

WFDD Local Content and Services for FY20

July 2019 – June 2020

Overall goals and approach to address identified community issues, needs, and interests through vital local services, such as multi-platform long and short-form content, digital and in-person engagement, education services, community information, partnership support, and other activities, and audiences reached or new audiences engaged.

During an ideation session for a marketing campaign for new listeners, we asked ourselves “What was the reason you started listening to public radio in the first place?” One of the answers that stood out most to us was the simplest one: “Because it became a friend I didn’t even know I needed.” At our core we believe this to be true. Our listeners see us as the trusted friend they know they can rely on, and this year in particular this relationship has been tried and tested, and it prevailed. In fact, we feel it’s safe to say that it blossomed in unpredictable ways.

We hear from listeners all the time who share how they feel about WFDD, and honoring that emotional connection is our guiding light, our north star. To put it even more plainly, the listeners themselves are that for us, and part of honoring that connection means always striving to do and be more for our listeners, and for our community. It means identifying the most important needs for all residents in the communities we serve, and meeting those needs through reporting efforts, sharing of information, and events that appeal to a broad spectrum of the population. Our mission — to inform, connect, educate, and inspire — defines how we approach our public service every day.

Fiscal year 2020 was a fractured year for everyone, where half of the year fell in the Before Times, and the other half was a blur of reimagining how to maintain the level of public service to which we are committed, keep up with the unrelenting pace of the news cycle, and not lose sight of our role as a lighthouse in the storm for our listeners. The COVID-19 pandemic clearly changed our strategy and dynamics in every department, but it hasn’t stopped us from fulfilling our mission. We are always seeking ways to increase our news coverage, and the pandemic presented opportunities for us to do that with the launch of a live blog solely dedicated to COVID-19, offered from the beginning in both English and Spanish. We partnered with other public stations in the region to ensure robust coverage of COVID-19 in North Carolina, including special reports and collaborative reporting projects.

Because we have found the strategy successful for us, we continued to focus on the production of high-quality engagement activities for our community: events of varying sizes and structures that provide opportunities to connect in-person with our audience. These include new events like our Trivia Night with Morning Edition host David Greene, annual events like our outdoor listening party Look Up And Listen and our Photo of the Year exhibit and opening reception, and recurring events like the WFDD Book Club.

When the pandemic made it impossible to have in-person events, we switched to provide our listeners with what they needed the most in those trying times: comfort. We began a new email series, the “Daily Dose of Good,” to share a bit of positivity, and while it meant a great deal of work, it paid off.

Hive®, our Education Department, continues to prove that there’s value in what young people have to say. The mission of this multi-tiered initiative is to give young people the skills, the tools, and the

platform to share their unique perspective — to open a window into the world (and worldview) of the youth of our community. It is our hope that this program also opens the eyes of young people to the possibilities of future careers in public media and the field of journalism, with the aim to diversify and deepen the talent pool. Hive® includes programs for students from middle school all the way through college (and even to adults), and through it we connect not only with students, but also with schools and school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members. When school went online, so did our education program. Pivoting to virtual after-school classes, plus a virtual version of Radio Camp, allowed kids to participate not only from the comfort of their own house, but also from all over the country.

Finally, our membership department was no stranger to the challenges posed by this new world we were forced into. As we were getting ready to begin our Spring Fund Drive, the COVID-19 pandemic drove us to rethink our financial goal, as well as our strategy. We were able to conduct a modified drive using pre-recorded messages and we were blown away by the response of our audience. While hundreds of people were losing their jobs due to the pandemic, the commitment of our listeners never wavered. Because of all the reasons stated above, our audience stepped up. They saw the value in WFDD's service before and throughout what will most definitely be a year for the history books.

One donor put it like this: "Free and fair, level-headed, and deeply considered information and involvement in issues that truly matter to our community, better our humanity, and increase our artistry. Thank you for all you do!" We can strive to do no less than these things. Our goals are lofty, and that's exactly what we think they should be.

Key initiatives and the variety of partners with whom WFDD collaborated, including other public media outlets, community nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, the business community, teachers and parents, etc.

During the fall of 2019, we continued to expand our news coverage across the region. Our series *Carolina Curious* received questions from listeners in over 30 zip codes across our 32-county listening area. When COVID-19 hit, we shifted our newsroom operations to remote work, but we never stopped providing our audience with the information they needed to navigate these uncertain times. We started a live blog in both English and Spanish with all the breaking news, daily stats, governor press conferences, testing information, and more.

WFDD spearheaded an effort to partner with other public radio stations to collect data and information across the state on how different local governments responded to the pandemic (<https://www.wfdd.org/story/state-emergency-nc-counties-had-plans-crises-weve-never-seen-anything>). Reporters from the different stations called county public health departments in their respective listening areas, covering urban and rural communities across the entire state and we asked them all the same questions — for example, what case information do you release publicly, what is the impact of COVID-19 on your budget, how often do you hold press conferences? What we found was confusion on the part of our public and our health officials, as well as a lack of funding that was plaguing our local government's response (<https://www.wfdd.org/story/when-shutdowns-began-counties-struggled-resources-data>).

WFDD partnered with North Carolina radio stations to offer two hour-long programs broadcast across the state examining how the pandemic is affecting daily lives. "Our Pandemic Summer" was devoted to how the season of vacations, summer camps, and pools looked very different in 2020. WFDD reported on how summer festivals were trying to find their way forward in the new coronavirus landscape (<https://www.wfdd.org/story/summer-festivals-feeling-heat-covid-19>). We also produced another program, "Back To School In NC: Keeping COVID-19 Out Of Classrooms," where WFDD focused on the budgetary impact of the pandemic on schools.

Early in the fall of 2019, we partnered with a local music venue and restaurants to offer a Trivia Night with *Morning Edition* host David Greene. Over 150 people attended, making it one of our most popular events to date. Other partners included a local inn and a café. These partnerships allowed us to create a robust, highly-inventive, tiered event while keeping our hard-cash costs reasonably low.

We also presented fresh versions of our annual events, from various free and ticketed events, including Bar Meet-ups, which are done in partnership with area breweries and combine listener engagement with fundraising. In October 2019, we once again secured exclusive access for our listeners to one of the most beautiful landscapes North Carolina has to offer: Hanging Rock State Park. We turned our annual Look Up And Listen event into a family Halloween celebration. 360 of our listeners traveled from all over the region with their families to listen to public radio under the night sky. Our partners for this event included Stokes County Economic Development, Hanging Rock State Park, and Green Heron Ale House. Attendees were invited to view night sky objects with the naked eye and through high-powered telescopes under the guidance of amateur astronomers; make s'mores by a campfire; and listen to carefully curated episodes of favorite public radio programs. We even provided trick-or-treating opportunities for the kids.

We've continued our Photo of the Week initiative, launched in January 2018, and this relatively simple activity continues to have an incredibly high impact on our community engagement. Listeners submit their original photos taken all around our listening area, and we select one each week to feature in our *Weekly Roundup* email and on social media. This initiative culminates in a Photo of the Year event, for which we partner with the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) in Winston-Salem to hang an exhibit of all the chosen weekly photos. The public is invited to an opening reception where they vote on their favorite. The one with the most votes becomes our Photo of the Year, and serves as the cover photo on our Facebook page for the following year. The winner and two runners-up also received trophies and gift baskets donated by a local establishment. Thanks to partnerships with SECCA and Diamondback Grill, we were once again able to keep this a free community event. The 2020 event, held in late January, saw more than 260 attendees.

Hive®, our Education Department, continues to grow and push the envelope in its strategies and offerings. As part of the fall 2019 Radio 101 class in partnership with R.J. Reynolds High School, the students spent months looking into national, state, and local data about school violence and produced a four-part series, *School, Interrupted*, about what it means to literally survive high school. The effort culminated in a Town Hall for Teens where youth from schools all over the district came together to discuss topics like lockdown drills, sexual violence, and racial inequalities in school; we made it clear that this was an opportunity for students to speak, and for parents, teachers, and district administrators to listen. Nearly 100 students registered to attend. Additional partners for the Town Hall for Teens include

the Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts and John Jordan Films, which documented the event on video. The stories from the four-part series produced entirely by high school students and the video from the Town Hall for Teens event continue to be available on our website: <https://www.wfdd.org/schoolinterrupted>.

In the spring of 2020, we found that while national media were sharing many stories about how the pandemic was affecting our lives, there was a key voice missing: that of young people. So, Hive® turned its attention to creating a COVID-19 Student Podcast Challenge, open to students from all over our listening area. We created a robust, online podcast-creation guide, and promoted the opportunity to teachers in multiple school districts. With few rules about what genre or style the final submissions should be, we received a broad variety of audio creations from students that expressed how they were managing during the pandemic lockdowns. The winning entry was a powerful original song, written and recorded by a high school junior: <https://www.wfdd.org/story/covid-19-student-challenge-winner>. We received submissions from students from 6th grade through 12th grade.

Other Hive® offerings in FY20 included our Radio 101 after-school session; Radio 101 “pocket editions” at Paisley IB Magnet Middle School and Salem Academy, the oldest educational institution for girls in the United States; and several sessions of Radio Camp, our week-long summer day camp for middle schoolers. In Radio Camp, students learn the basics of radio story production, from studio and field recording, to subject research, to interviewing techniques, and the other skills needed to write, record, edit, and create stories for radio broadcast. Each student concludes the week with a story of their own that is also broadcast on WFDD and shared on our website. Each Radio Camper interviews a community member for their story; local organizations and businesses, artists and entrepreneurs, and general people of note are all subjects for these interviews. In order to expand the reach of camp offerings, we partner with Guilford College and Appalachian State University to hold camp sessions in cities throughout our broadcast area. And because we don’t think the fun should stop in middle school, we also offered a session of Radio Camp for Grown-Ups in the spring of 2020. This session shifted to virtual, once shutdowns began.

Our WFDD Book Club continues, now five years in. The Book Club meets quarterly, and each read is chosen by the Book Club members, through an online vote from three options. We continue to partner with the Guilford College Bryan Series, Scuppernong Books, and Bookmarks, and have introduced a new partner in the Forsyth County Public Library. The local, independent bookstores offer each WFDD Book Club selection at a discount to our participants. One Book Club session meets at the Forsyth County Public Library’s downtown Winston-Salem branch. The library is open and accessible to a diverse population, which brings added exposure to the Book Club, particularly in underserved populations.

During December 2019, we held our 11th Backpack campaign, which continued our partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina and Kaplan Early Learning Company. The synergy between the Food Bank’s Backpack Program, which provides weekend meals to children facing food insecurity, and Kaplan, a company whose mission is to foster the mental, physical, and social health of children, is natural. During this annual campaign, our corporate partner donates a backpack full of food to the Backpack Program for each gift to 88.5 WFDD. For the December 2019 campaign, Kaplan generously increased its support, which allowed us to increase our goal to 1,300 gifts of support for WFDD and 1,300 backpacks of food for the Food Bank’s Backpack Program. Not only does the campaign raise awareness of the significant challenges our community faces with childhood hunger (our area has one of the highest instances of childhood food insecurity in the

nation), it also raises essential support for 88.5 WFDD, and brings the community together to help alleviate childhood hunger in our region. But, because all things were different in 2020, we held a second Backpack Campaign in May of 2020, to address the increased need for food support in our community created by the pandemic. Together with our listeners and the support of major donors, we were able to provide an additional 1,300 backpacks of food for Second Harvest Food Bank's Backpack Program. Core to our values at WFDD is awareness of what matters to our community, and coordinating a second Backpack Campaign demonstrates that belief. And it clearly resonated with our community, as evidenced by how they rose to the occasion to support 1,300 additional backpacks for the Food Bank's program.

Impact of key initiatives and partnerships have in the community, such as increased awareness, learning, or understanding about particular issues; indicators of success, such as connecting people to needed resources or strengthening conversational ties across diverse neighborhoods.

Because we are deeply committed to ensuring that our news reporting highlights issues relevant to everyone in our communities, and to addressing topics of importance to underserved populations, we created a Spanish-language version of our COVID-19 Blog, available on our website from the very beginning stages of the pandemic. Particularly in the area served by WFDD, the Hispanic and LatinX communities were disproportionately affected by coronavirus, so getting key information to that community was vitally important. This page is the third most-visited page on our website, with 47,540 visitors, coming after the English version, and the "Listen" link. The largest number of visits came from Charlotte, followed by Winston-Salem, Doraville, Raleigh, Greensboro, Durham, Atlanta and New York. Information provided on that page included a daily count of cases statewide and countywide; the governor's press briefings in Spanish; testing sites and hours; updates on hospital services; updates on available resources; vaccination sites and hours. We also translated pertinent news stories into Spanish, to further our efforts of getting necessary information out to our Spanish-speaking community members.

Our annual Backpack Campaign continues to have a positive impact for our community, and for FY20 this is doubly so. With not one, but two, Backpack Campaigns in the fiscal year, one in December 2019 and one in May 2020 (in response to the increase in food insecurity due to the pandemic), our community worked together not only to provide essential funding for WFDD, but also to provide 2,600 backpacks of food for Second Harvest Food Bank's Backpack Program. That's the equivalent of 13,000 meals. Since its inception 11 years ago, this collaborative fundraising campaign has resulted in the donation of 10,300 backpacks — over 51,000 meals for children at risk of going hungry.

Our Hive® Education Program continues to grow and find new ways to connect with students. Even in a pandemic year, the program saw a 117% increase in the number of participants and a 21% increase in web traffic. All the various Hive® offerings expose young people to the power of audio storytelling, but they also teach writing, communication, and media literacy — skills that last a lifetime and benefit the students in many ways beyond their usefulness in our programs. Marshall Marvelli is an educator who was instrumental in developing a relationship between WFDD and Paisley IB Magnet Middle School that

allows the station to provide Radio 101 “Pocket Editions” to classes at Paisley. Here’s what he had to say:

“WFDD- FM has become an important and enriching educational experience for my students through the efforts of Gabriel Maisonnave, the program director, who runs and facilitates a radio script writing course, ‘Radio 101.’ For five weeks each third quarter, my students are introduced to the art and craft of reportage and script writing including all of the technical and mechanical facets of radio script production elements of the craft. The richness of the course lies in the fact that it is a multi-level, multi-step project that requires the student to explore a topic often with the assistance of adults and then generate an aural/oral presentation involving a written script that for most of the students will be the culminating work product. For a few, those who have found and created a story that has the power to attract listeners, the project will go into production. This course is not something that I could have created or envisioned without WFDD. Without Mr. Maisonnave, this opportunity for my students would not exist. This is the value of WFDD and its Hive® program.”

At a quick glance, it might be easy to assume that WFDD’s Photo of the Week initiative is superficial and purely just a fun exercise. In reality, it has led to much deeper engagement with our community, as well as increased reach and more frequent interaction with our social media posts and platforms. Our Photo of the Week social posts are often our most popular, with increased likes and shares, and our *Weekly Roundup* email, which prominently features our Photo of the Week, has an average open rate of 37.7%, above industry standard. This initiative not only allows us to connect personally with listeners who submit photos for consideration, it also demonstrates that we value their talents. We extend the Photo of the Week initiative to incorporate an annual Photo of the Year exhibit and opening reception in partnership with the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA). SECCA’s Development Director, Devon MacKay, eloquently details the value of this event to SECCA, WFDD, and to the community as a whole:

“The WFDD Photo of the Year was a wonderful partnership for SECCA. Specifically,

- It provided an opportunity for us to learn about and exhibit photography from a much broader range of artists than we usually do, including amateur and professional, young and old, from all communities within WFDD listenership.
- It helped us communicate to so many more people than we usually do that we are here to exhibit and celebrate artists whether they win prestigious awards or they are a fan favorite. The voting process democratized what usually seems like a very elite and hard to penetrate standard of “contemporary art.”
- We saw an uptick in visitors walking through the galleries because they were here to specifically vote for a friend’s work from Photo of the Year.”

Our quarterly Book Club is yet another way we connect personally with our listeners, and while we see quite a few regular attendees, we also see new faces at every meeting. Attendees have told us that they felt comfortable coming solo to a Book Club meeting because they feel like they are meeting friends there. We routinely see people from disparate backgrounds engaged in meaningful conversation and sharing insights from their personal experiences. We purposefully select books from different genres and with different subject matters to appeal to as broad a section of our community as possible. Regular Book Club attendee Ulli Becker shared this:

"I have been attending the book club right from the beginning, if I could make the meeting. Early on we were meeting at a bookstore in Greensboro. I've lived in Greensboro since 2008, but I didn't know this bookstore. This is one of the things I love about the in-person events WFDD has: I learn more about places in my hometown. After the start of the pandemic, the book club moved to Zoom. I don't see many disadvantages with the zoom. The station still does a great job with the advertising, it's just instead of going to the bookstore, you are on the computer.

I also like the whole process around the book club: it is very inclusive. We have a group on Facebook, and we sign up for the book club email. Then the group votes on the book for the quarter. So far we had a large variety of different topics and different genres. I do read a lot, but I usually stick to mysteries/thrillers. The book club has broadened my horizon tremendously. For example, the last book was written in first person, and usually I don't read first person books, but I did this because it was for the book club and now I'm reading a book written in first person. We sometimes also have the authors in the meeting, especially authors from North Carolina. Again, this helps me learn more about my home state. I've also connected on Facebook with some of the other participants of different book club meetings.

As a result of attending the book club, I have greatly expanded my knowledge about my home state and city. I have also read books that I would never have read without the book club and I have met new people. All around, the book club has been a great enrichment of my life."

And another regular attendee, Raymond Stein, had this to say:

"The WFDD Book Club meetings are important to me in many ways. They are well-advertised and people are encouraged to be part of the group. The meetings themselves are run very well with everyone being encouraged to participate. I do like to share my thoughts, but I really enjoy hearing what others have to say about the books. It's a great way to learn more about them. During these unusual times, it is good to be part of this book club community, even if we currently cannot meet in person. I am happy to be part of this group."

Lastly, we want to draw attention to the impact our email series, *A Daily Dose Of Good*, had on our listeners. This effort came from a flash of inspiration in the very early days of the pandemic, when there was so much uncertainty, and fear and tension were palpable and ever-present. We felt that perhaps we could help in some small way, by sending daily reminders of good things in the world. Our listeners heartily embraced this, and delivered the message that this kind of messaging is needed always, not just in times of strife. Read below some comments from listeners that express how meaningful this simple effort was:

Listener James Paul:

"Good Day! I, along with thousands of other listeners to WFDD, wish to thank you for the Daily Dose of Good. To be able to see such serene and meaningful images every day when so much all around all of us can be both sad, with so many COVID-19 cases, and very uplifting with so much being done by our first responders...The entire staff of WFDD is to be

congratulated and thanked for providing us all with timely and accurate information. Please stay safe...”

Listener Wayne Turner:

“What a splendid idea! This is exactly what we need during these crazy, unprecedented times of health angst. Thanks so much for all your efforts at keeping us grounded and calm.”

Listener Laura Anne Middlesteadt:

“Hi guys...I almost never cry, but that piece with the musician with dementia melted me. Just the most beautiful thing I have seen in months. Thank you! And thanks also for introducing me to Mabel and Olive! You all are a ray of sunshine in a sea of chaos.”

WFDD is so much more than radio. It is a service with the power to uplift, to care, to support, to calm, to inform, to connect, to educate, to inspire . . . and so much more. It is impactful, and life-changing.

Efforts (e.g., programming, production, outreach activities) to investigate and/or meet the needs of minority and other diverse audiences (including, but not limited to, new immigrants, people for whom English is a second language and illiterate adults) during Fiscal Year 2020, and any plans to meet the needs of these audiences during Fiscal Year 2021.

Serving our entire community, including underserved and underrepresented populations is key to our mission and vision.

As reported in previous sections, from the very beginning of the pandemic, we hosted a Spanish-language version of our COVID-19 Blog on our website, and translated pertinent stories into Spanish as well. We were very fortunate to be awarded a North Carolina News Lab Grant, to aid us in our efforts to reach the Hispanic and LatinX communities with information about COVID-19, and by the end of FY21, we hope to have a bi-lingual Report For America corps member working in our newsroom, whose beat will be COVID-19’s effect on our communities’ Hispanic and LatinX population, as well as what the pandemic recovery looks like in those communities. We are partnering with Spanish-language publication *La Noticia* in this effort.

Our news team places a great deal of emphasis on covering race and social justice. This beat has been a primary focus throughout FY20. We feel that reporting on how systemic racism affects our lives in this community is a daily, ongoing commitment for our team and we will continue that dedication in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Early in FY20, we established a relationship with Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods, a nonprofit organization in our community whose mission is “connecting people, strengthening voices, and leveraging resources.” It was our intent to work in concert with Neighbors for Better

Neighborhoods to convene a series of community conversations in some of our underserved communities, to help us better understand, and subsequently address through our reporting, the issues that are directly affecting the residents of those communities. The question to spark the discussion was “what do you want your city to look like?” The pandemic forced us to press pause on that work, though we are committed to returning to it as soon as possible.

Our Hive® Education Program continues to present opportunities to connect with a diverse group of people. We are fortunate to have a class embedded at R. J. Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem, an arts magnet school with students from 38 countries, speaking 26 languages, making it the most diverse high school in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system. Our after-school option is open to students from the entire school district (and neighboring districts).

In FY20, we again presented several weeks of Radio Camp, during which the participants and their interview subjects represented a diverse population. Middle-school-aged girls and boys from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds interviewed community members of various ages, talents, and ethnic backgrounds. It is always our goal to accurately represent our entire community when seeking interview subjects for our Radio Campers. Radio Camp stories air on WFDD and appear on our website.

Our experience with the pandemic forcing Hive® offerings to a virtual environment is that it opened up opportunities for broader reach of the program. We saw participants not just from all over our listening area, but from places far-flung in our country. For this reason, we foresee a continuation of virtual offerings, even once the pandemic has subsided.

Our vision for the future includes further expansion of Hive® (our education program) to include taking Radio 101 into a juvenile detention center and possibly a partnership with Industries for the Blind. We continue to explore ways to promote our Hive® offerings to students of color, including using area Spanish-language publications *Que Pasa* and *La Noticia*; the local African-American newspaper, *The Winston-Salem Chronicle*; and social media channels frequented by students. It is our goal to make certain all students from every part of our community are aware of these opportunities.

Please assess the impact that your CPB funding had on your ability to serve your community. What were you able to do with your grant that you wouldn't be able to do if you didn't receive it?

This year was marked with uncertainty and fear. Nobody could have predicted in January 2020 that everything would change drastically in just a matter of weeks. Financially speaking, we began FY20 with our biggest fundraising goals to date, building on years of sustainable growth and community support. When COVID-19 hit and hundreds of people in our community lost their jobs, we were afraid of what that would mean for our ability to provide the services people had come to rely on. To our surprise, our listeners stepped up and made sure that we still had the money needed to keep WFDD operating at 100%. Part of the reason why our

listeners are so devoted is because for years we've been using the funds from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to add value to their lives. At WFDD, we see this funding as a chance to go beyond the regular programming schedule and truly be there for our community when they most need it. Whether this means providing clarity and analysis in divisive political times, or meeting them at our schools to share the power storytelling has to shape our identities, or giving our audience a hub for all the breaking news related to a deadly virus, or just sharing a silly picture of a cat being a cat in a moment where despair was taking over all of our lives, the CPB funding once more allowed us to not be tied to the textbook definition of what a public radio station is, and instead have the freedom to imagine how much better our 32-county-wide community could be because we are part of it.