

WGCU



Culture and Connections Reporter Elizabeth Andarge

2024 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

“You are our window on the world for in-depth news and travel documentaries, plus the best entertainment shows!”

– Curt Dunham, North Fort Myers

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



WGCU is a valuable part of supporting a healthy democracy.

WGCU Public Media is Southwest Florida’s source for PBS and NPR, and a member-supported service of Florida Gulf Coast University. WGCU provides essential local news, educational programming, and cultural content to the region, keeping residents informed, engaged, and connected. WGCU is committed to filling local news gaps by providing in-depth, fact-based reporting at a time when the decline in traditional journalism has left many communities underserved.

Education, expanded news and hurricane preparation.

WGCU Public Media provides PBS Kids children’s programming and educational resources of PBS LearningMedia to help Florida’s youngest residents enter school “ready to learn.” Educational workshops for teachers and parents in rural areas also support under-resourced communities. WGCU has expanded its news staff to enhance local reporting across digital, radio, and television platforms. Additionally, WGCU partnered with the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network to train reporters for hurricane season and strengthen ties with emergency agencies and first responders.

WGCU’s work with community partners has a deep impact in the region.

WGCU has expanded its reach through live and virtual events, public screenings, content initiatives, and educational activities. By collaborating with key partners, WGCU made a meaningful impact on local communities, including those that are isolated, underserved, and under-resourced. From WGCU Be My Neighbor Day to our collaboration with the FGCU Water School, WGCU understands that partnerships are key to making an impact.

WGCU broadcasts quality programming 24 hours a day, serving all or parts of 12 counties in Southwest Florida with six distinct digital TV channels, three radio services, and multiple digital and social media platforms. WGCU reaches a monthly average of 350,000+ TV viewers; 200,000+ FM listeners, and 120,000+ unique digital visitors to WGCU.org. WGCU TV recently was ranked in the top 10 most-watched public television stations in the country.

WGCU Total Streams for FY 2024

PBS Kids – 12.6 million

Florida PBS LearningMedia – 302.3 K

General Audience Programming – 980 K

WGCU FM – 1.46 million

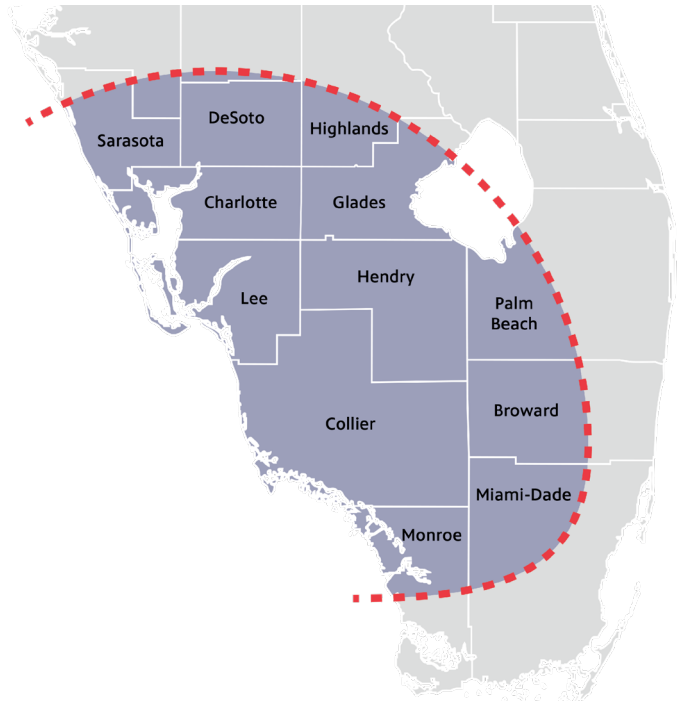
WGCU Public Media Features Educational Programming and Engagement

WGCU produced more than 445 hours of local content from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024 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 were archived on wgc.org for access by teachers and students 24 hours a day.

The **Florida PBS LearningMedia** portal provided teachers, parents and home schoolers with free, web-based curriculum that was engaging and effective. The public media videos, lesson plans, and activities on the site helped make learning fun. Through local grants, WGCU provided 22 educational workshops to educators, caregivers and families in both English and Spanish. These workshops taught attendees how to utilize **Florida PBS LearningMedia** resources at home and in the classroom.

PBS Kids television programming, online streaming and interactive games prepared 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 provided Southwest Florida families an opportunity to explore WGCU and its three “neighborhoods”: Arts & Education, Science & the Environment and Meet the Helpers. Families met neighbors from nonprofit education, arts, and environmental organizations as well as public safety organizations. Daniel Tiger was also on hand to meet his Southwest Florida friends. Finally, at the heart of this event is the importance of being neighborly, so WGCU hosted activities throughout the day to promote community kindness. The 2024 event was held Saturday, March 2 with 25 community organizations represented and nearly 500 attendees.



Awards

WGCU won the national Public Media Award for Overall Excellence in Content from National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). WGCU reporters, producers, and photographers were recognized with 16 additional awards from the Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists, Radio Television Digital News Association, Public Media Journalists Association, Society of Professional Journalists, Gannett and NETA Public Media Awards.



Environment

The Green Flash e-newsletter was published monthly featuring WGCU environmental reporting. WGCU’s Senior Environmental Reporter Tom Bayles covered topics from climate change to water quality to environmental impacts on wildlife. Bayles’ position was made possible with three consecutive years’ support from the Volo Foundation and the Brico Fund.

New Voices

WGCU hired Florida Gulf Coast University student Eddie Stewart to host weekends on 90.1 FM, adding more newscasts and additional reporting to its initiative. Elizabeth Andarge was hired as the Culture and Connections Reporter to broaden community knowledge and unify us through understanding our differences. Mike Walcher was hired as a reporter/editor working closely with FGCU journalism student interns and WGCU Public Media Fellows.

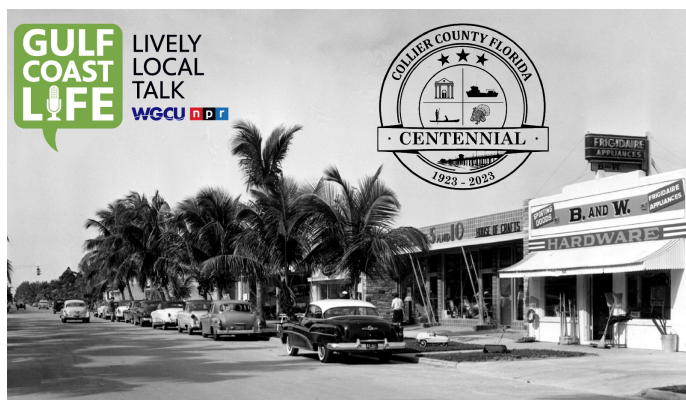
Engagement Journalism

The WGCU team could be found hosting events, conducting conversations and moderating debates with groups like the Alliance for the Arts, The Florida Repertory Theater, the Naples City Mayor and City Council Forum, Floridians for Democracy, Collier County League of Women Voters, Lee County League of Women Voters and “Assault on Public Health” with the former Florida surgeon general.



Documentary Unit

WGCU strengthened its commitment to local storytelling by establishing a dedicated three-person documentary unit to bring more “Untold Stories” to life. Focused on capturing the rich history, people, and places of Southwest Florida, the team produced compelling stories across FM, digital, and social platforms. Its first project, “Untold Stories: Sanibel Island’s Store,” showcases the depth and impact of their work.



Gulf Coast Life

The WGCU radio talk show that aired four days a week featured multiple topics, authors, experts, FGCU professors, nonprofits, and local arts organizations. A live show was recorded on location at the Collier County Library to explore the history of the county as it celebrated its centennial.

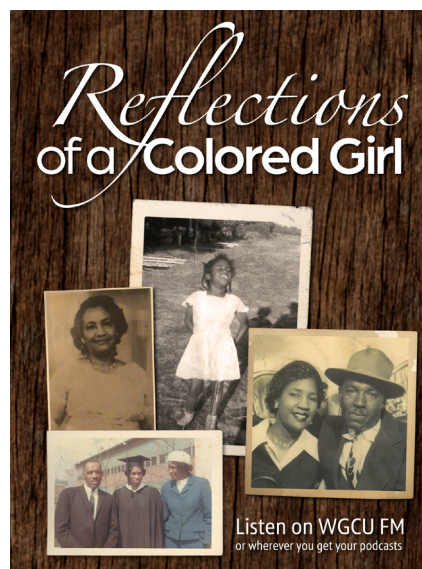
The Face of Immokalee: Public Art for Social Change

WGCU produced “The Face of Immokalee: Public Art for Social Change” as part of its “Spotlight on the Arts” interstitials series that is generously funded by Naomi Bloom in memory of her husband, Ron Wallace. This film followed photographer Michelle Tricca, at right, as she set out to humanize the people of the agricultural community of Immokalee in her public art exhibit, “The Face of Immokalee.” Reporter Tara Calligan chronicled Tricca’s efforts and the way her art personalized a community in her documentary, also titled “The Face of Immokalee,” which won Best Florida Film at the Naples International Film Festival this year and was nominated for a Suncoast Regional Emmy. The evolution of this project exemplifies the power and impact of our community partnerships.



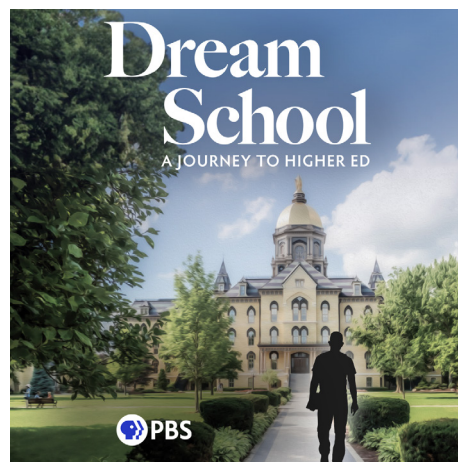
Reflections of a Colored Girl

WGCU was honored to bring the powerful storytelling of Dr. Martha R. Bireda to our listeners through a compelling series of 20 short essays. Bireda — a distinguished writer, lecturer, and living history performer — shared deeply personal reflections on her life experiences, offering insights into race, class, and gender through the lens of history and lived experience. With over 30 years of expertise working with educators, law enforcement, and civic leaders, Bireda’s thought-provoking narratives sparked meaningful conversations across our community. As director of the Blanchard House Museum of African American History and Culture in Punta Gorda, she continues to preserve and illuminate the rich heritage of African Americans in Southwest Florida.



Dream School: A Journey to Higher Ed

For years, six high school students worked hard to earn a seat at America’s top colleges. Will it be enough? This program is the inspiring journey of a diverse group of bright and ambitious high school students working to get admitted into America’s top colleges. Reported by WGCU’s Sandra Viktorova, the documentary shines some light on this high-stress world and the various factors that come into play when it comes to college admissions today. WGCU held a special screening event for students in the Immokalee Foundation High School Program. The film has had more than 257K views on YouTube and more than 500 comments from around the world.



After Ian: A WGCU News Hurricane Special

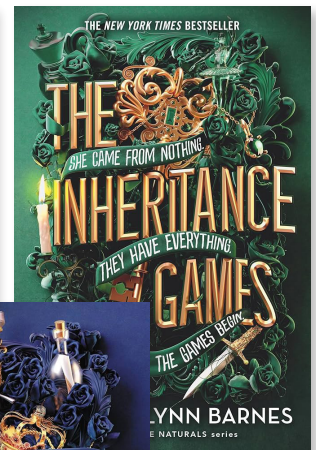
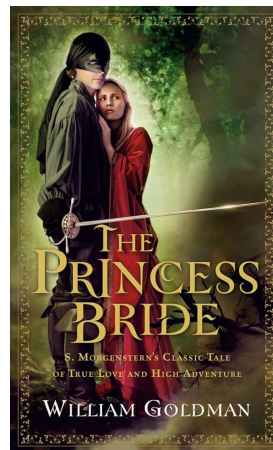
From the economy to the environment, from the strength of a community rallying together to the deeply personal struggles of recovery, WGCU provided an in-depth, human-centered perspective on the impact of Hurricane Ian. Through powerful storytelling and rigorous reporting, we explored how Southwest Florida navigated the storm's aftermath, capturing voices of resilience, hardship, and hope. WGCU hosts Sandra Viktorova and Bryant Monteilh, alongside the dedicated WGCU news team, delivered a compelling examination of the storm's effects in a special anniversary broadcast. Their commitment to chronicling the recovery process, from rebuilding efforts to the emotional toll on residents — earned WGCU a prestigious Suncoast Emmy Award.



Move to Include Virtual Book Club

The WGCU Move to Include Book Club is a unique social opportunity for people with an autism diagnosis and their peers to celebrate inclusion and reduce social isolation among young adults. The virtual book club is reading its ninth book together, finding that books can be even more interesting when you can discuss them with friends.

“I have always looked for a group that made me feel like I belong. One day, I had stumbled upon the WGCU Move to Include Book Club and decided to take a chance, knowing that if nothing else I could share my love of reading with others. But this book club has been so much more for me. It has given me not only a community of people where I feel like I belong, but a community that lifts me up, gives me confidence, and more. It is something that I look forward to every week, and I am so glad that I took that leap of faith so many books ago. Thank you, WGCU Move to Include Book Club for being a community that I can call home.” - Emma Skinner



Amplifying Local Voices: WGCU's StoryCorps Partnership

From February 15 to March 15, 2024, WGCU partnered with StoryCorps and the Lee County Alliance for the Arts to record, preserve, and share the diverse stories of the people of Southwest Florida. This initiative provided a platform for residents to share their personal narratives, fostering a deeper sense of community and connection.

StoryCorps' mission—to highlight the power of storytelling in bringing people together—aligns with WGCU's commitment to inspiring, educating, informing, engaging, and entertaining through public media. More than 30 local stories were curated, edited, and produced by WGCU's John Davis, reaching audiences through broadcasts on WGCU FM. By elevating these voices, WGCU not only preserved the region's rich oral history but also reinforced the importance of shared experiences in building a stronger, more connected community.



Marcia Robinson and her son Finzo Hall recorded a remote conversation through the StoryCorps Mobile Tour visit to Southwest Florida in March 2024.

“WGCU had another strong year of service to this community. We had a record year in our financial growth across membership, major gifts, and corporate support to sustain and grow our service to the community. We were able to meet our goals in our strategic plan on time and on budget. We are striving to be Southwest Florida's one-stop shop for local, national, and international content. Approximately 500,000 people depend on WGCU each month. We think about this responsibility every day as we create our best work.”

*-Corey Lewis,
WGCU General Manager*

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.