**JUNE 2, 2021**

The fiction selection for this episode is Finding My Voice by Marie Myung-Ok Lee. Reissued this year, Finding My Voice was the first-ever young adult fiction with an Asian American lead character and by an Asian American author. It tells the story of Ellen Sung, the only non-white student at her Minnesota high school. When she becomes interested in a blond, popular football player—and he becomes interested in her—she has to fight the racist bullies that abound at her school, as well as the disapproval of her Korean immigrant parents. Read more >>
IV. Stories of Impact

WGCU Hires Its First Environmental Reporter

Through generous grant funding, WGCU was able to hire its first dedicated digital environmental reporter. Valerie Vande Panne reported on Southwest Florida issues which included critical water issues like red tide and blue green algae, endangered species and local wildlife, and government legislation impacting the environment. With a total reach of more than 400,000 views on the WGCU website and social media, Valerie’s first story received the most engagement wgcu.org.

Climate Change Inspires Roseate Spoonbills to Relocate

SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

While Roseate Spoonbills, a tropical and subtropical shore bird, traditionally call Southwest Florida home, they are nesting—and flying—much further north now.

The Roseate Spoonbill is a beautiful pink bird that, at a distance, can sometimes be mistaken for a flamingo. While spoonbills traditionally call Southwest Florida home, they've never been known to leave the tropical and subtropical climate zone north and south of the Equator. So why are they nesting as far north as Arkansas and Georgia—and wandering even further north in Minnesota and Maine—and Québec? Read more >>

Notable News Stories

Florida Residents Arrested In Connection to Attack on U.S. Capitol/ Law Enforcement Seeks Information

JANUARY 8, 2021

Nearly a dozen Floridians, including at least one Southwest Florida man, have been arrested in connection with the mob of pro-Trump extremists who breached the U.S. Capitol, as lawmakers were affirming the election victory of President-elect Joe Biden. The Naples Daily News reports Michael Amos, 38, of Naples was among those arrested Wednesday. Read more >>
Lake O Prayer Walk Aims To Defend Everglades Future
FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Lake Okeechobee is referred to as the “liquid heart of Florida” for good reason. It functions as a critical aspect of South Florida’s flood control and water supply systems. Millions of people depend on it for water. Last week, a group of 26 people circled the 118-mile circumference of Lake Okeechobee in seven days on a Prayer Walk. Read more >>

Lee Health/NCH Say Reports of 100% COVID-19 Positivity Rates are Wrong
JULY 15, 2020

A recent Florida Department of Health report shows many labs in the state reporting 100% positivity rates for COVID-19 tests, meaning that every test they report is positive for the virus or that they’re simply not reporting negative test results, but NCH Healthcare System and Lee Health officials say that’s not the case. Read more >>

Young Seminole Tribe Member Sues Ron DeSantis
OCTOBER 6, 2020

As flooding becomes more frequent, and hot, sticky Florida gets even hotter, a group of young people, ages 13 to 21, are suing Florida governor Ron DeSantis, Secretary of Agriculture and Consumer Services Nikki Fried, and Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Noah Valenstein, among other officials, over climate change. The eight young people are asserting their right to a healthy future is at risk in Reynolds v. Florida. Read more >>
The Three Song Stories podcast continues to gain an audience, and recognition from the local community, as well as fans from all across the nation and world. The podcast team is composed of Mike Kiniry, Richard Chin Quee, and Tara Calligan. Listen at threesongstories.org.

Notable year three guests include Canadian survival expert, filmmaker, musician, and creator/host of the TV series Survivorman Les Stroud; Emmy Award-winning singer/songwriter and co-producer of several PBS shows Jon Michaels; award-winning documentary visual journalist for The News-Press/USA Today Network, St. Petersburg Times, and Tampa Bay Times, Kinfay Moroti; WGCU’s Morning Edition and Gulf Coast Life Arts Edition host, Assistant News Director, and reporter, John Davis; and Senior Host of Colorado Matters, and founding host of Gulf Coast Live, Ryan Warner.

52 podcasts produced in 2021
26.4K downloads in 2021