



WGVU Public Media

MADE FOR ALL.
POWERED BY YOU.

2025

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Dear Friends,

Public media is at its best when it truly reflects and serves its community. That belief guides everything we do at WGVU.

In 2025, our team finished over 270 local projects for TV, radio, and digital platforms. We kept our flagship programs going, shared more community stories, and earned Regional Emmy® Award nominations and wins that highlight the quality of work happening right here in West Michigan.

WGVU did more than just broadcast this year; our team took part in over 75 community events, from educational programs and youth activities to open conversations and cultural celebrations. We focused on building strong relationships and making real connections.

This year brought challenges. When we lost funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, there was a big gap to fill, 20% of the annual operating budget, but West Michigan stepped up - individuals, families, and local partners all pitched in. Their support means WGVU is now fully community-funded and accountable.

At a time when trust in media is shaky, your support means WGVU will move confidently into a future where we are 100% community-funded and ensures West Michigan still has access to fact-based news, educational programs for children and lifelong learners, and stories that show the full diversity of our region.

This report shows what we have achieved together. When a community invests in public media, the return comes in trust, knowledge, belonging, and shared understanding. One initiative I am most proud of is that, thanks to donor support, WGVU sponsored over 900 student field trips to local museums and nature centers this year. For many children, it was their first hands-on learning experience outside of the classroom; and each child took home a picture book provided by WGVU. These moments show how community investment can truly change lives.

Thank you for supporting WGVU and helping to strengthen a public resource that belongs to everyone.

With gratitude,



James Rademaker
General Manager





Our Mission

Connecting with communities using the strengths of public media to educate, inform, inspire, and entertain.



Our Vision

WGVU's vision is for an improved quality of life for all members of the community through access to high-quality cultural, educational, and entertaining content built upon authentic relationships, recognizing our true strength lies in our ability to work together.



Our Values

Excellence: We strive for excellence in everything we do. Excellence is not a destination, but a purposeful and continuous process.

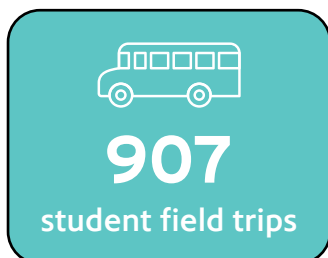
Integrity: As stewards of public trust, we are committed to being engaged, credible, independent, nonpartisan, balanced, authentic, and courageous.

Inclusivity: We foster a welcoming environment allowing individuals the space to authentically be themselves. Representation matters, and we consistently work alongside our community to provide accessible and innovative content.

Curiosity: Listening and learning drive creativity - we nurture life-long learning, growth, and innovation by being a window to the world's possibilities.

Respect: We are a catalyst for civil discourse, treating all people with respect, dignity, and compassion to build a stronger society.

WGVU at a Glance



"My earliest memories with my grandmother are watching public TV programs like Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers with her. My grandparents were huge PBS supporters, and I am giving in their honor."

— Hannah, Grand Rapids



WGVU at a Glance

Local News

- 600 original stories: government, education, health & environment
- News Roundup newsletter: 67% open rate, 4.2% click-through rate, 11% growth over the past year
- Focus West Michigan weekday podcast, on-demand local audio

Education

- 36 education outreach events across West Michigan
- 4,000 educational kits and resources distributed
- 4,500+ children, caregivers & educators directly engaged
- Partners: GVSU, GRPS, Kent ISD, La Escuelita & 12+ more

Local Productions

- 270+ TV, radio & digital projects completed
- 6 Emmy nominations, 3 Emmy Awards won in 2025
- Color Out Here,
- Mutually Inclusive
- Living West Michigan
- Family Health Matters,
- Kalamazoo Lively Arts
- Powerful Women

Community Engagement

- 75+ events: fun runs, zoo days, civic forums, film screenings
- One Small Step: West Michigan Conversations (StoryCorps)
- 100+ community members in focus groups & feedback sessions
- BIPOC Summit, Latino Youth Conference, MRPA presentations

National Programming

- PBS NewsHour, FRONTLINE, Washington Week, Masterpiece
- Carl the Collector: first PBS KIDS show with neurodivergent lead
- PBS Passport: extended on-demand access for WGVU members
- 28,000 PBS Highlights newsletter subscribers

Jazz & Blues

- 52 weekly hours — more than any station in the region
- 7 weekly programs with local & nationally recognized hosts
- NEW: Spotify playlists curated by WGVU DJs (2025)

Field Trips & Investment

- 907 students on field trips across 5 Michigan counties
- 7 institutions: GRCM, Blandford, Kalamazoo Valley Museum & more
- 970 picture books donated to students

Digital Growth

- 502K website visits (+25.1% year-over-year)
- Social media news channels: 26K views in first 4 months
- Podcast production sustained; on-demand audio growing



Local Reporting, Local Impact

Behind every story are reporters who attend local meetings, ask hard questions, and live in the communities they cover. Their reporting is rooted here because they are here.

15,000+

News Roundup newsletter
subscribers

Strong subscriber growth in 2025 reflects the community's demand for trusted, consistent local news. Readers open, engage, and return. The reporting is relevant to where they live.



"Keep up the important programming and excellent news reporting. Remain steady despite the political noise and assault on truth. We rely on you for fair and accurate information."

— Megan, Grand Rapids

Focus West Michigan Podcast

Our weekday local news podcast provides an accessible, on-demand summary of the day's top stories alongside a weekly feature-length story.

FOCUS
WEST MICHIGAN
Stay informed on the
stories that matter

From Screen to Hands-On Learning

When children engage with PBS KIDS at home, they build early literacy, math, and social-emotional skills. At WGVU Education events, those lessons become tangible. Students practice capturing footage, evaluating media sources, and developing their own stories. Through our media literacy initiatives, families engage in guided activities designed to reinforce reading comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

36+
education-
focused events
attended

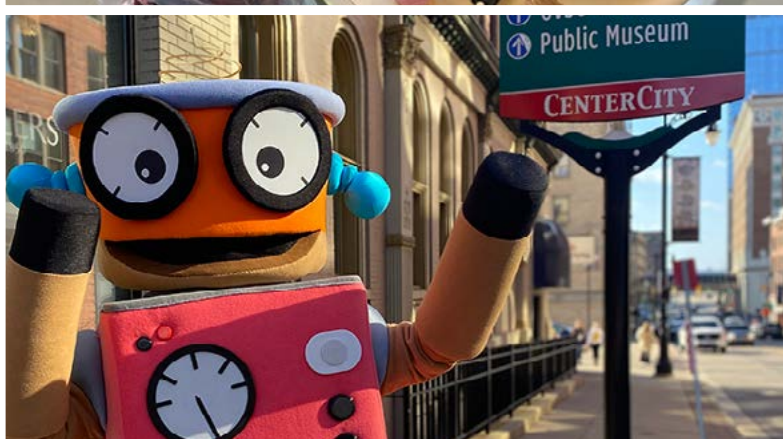
4,000+
resources
distributed

6,300+
people
engaged

12+
partner
organizations

“PBS, thank you for raising me, and now helping raise my daughter, to know and show empathy and compassion to everyone, to be curious instead of cruel, and to find joy in reading and STEM. We appreciate you!”

— Chantal, Comstock Park



National Programming that Enriches West Michigan

While WGVU proudly produces local content, National PBS and NPR programming is a vital part of the public media experience in West Michigan, providing trusted reporting, cultural storytelling, and educational innovation that connects our region to the broader world.

● **Reporting That Builds Civic Understanding**

Programs such as PBS NewsHour, Washington Week, and FRONTLINE continue to deliver in-depth reporting and investigative journalism grounded in context and research. Rather than chasing headlines, these programs provide perspective on national elections, international conflict, economic policy, and public health. They reinforce the standards for which public media is known: depth, accuracy, and accountability.

● **Cultural Storytelling That Brings People Together**

Long-running series such as Masterpiece offer thoughtful storytelling that brings families together. Documentaries from filmmakers like Ken Burns help audiences understand the forces that continue to shape our world. Performance specials, arts showcases, and cultural programming provide access to experiences that might otherwise be geographically or financially out of reach for many households.

● **Innovation in Children's Programming**

PBS continues to lead in educational children's media, combining research-backed curricula with inclusive storytelling. Groundbreaking series such as Carl the Collector, the first PBS KIDS show centered on a neurodivergent main character, reflect a growing commitment to representation and social-emotional learning. Through WGVU, these programs remain freely accessible to every household in West Michigan.

● **PBS Passport: Member Access Extended**

Two-thirds of PBS national programming is freely accessible to everyone on the PBS app. PBS Passport unlocks the remaining third — plus early releases, full seasons of MASTERPIECE dramas, Ken Burns documentaries, and exclusive content. When members invest in WGVU, they unlock a deeper viewing experience while sustaining the broader public media system. Local support powers national access.

270+ Projects. Countless Stories.

While national programming connects West Michigan to the world, WGUV's local productions ensure our West Michigan stories are told with depth, care, and authenticity. In 2025, WGUV completed more than 270 local production projects across television, radio, and digital platforms.



Color Out Here

Made possible by the Wege Foundation, Color Out Here brought four new segments where host Alice Lyn centers BIPOC voices in outdoor and

land-based experiences in 2025. Ice Fest Part 1 & 2 explored recreation spaces as places of connection. Urban Farms Part 1 & 2 examined food sovereignty and land stewardship, paired with climbing, hiking, biking, and kayaking community events.



Mutually Inclusive Season Five

With support from the Frey Foundation and W.K. Kellogg foundation, season five explored identity, resilience,

and belonging. The Mutually Inclusive team hosted "Honoring Veteran Voices" featuring films and discussions on veterans' diverse experiences. The Emmy-winning "Meeting ALICE" episode, paired with a poverty education workshop, examined economic hardship and systems-level challenges.



The Shelley Irwin Show

After 25 years on the air at WGUV, Shelley Irwin has become West Michigan's daily conversation. Her weekday news magazine connects

listeners with the local newsmakers, nonprofit leaders, artists, and community voices shaping life across our region.



Living West Michigan Season Two

Emmy award-winning series showcasing local initiatives, small businesses, nonprofits, and cultural leaders working

to strengthen the region, focusing on practical impact and the people behind meaningful change.



Kalamazoo Lively Arts Seasons 15 & 16

Made possible with support from The Gilmore Foundation, this series spotlighted regional artists, performers, and cultural institutions across

Southwest Michigan, reinforcing the role of arts in economic vitality and community identity.



Powerful Women

Elevated voices of women shaping West Michigan across government, health, education, business, arts, and community leadership,

emphasizing lived experience and first-person perspective.

More Than Music

52

WEEKLY HOURS
more than any other
station in the region

WGVU Public Media stands apart as West Michigan's home for jazz and blues, dedicating 52 hours weekly to programming. Trusted local hosts guide listeners through classic recordings, emerging artists, deep cuts, and genre milestones. That commitment ensures listeners across Grand Rapids, Holland, Muskegon, and surrounding communities have consistent access to thoughtfully curated music that spans generations and styles. Jazz and blues are living traditions rooted in American history and creative expression. In a fragmented media landscape, WGVU remains a steady and trusted voice.

A Curated Listening Experience

WGVU's jazz and blues schedule blends local expertise with nationally recognized programming, spanning the full spectrum of the genre.

Weekly Programs

- WGVU Jazz with Scott Vander Werf
- Friday Night Blues with Greg Blueben
- Beale Street Caravan
- Classic Jazz Sunday
- Jazz Spotlight
- Basically, Big Bands
- Jazz Night in America

NEW IN 2025: Spotify Playlists Curated by WGVU DJs

Extending the on-air experience into digital spaces. Revisit favorites, explore themed collections, discover new sounds.

Scott's Spin



Scott Vander Werf's
Classic Jazz



By combining broadcast programming with streaming access, WGVU strengthens its connection to longtime listeners while reaching new audiences where they already consume music.

75+ Events. One Community.

WGVU's commitment to West Michigan does not stop at the screen or the airwaves. We show up. In 2025, teams across the station participated in more than 75 community events, building relationships face-to-face, and reinforcing what local public media should be: present, accessible, and accountable.



One Small Step: West Michigan Conversations

WGVU partnered with StoryCorps to bring One Small Step to West Michigan, pairing individuals for intentional conversations focused on lived experience and shared humanity rather than political debate. These conversations were recorded and shared as One Small Step: West Michigan Conversations, extending the impact beyond the room and into the broader community. This work reflects public media at its best: creating space for understanding and strengthening civic fabric one conversation at a time.

2025 Event Highlights

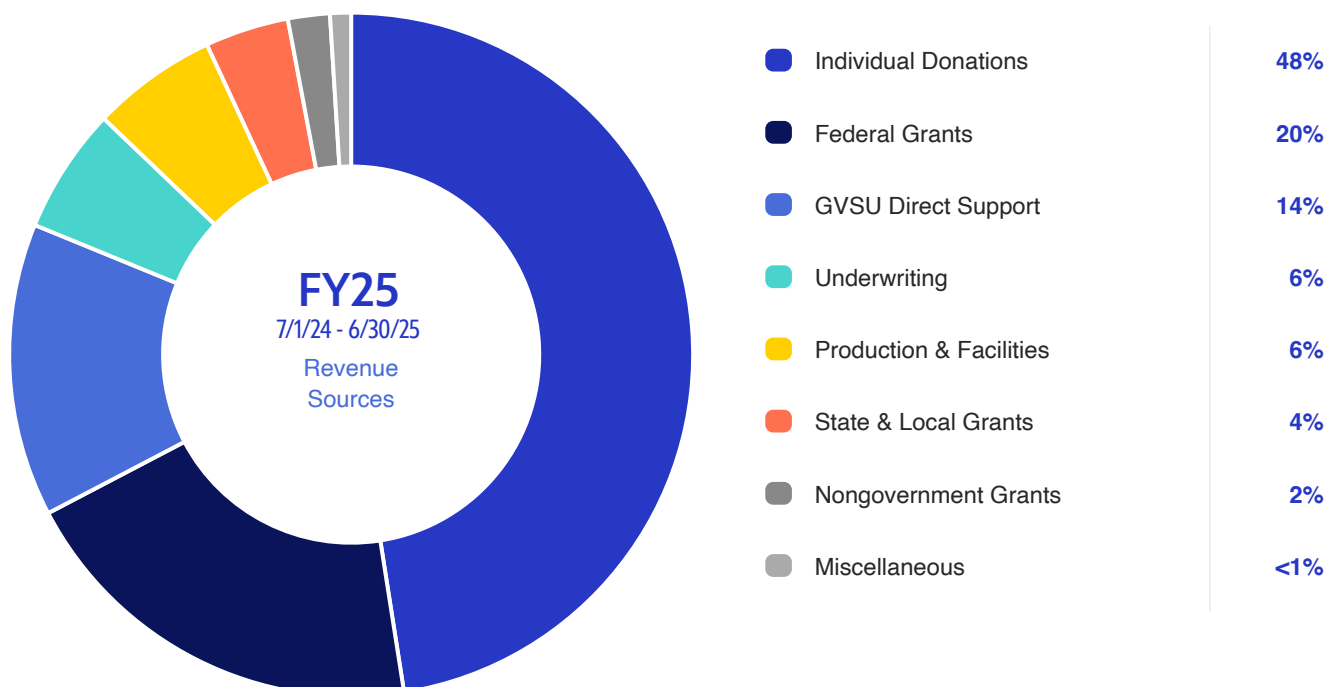
- Shelley Irwin Fun Run – year one, a new community tradition centered on connection and visibility for public media
- Be My Neighbor Day – family-focused event inspired by values of kindness, service, and community responsibility
- Kids Day at the Zoo and Kids Day at the Air Zoo – large-scale family events bringing PBS KIDS learning to life through hands-on activities
- Community screenings and facilitated dialogue events designed to move from awareness to understanding
- Muskegon Civil Conversations – structured forums creating space for respectful dialogue on local issues
- Michigan Recreation and Park Association conference presentation
- BIPOC Summit in Marquette and keynote at the Latino Youth Conference in Muskegon
- No Surrender Running Club 5K, Solstice Bike Ride, Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit

Color Out Here: Expanding Representation in Outdoor Experiences

The Color Out Here series continued to highlight how communities connect with land, outdoor recreation, and cultural identity. In 2025, four new segments explored stories from Michigan Ice Fest and Sunlight Gardens, examining how outdoor recreation and urban farming foster community and cultural connection. Production also began on a new mountain biking segment.

Public Media Exists Because the Public Chooses to Sustain

As illustrated below, WGVU's funding model is intentionally diversified to protect independence and ensure long-term stability. Nearly half of all revenue came directly from individual donors in FY25, making local households the largest single source of support.



48% of revenue comes directly from West Michigan donors — the single largest source.

77%

Increase in individual giving July–December 2025 vs. the same period in 2024.

Increase in individual giving

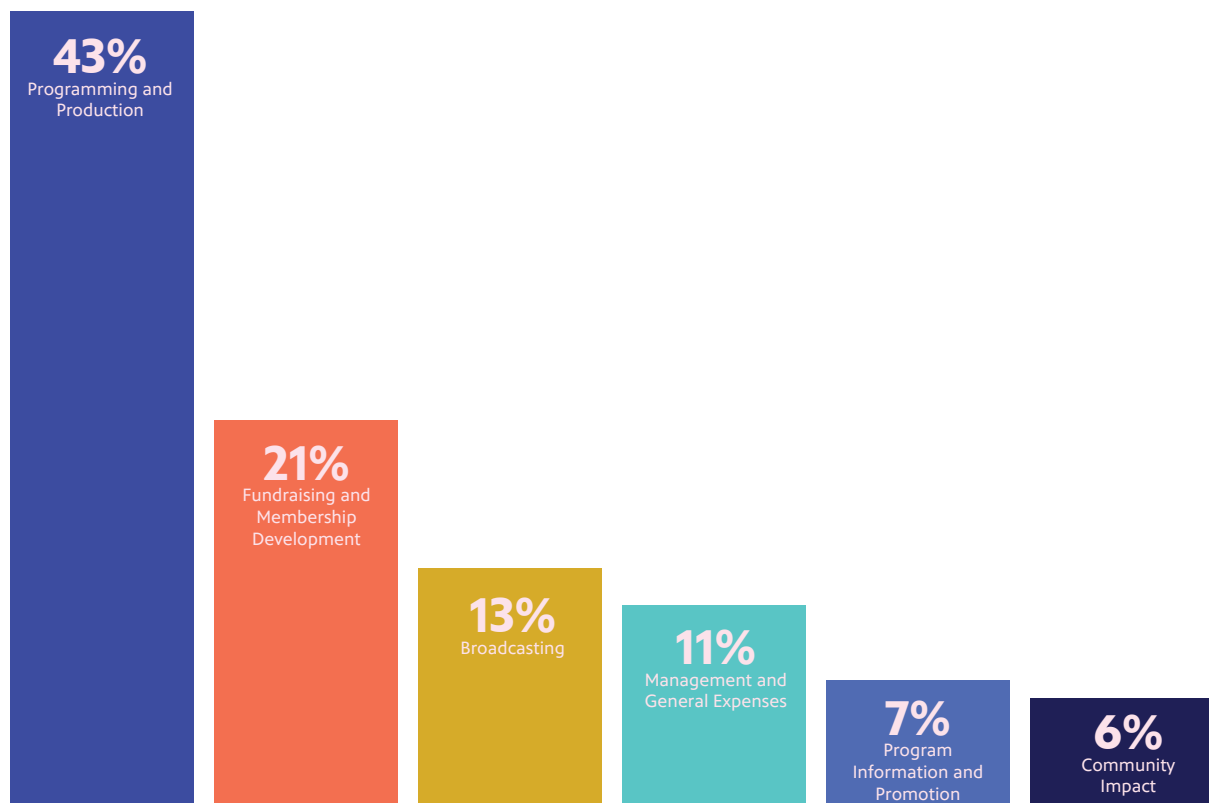
No single source defines WGVU. The station is supported by a balanced mix of community investment, institutional partnership, and mission-aligned support. WGVU is not owned by shareholders, it is sustained by viewers, listeners, donors, and partners who believe that trusted public media strengthens West Michigan. In 2025, the community demonstrated that commitment clearly.

**In July of 2025, Congress rescinded funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, canceling a federal grant that we would normally have received in October of 2025.*

What Community Support Makes Possible

Community support powers everything WGVU does. Local donations allow us to report hundreds of West Michigan stories each year, bring trusted PBS and NPR programming to our region, and connect families to free educational resources. Transparency strengthens trust. In FY25, WGVU directed the majority of its resources toward content creation, delivery, and community service.

EXPENSE ALLOCATION — WHERE COMMUNITY SUPPORT GOES



62% of total expenses directly support production and delivery of programming.

When combined with community impact efforts, the majority of resources support content, education, reporting, and public service. Programming and broadcasting combined represent more than half of all FY25 spending. This allocation reflects WGVU's core purpose: to inform, educate, and connect West Michigan.

Meeting Audiences Where They Are

In 2025, WGVU strengthened its digital presence across web, social, podcast, and email platforms, ensuring that trusted reporting and programming remain accessible beyond traditional broadcast.

671K

annual web visitors

+ 25%

year-over-year
website growth

26K

WGVU news social
media reached

What Reach Means for West Michigan

Growth in digital reach reflects what our community wants: local reporting it can trust, delivered where and when it wants. The News Roundup newsletter's 15,000 subscribers are not just readers, they are engaged community members who open, read, and return. That kind of consistent engagement signals trust, not just traffic.

Dedicated Social Media News Channels

In September 2025, WGVU launched dedicated social media news channels on Facebook and Instagram. In just four months: 26,000 total views, 11,400 viewers reached, and 723 direct interactions. The launch demonstrates audience appetite for local reporting delivered in platform-native formats while maintaining public media standards.

Digital growth is not a shift away from broadcast, it is an expansion of access.

Website, social media, newsletters, podcasts, and playlists together ensure that WGVU remains accessible and connected across platforms. Public media's future is multi-platform. In 2025, WGVU continued building that future.

What the community is saying about WGVU

"I grew up as a PBS kid on WGVU. Now, my own children are PBS Kids via WGVU, and I could not be more proud to watch this station, show them this station, and support this station. Thank you!"

— Andrea, Grand Rapids

"I'm an autistic small creator who is 30 and enjoys finding PBS Kids shows' fictional characters. I already liked Lucita Sky, Julia from Sesame Street, and Malik from Work It Out Wombats. Thanks, WGVU."

— Jedidiah, Holton

"PBS is an integral part of our democratic society. We strongly support you and appreciate you providing independent news to our community. Freedom of the press is under attack and we want to help in any way we can."

— Marie-Louise, Grand Rapids

"Been listening to NPR since the 1980s in Cincinnati, then Alamogordo, New Mexico, and now WGVU's 95.3 repeater in Muskegon. You've all been excellent, both nationally and locally, for that entire time."

— Jonathan, Muskegon

"I started watching PBS when Masterpiece Theater aired the Henry the 8th series. I was in middle school. It introduced me to a lifelong love of history and literature. PBS/WGVU, you matter and are valued."

— Toy, Greenville

"WGVU provides a reliable source of programming not found on other channels. There is something on PBS for EVERYONE."

— Anne, Grand Rapids

"This is where I get all my news because I know it's the only place to go for honest, trustworthy news."

— Patricia, Grand Rapids

"Thank you for all your great work in support of objective, unbiased news, and work with education and the arts. Well done!"

— Steven, Byron Center

This Is What You Made Possible.

Public media exists because communities believe knowledge, culture, and trusted reporting should be available to everyone. You are that community.

In 2025, it was your investment that funded 600 original news stories, your generosity that sent 907 children on field trips to museums and nature centers, your trust that kept local jazz and blues on the air 52 hours every week, and your belief in public media that helped WGVU show up at over 75 community events across West Michigan.

The work ahead is important. Access to reliable information, meaningful dialogue, and educational opportunity matters more than ever. Because of viewers, listeners, members, and partners like you, WGVU will remain a trusted source for learning, curiosity, and connection across West Michigan.

Thank you, neighbor, for being part of this shared effort.



wgvu.org/impact

WGVU
Public Media



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