

Local Voices,
Local Stories
Powered by **YOU**



**2022-2023 Community
Gratitude Report**

WGCU
PUBLIC MEDIA

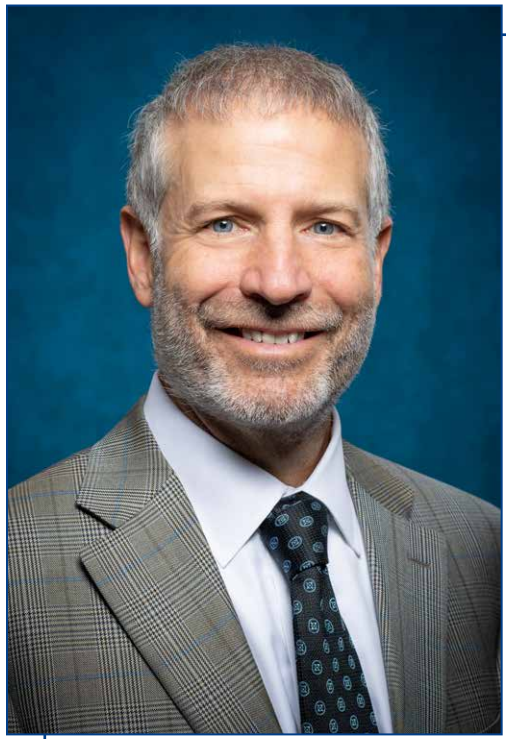


from our
general manager

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“To inspire, inform, educate, engage and entertain through the power of public media.”



It was a very good (but not ordinary) year.

This has been an inspirational year in public broadcasting. 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. WGPU was proud to be a primary force in charting a course toward recovery.

WGPU supported our community, and in turn, our community supported WGPU at a record level this year as we expanded our local news gathering, reporting and programming. We

increased from six to 16 local voices on air. We have a five-year plan to nearly double our size to match the growth of this community. Our awards this year are proof of our success in these early stages, as are our highly successful podcasts, all of which you will read about later in this report.

Going forward, WGPU will be your destination for local, national and global content on radio, TV, and digital delivery systems. We will keep our audiences connected and introduce a new generation of civic-minded, engaged community members to public media.

We have assembled a great team of leaders, mentors, and rising talent. We never forget that none of this would be possible without your ongoing support. The growth of our annual fund from our members, civic-minded businesses, nonprofit partners, and major donors in our Leadership Circle continues to pave the way for WGPU to serve this community.

Thank you for being a part of this. There are more great things to come!

Corey S. Lewis
General Manager



leadership

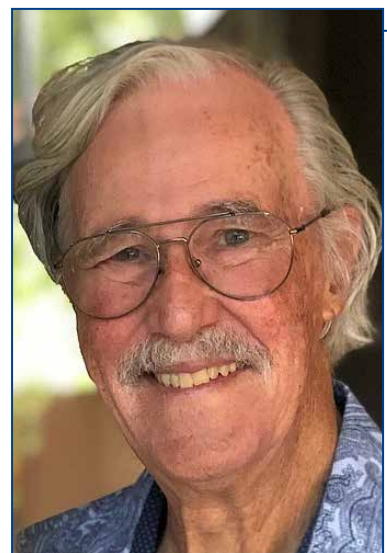
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distinguished board service



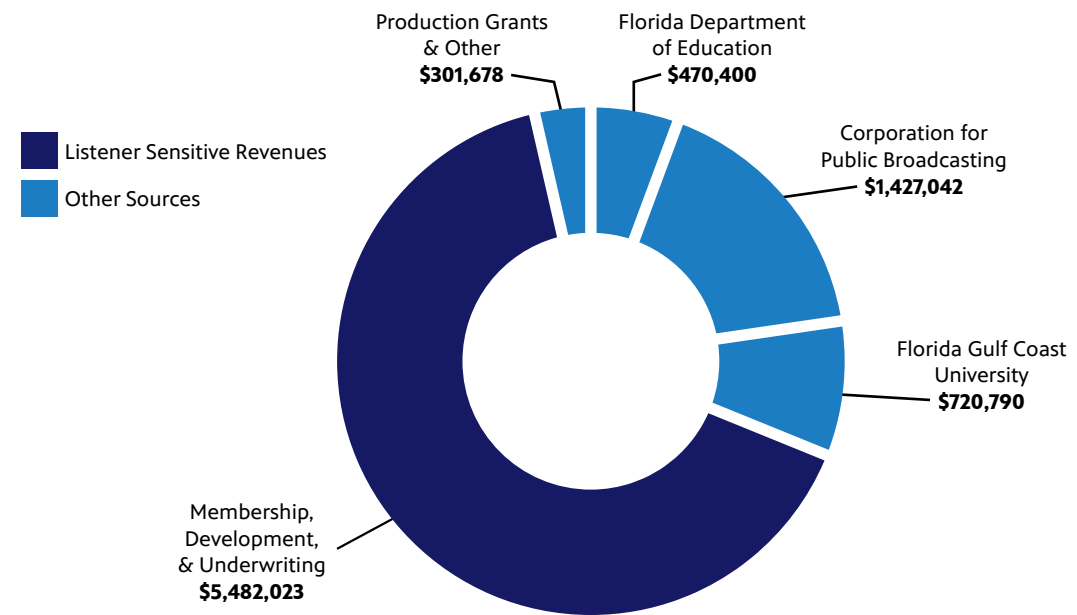
As current WGPU Advisory Board Chair Linda Penniman took her seat in April, outgoing chair Jim Hale was presented an award for a decade of service and for launching WGPU's strategic campaign to transform local news.

The WGPU Advisory Board communicates to and on behalf of listeners and viewers, provides input concerning public broadcasting to governmental agencies and elected officials, and assists in engagement and fundraising activities.

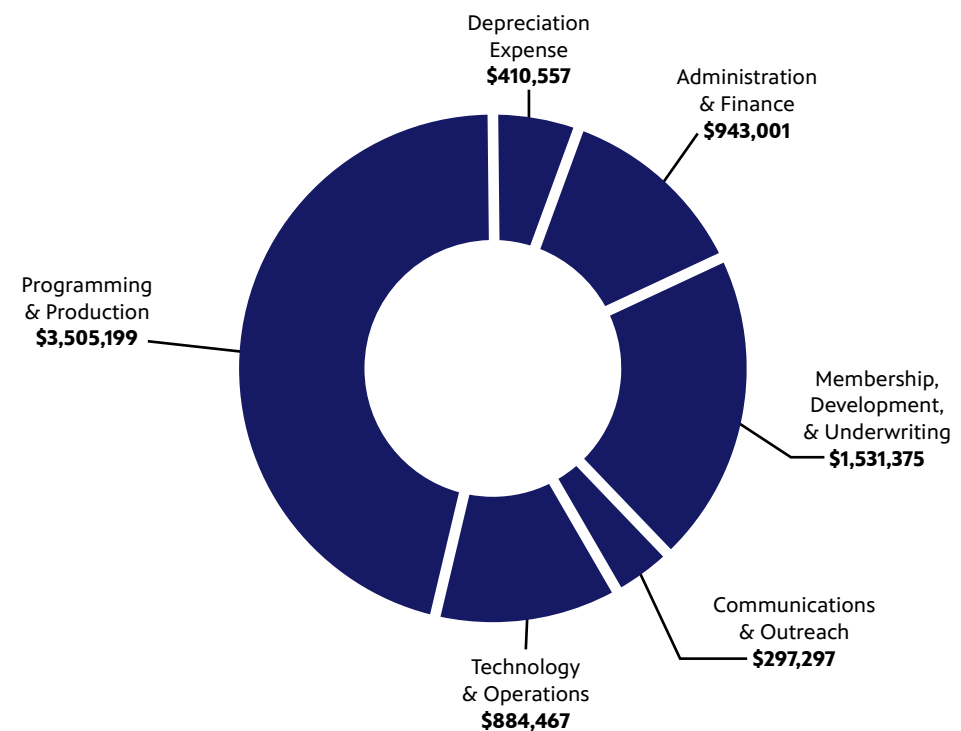
financial excellence

Operating Financial Information for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

REVENUES \$8,401,933



EXPENSES \$7,571,896



Above data is unaudited and does not include some end-of-year accruals, in-kind, trade, or indirect support calculations.



reliable & resilient resource



Kevin Trueblood
Associate General
Manager, Technology
and Operations

WGCU takes its role in providing vital information to the community during emergency events like Hurricane Ian very seriously.

In recent years, WGCU has spent a great deal of time and effort fortifying our studio and transmitter facilities to ensure our broadcasts remain uninterrupted. This was made possible by grants from the state of Florida and through member contributions.

Hurricane Ian was the first true test of that hardiness.

The primary transmission site for WGCU-TV and FM lost power midway through the storm and we switched to backup generator power.

“WGCU-FM was never off the air.”

WGCU supported additional media that took up residence in our studios. The local Fox affiliate evacuated its Cape Coral studios and broadcast its round-the-clock news coverage from the WGCU TV studios for four days. In addition, journalists from the local newspapers and other Florida public radio stations moved in to collaborate with and provide relief to WGCU staffers.

Thanks to technology upgrades in recent years, staff members had far more tools to collaborate and work more efficiently to get stories on the air, including for the first time, updates from the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network on WGCU TV.



Left: WGCU FM's main transmitter followed by two backup transmitters.

Below: Hurricane Ian ripped the canopy off WGCU's transmitter site and threw it about 35 yards across the property located near Babcock Ranch.



Scan the QR code to watch the security camera footage of the canopy being ripped off the site.



trusted community partner



Amy Shumaker
Associate General
Manager, Content

The biggest impact on Southwest Florida in the past year was made by Hurricane Ian. 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), WGCU kept the community informed and was a lifeline for many throughout the storm. When the power is out and cell service is down, a battery or crank-operated radio is the only way to receive local news and information.

WGCU featured an hour-long special, titled *After Ian*, on TV and radio one year after the storm. Hurricane Ian is an ongoing story, among WGCU's wide variety of news, education and entertainment programming on all of its platforms.

WGCU's signature radio talk show, *Gulf Coast Life*, connects listeners to the people, places, and things that make Southwest Florida unique. This includes a weekly *Arts Edition* on Thursdays and a twice-monthly *GCL Book Club* on Wednesdays.

WGCU produced *With A Made Up Mind: The History of the Black Vote*, funded in part by a Florida Humanities grant, to examine ballot access and the history of voter suppression among African Americans since Reconstruction. More programs focused on the history, people and places of Southwest Florida are in the pipeline with WGCU's new documentary team.

THE LAST RIDE

WGCU partnered with a local newspaper on a podcast about two young men of color who disappeared in Naples – both of whom were last seen with the same Collier County Sheriff's deputy. Since June 30, it had been downloaded more than 1.2 million times by a global audience.

Podcasters: Janine Zeitlin and Amanda Inscore Whittamore



Blue Sky Summit

WGCU hosted a pre-hurricane season conversation with FPREN and local emergency managers and hospital systems. Attendees learned how this public safety partnership is an asset before, during and after a storm.





donor impact

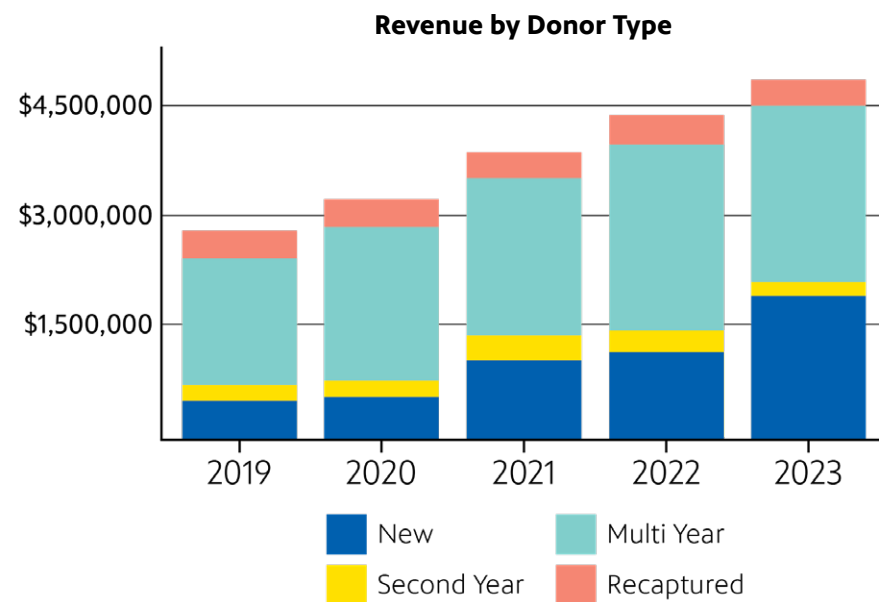


Michelle Rhinesmith
Associate
General Manager,
Membership and
Campaign Strategy

WGPU brings invaluable news, programming and culture to communities across our Southwest Florida region 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We're providing essential coverage of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our world with trusted, insightful reporting that amplifies real voices, critical issues, and meaningful paths forward. We're giving voice to the voiceless through informative and educational programming that is of the highest caliber. And we're placing a spotlight on the arts that both highlights the world stage and local artists.

As a member of WGPU, you can take pride knowing that everything we do is possible because of supporters like you. Your generous gifts enable us to remain true to our mission – to inspire, inform, educate, engage and entertain through the power of public media.

A strong public media makes for an even stronger community. Since my arrival in Southwest Florida in 2021, I have witnessed first-hand how resilient this community can be. And as a proud supporter of WGPU, I know this beautiful place in paradise will continue to thrive as WGPU continues to grow – because WGPU's growth is in our trusted hands.



A strong public media makes for an even stronger community.



corporate impact



Scott Miller
Associate
General Manager,
Business
Partnerships and
Corporate
Investments

This year, the underwriting department expanded to three full-time staff members who have both commercial and public media experience.

With WGPU's strong listener base, the underwriting staff was able to go into the community to tell our story to potential underwriters and secure dollars and commitments from businesses and organizations both large and small. Armed with the latest tools to help educate underwriters on the benefits and advantages of reaching our audiences, we finished the year with record revenues.

With a stronger focus on larger and new underwriting prospects, WGPU has commitments from one of the area's largest hospital groups, a large automotive franchise and several county and government offices, among others.

Southwest Florida has responded to underwriting at WGPU and our mission – and the outlook looks even better, with new tools coming online, a stronger focus on digital underwriting and the hiring of more staff to serve this community.

Special thanks to our leading corporate sponsors:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| Alison Craig Home Furnishings | FGCU Department of Graduate Studies | Naples Art District |
| All Native Garden Center | FGCU Wasmer Art Gallery | Naples Art Institute |
| ArtFest Ft. Myers | Florida Department of Children & Families | Naples Trust Company |
| Artis-Naples | Florida Department of Health | Neapolitan Enterprises – Third Street South, Naples |
| Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall | Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs | Nova Southeastern University |
| Bigham Jewelers | Florida Division of Emergency Management | Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida |
| Bill Smith Appliances & Electronics | Florida Power & Light | Players Circle Theater |
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| Busey Bank | FSU Office of University Advancement | Punta Gorda Symphony |
| Calleja Group at Morgan Stanley | Glenmede Trust Company | Pure Florida |
| Center for the Arts Bonita Springs | Golden Gate Nursery | Sanibel Captiva Community Bank |
| Choral Artistry | Gulf Coast Orchid Alliance | Shula's Steak House |
| Citizens Property Insurance | Gulf Coast Symphony | Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center |
| Clive Daniel Home | Gulfshore Opera | Southwest Florida Symphony |
| Collier County Solid & Hazardous Waste | Gulfshore Playhouse | Subaru of Naples |
| Collier County Supervisor of Elections | Hotworks.org | Suncoast Credit Union |
| Edison and Ford Winter Estates | IMAG | TheatreZone |
| FGCU Academy | Lee County Adult Continuing Education | Toy World |
| FGCU Bower School of Music | Lee County Supervisor of Elections | University of South Florida College of Public Health |
| FGCU College of Education | Marco Island Center for the Arts | Visit Central Florida |
| FGCU Department of Continuing Education | | Visit Florida |
| | | Visit Sarasota |

together we MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Anne Stavelly
Engagement Coordinator

It was a very good fiscal year in community engagement, with visits from national NPR and PBS partners and local people taking part in special events.



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2



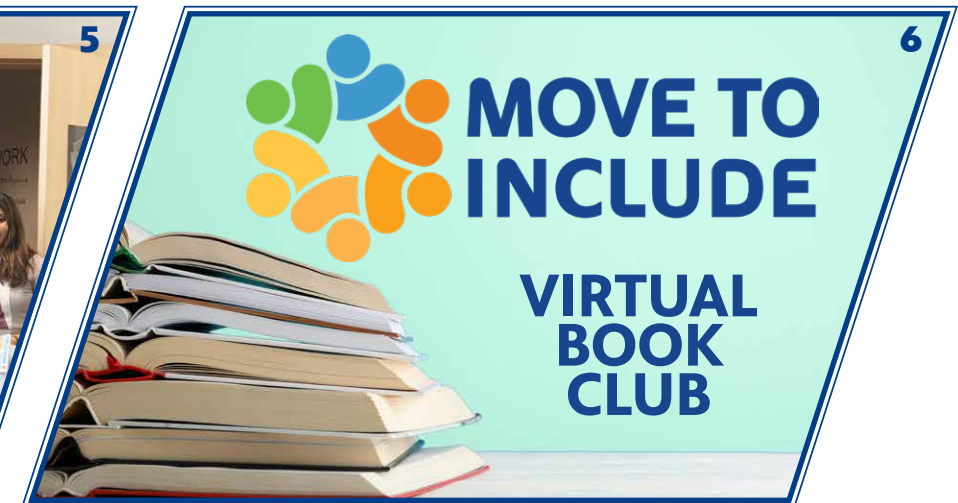
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5



6

1. Film Screening

WGCU and the Holocaust Museum & Cohen Education Center welcomed filmmakers Ken Burns and Sarah Botstein (virtually) and an audience of 200 to discuss their release, *The U.S. and the Holocaust*.

2. Press Club Media Mixer

WGCU hosted the Press Club of Southwest Florida and the Public Relations Society of America Gulf Coast Chapter for a program celebrating the work and collaborations of local weather and news teams as they covered Hurricane Ian. General Manager Corey Lewis spoke and accepted the first Press Club/PRSA Excellence in Public Service Award for Hurricane Ian coverage. Then 60 attendees toured the WGCU studios and held a media mixer.

3. Visit by NPR Journalist

Robin Young, award-winning journalist and co-host of NPR's weekly midday show, *Here & Now*, visited the studios and discussed the status of daily live news with WGCU's local *Morning Edition* host John Davis and local *All Things Considered* host Sandra Viktorova. Guests learned about how NPR and WGCU work together behind the scenes and how the biggest stories happen.

4. Station Tours

In addition to hosting national and local talent, WGCU provided 15 station tours to members of local groups, as well as 10 screenings and four other presentations in Southwest Florida.

5. Community Partnerships

Lifelong learning with WGCU PBS starts early. WGCU collaborates with more than 30 community partners to bring educational workshops to teachers, students and families.

6. Move to Include

The Move to Include Virtual Book Club for young autistic adults and FGCU student peers is designed to break the isolation people with disabilities often feel and to provide a social setting to make new friends. WGCU has hosted six book clubs to date and partnered with Kansas PBS in Wichita to create a pilot program there. As the national Move to Include public media initiative grows, WGCU will be a hub for other PBS stations to replicate this successful program.



WGPU views this time in media and journalism as a unique and significant opportunity that enables us to capture new audiences, increase our audience engagement, and improve our contributing audience numbers.

Although WGPU's national, international and local content has made its radio and TV stations a destination for thought leadership and thoughtful people, WGPU is prepared to meet some challenges to remain this vital force for Southwest Florida.

Here's what we know and what the future holds:

More local voices and stories from our station are critical to serving our audiences in areas where newspapers have fallen off.

We must augment national programs with more locally originated content, without sacrificing one of our biggest strengths: bringing voices from around the globe to our audiences. Our focus will be on developing deep content areas using local experts on global issues such as the environment and healthy aging.

Historically at WGPU, our staff and resources had been among the smallest in the country for stations of our size and audience impact. We are making an initial investment here with the goal of funding more reporters to keep pace with the growth of this community and meet your expectations.

We are strengthening our partnership with the FGCU journalism program, building a collaborative investigative reporting program in which student fellows work with WGPU reporting mentors to meet the staffing needs of our newsroom and place the best and brightest of Southwest Florida at NPR stations across the country.

To grow the independent investigative unit and to build the newsroom of the future, we're seeking significant funds from the community, while continuing to provide interesting events and opportunities for our current, vitally important supporters.

In these ways, WGPU Pubic Media – PBS and NPR for Southwest Florida – can continue to give people the context and information to chart our collective future.

Thank you for joining us in this important effort.



Research shows that people exposed to news on public television are better-informed than those exposed to news on private TV. ... Countries with strong public broadcasters have higher levels of social trust, and the people who live in them are less likely to hold extremist political views."

Knight Foundation 2023



Sara Jordan
Development Director



Pedro Lora
Development Director

For more than a decade, I've had the privilege of connecting passionate people to the nonprofit missions they care deeply about. The WGPU development team works to bring supporters closer to our mission, create meaningful experiences, and present opportunities to affect lasting, positive change through philanthropic giving. As WGPU continues its journalistic expansion and strategic growth, we are humbled by the support that you, our audience, provides. Every gift we receive – whether from a sustaining member or a Leadership Circle donor – represents more than just dollars and cents; it represents the confidence and hope that our community has in WGPU to be a leader in news, culture, and entertainment.

Southwest Florida has many meaningful and impactful nonprofits within the community – nonprofits concerned with children, health, education, and human services. Finding an organization that impacts all these sectors is quite difficult, but also very special once found. WGPU is that very thing, an invaluable source of information for all ages, while also being a link between the community, government, and nonprofits. It is thrilling to witness firsthand our expansion of localized media thanks to our philanthropic partners. As a Southwest Florida native, it is inspiring to be a part of such a reputable organization with deep roots in the community.



leadership circle

WGCU's Leadership Circle is a committed group of donors whose philanthropic gifts enable WGCU to produce and deliver the highest-quality television, radio and digital programming for Southwest Florida and nationwide. Each member of the Leadership Circle makes an annual investment in WGCU of \$2,500 or more that helps strengthen the impact of our work in the community; ensures that there is always a space where lifelong learning takes place; safeguards the notion that in-depth information and fresh ideas will be exchanged; and allows everyone to explore the world around them.

WGCU offers unique access and experiences to our loyal and generous Leadership Circle donors with our deepest appreciation. Leadership Circle members are subject to fascinating speakers, outstanding musical performances, WGCU on-air talent, and people like you who share the interests and values that inspire your passion for WGCU.

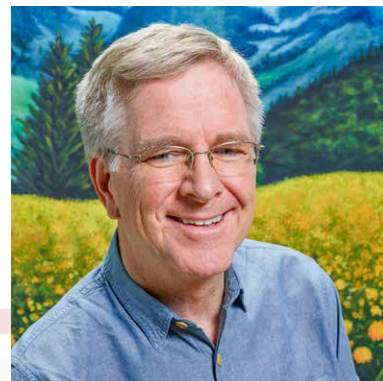
By joining this dedicated group, you play a most important role in enabling all we do at this station.

Exclusive Leadership Circle Events for 2024



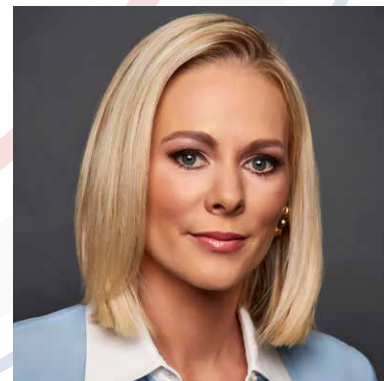
January 2024

PBS NewsHour Host
Geoff Bennett



February 2024

PBS Travel Expert
Rick Steves



March 2024

PBS Firing Line Host
Margaret Hoover

legacy society

You can continue making your area a better place to live, learn and grow by establishing a planned gift to support the future of WGCU.

The WGCU Legacy Society honors people who make a provision for WGCU in their wills, establish a life income gift to WGCU, or create an endowment of \$25,000 or more for sustainable support of WGCU.

A number of planned giving programs are available. Some planned gifts may offer tax benefits, income for you or your family or estate planning advantages, all while supporting WGCU's mission. We will work closely, and confidentially, with you and your advisors.

For more information, call 239-590-2514 or email leadershipcircle@wgcu.org

You have been here for us this year, so we can be here for you. With your support, we remain committed to learning, growing, and connecting with you so that we can better serve the community.

WGCU Public Media gratefully recognizes the support of our Leadership Circle donors.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| Mr. Nat Alcamo | William Hillemeier | Anne Noonan and James Rathmann |
| The Fred and Jean Allegretti Foundation | David and Carolyn Hobson | Steve and Cathy O'Brien |
| Anonymous Donors | Gregory E Hudson | Dr. Maryann C Peifly and Mr. Joe Colaneri |
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growing local, going global

WGCU as a content leader

WGCU marked many important milestones in coverage this year.



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.



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.



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. This part-time position is funded in part by Naomi Bloom, Jay & Toshiko Tompkins and Julie & Phil Wade. WGCU also produced *Spotlight on the Arts*, short digital videos highlighting local arts and culture. The short features are produced by Tara Calligan and edited by Rendy Ramos; the segments are funded in part by Naomi Bloom in memory of her husband, Ron Wallace.



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.

proof of concept



WGCU staff accepting "Overall Station of the Year for Radio" from the Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists



Amy Shumaker (right) receiving the NETA award for "Overall Excellence in Content"

WGCU and its journalists received awards from various groups for reporting this year.

- Overall Excellence in Content award for "WGCU Hurricane Ian Lifeline," a body of reporting during the September 2022 storm and its aftermath, from the National Educational Telecommunications Association. Judges said, "The storytelling across the sampled content was exceptional in all aspects and the continued coverage provided a view point of the journey the community is still on today."
- An award in Radio News & Public Affairs for a story on the Pine Island evacuation, from the National Educational Telecommunications Association.
- A first-place award for WGCU environmental writer Tom Bayles, for online commentary on how Hurricane Ian was the catalyst for water quality issues that continue today, and a third-place award for Bayles for his body of work as a broadcast environmental reporter throughout Florida, from the Florida Society of Professional Journalists.
- Two second-place awards for WGCU environmental writer Tom Bayles for News Features from the Public Media Journalists Association.
- Feature in Hard News for Reporter Bryant Monteilh, from the Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists.
- General Assignment - Long for Pam James, Eileen Kelley and Tom James from the Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists.
- Two regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, for Sandra Viktorova in Hard Feature, and Overall Station of the Year for Radio, from the Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists.
- Nominations for Suncoast Emmy Awards for WGCU's historical documentary *A Force for Freedom: The Robert Hilliard Story* and the independent local documentary *The Lure of Lovers Key*, which premiered on WGCU.

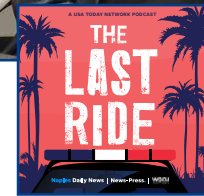


voices across the region

With our history dating to the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1967, public media has strived to include and serve the entire public.

Fulfilling that mandate is a great responsibility that we work to live up to every day. Our award-winning journalists amplify community voices and produce stories that reflect the needs, interests, and hopes of our region. In the past year, voices from across Southwest Florida were represented throughout innovative

programming, from WGPU's *Last Ride* podcast and *Move to Include* virtual book club to *Three Song Stories* program and podcast. We began to build new teams and reimagine others, such as a documentary unit and an expanded investigative and public affairs team to help us show up for, listen to, and engage our community. These growing areas present a meaningful opportunity to bring community members into the conversation more deeply and to engage with our reporting in new ways.



Janine Zeitlin, producer, writer and reporter of 'The Last Ride' podcast; and Amanda Inscore Whittamore, audio editor and co-producer



Craig Pittman, New York Times best selling author and co-host of the "Welcome to Florida" podcast

engaging the next generation



As consumption habits change among news consumers, traditional modes of news delivery, such as newspapers and real-time audio and video, have declined, in contrast with the growth of streaming services, podcasts and smart speakers. To achieve our public service mission in the 21st century, it is essential that we are on the platforms where the audiences are. We are therefore focused on digital innovation and transforming how we deliver our news and information digitally – on mobile apps, social media, e-newsletters and podcasts – to bridge the divide between traditional news platforms and the digital world. Our staff, our methods and our content must and do reflect the diversity of experience among all generations of people in our region.



Dedicated WGPU supporter and concert-goer Leslie Young of Buckingham rented a limousine so many times to attend shows he thought he may as well go ahead and buy a limo. So he did. A black stretch.

How many WGPU concerts has he been to? "Shoot, I don't even know. My first was when Brit Floyd was playing at Barbara B. Mann, they're absolutely my favorite, and that was five or six years ago."

"The next one in line of favorites would be the Fab Four. This will be my third year seeing them. I caught them on WGPU TV and thought, 'Who is that? They said they were coming to Fort Myers. I said I'm gonna find those boys and go see them.'

"The shows you guys put on, it would be a tough time for anybody to match them."

WGPU's partnerships with local venues provide opportunities for our audiences to see the shows while providing financial support to the station.

Sometimes Young takes a friend for a concert and limo ride and sometimes he rents a table for 10 or so upstairs at Hertz Arena. "I try to show everybody a good time," he said.

Young, 64, is in site development, he said, or "dirt work." He says he works hard "and I play a whole lot harder."

He's had the limousine a few months and is looking forward to the next few shows. He already has tickets.



Brit Floyd

our staff



Thank **YOU** for
supporting WGCU!



WGCU
PUBLIC MEDIA

10501 FGCU Blvd. South | Fort Myers, FL 33965 | wgu.org
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