2024 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



"As a communications professional, I turn to WUFT every single day because it is a trusted source of reliable and accurate news and information – an ever-more-vital commodity in today's media and political landscapes."

-Steve Orlando
University of Florida Interim Vice President of Strategic Communications & Marketing

The mission of WUFT-TV/FM is to educate, enrich, enlighten and inspire diverse audiences and individuals through high quality educational programming and related services that enhance the quality of life for people in the communities we serve.

LOCAL VALUE

WUFT-TV and WUFT-FM are an integral part of the North Central Florida community for 67 and 44 years, respectively. WUFT-TV is committed to providing value through educational programming for students in preschool, elementary, secondary and higher education. Local programs highlight non-profit organizations that provide valuable services to the community. WUFT- FM provides news, weather, public affairs and entertainment programming. It also serves as a facilitator of community dialogue on various topics. Both stations include a daily, multi-platform news operation with local and state news and expanded severe weather coverage when needed.

2024 KEY SERVICES

WUFT-TV/FM highlights the services of non-profit and community organizations through weekly episodes of "Greater Good" on television and on "Tell Me About It" on radio. "Artistry in Motion" features local artists explaining their work and accomplishments in video and audio vignettes. "Knight Talks" features UF students interviewing media industry leaders and "WUFT Amplified" showcases local musical groups. WUFT-TV/FM also provides current and breaking news content and serves as a source for severe weather and emergency information for the local community and other public broadcasting stations through the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network during hurricanes and other storms.

Local Impact

WUFT partnered with other public television stations in Florida for implementation of Jump Start's *Read for the Record Day*. Station representatives, including WUFT Executive Director Randy Wright and UF CJC Dean Hub Brown were recorded while reading *Piper Chen Sings.* The recordings were featured at various times on Oct. 24 on each Florida public media stations' Facebook page.

WUFT is also a training facility for student news journalists and meteorologists and is a valuable resource for critical news and weather information in the 21-county television and 19-county radio service area in North Central and Mid-Florida.

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IN THE COMMUNITY

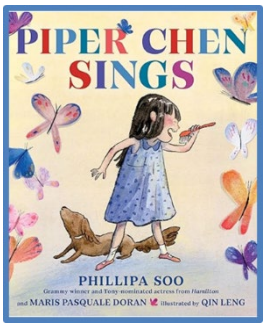
WUFT-TV signed on in 1958 and became the area's first television station to provide educational and entertainment programming to individuals and families in North Central Florida. Today, the station reaches 21 counties over-the-air, on cable, on the WUFT Media app and on satellite. WUFT-FM signed on in 1981 and serves 19 counties in North Central and mid-Florida. In 2024, both stations continued to produce award-winning news content with accolades from the National Broadcasting Society, RTDNA (Radio, Television, Digital News Association), Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists, Society of Professional Journalists and PMJA (Public Media Journalists Association). In addition, several WUFT news students placed in monthly Hearst Journalism Awards competitions and the National Championship in San Francisco.

Education Outreach

Preschool and Elementary

Jump Start's Read for the Record Day

WUFT partnered with other public television stations in Florida for the implementation of the 19th annual Jump Start's *Read for the Record Day*. Station representatives including WUFT Executive Director Randy Wright and University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications Dean Hub Brown were recorded while reading the Book, *Piper Chen Sings* by Phillipa Soo. WUFT staff coordinated the logistics and scheduling for WUFT and other Florida station recordings, some of which were in Spanish and in sign language, for posting on the WUFT Media Facebook page at various times on Oct. 24.



Multi-Lingual Educational Print Materials

WUFT Education Outreach staff distributed various print materials to help children and families deal with big challenges including divorce, parental incarceration, the death of a loved one, traumatic situations and the challenges following the aftermath of major weather events.





FANFARES & FIREWORKS PBS Kids Zone

WUFT Educational Outreach staff, community nonprofit organizations and volunteers partnered to present the Children's Trust of Alachua County PBS Kids Zone. Kids and families enjoyed educational and art activities including a Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood photo booth, games and information on children and family services available in North Central Florida. The event was a new feature during the annual Independence Day event on July 3 at the University of Florida Bandshell at Flavet Field.



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Community Engagement and Impact

Local Specials and Continuing Series:

"WUFT's FANFARES & FIREWORKS"
WUFT-TV/FM hosted the annual Independence Day eve kick-off with a free family-oriented music event for the community on the UF campus. The evening included performances by four musical groups followed by a fireworks show. Local businesses and foundations provided the funding. The event was edited into a special program for broadcast on July 4.



"Greater Good" is a WUFT-TV produced half-hour series showcasing non-profit organizations in the North Central Florida community. Each participating organization leads the viewer on a journey of their organization's history, their mission and their impact on the community.



"Tell Me About It" is a 30-minute weekly radio show featuring non-profit organizations, events and research projects in North Central Florida.



"Artistry in Motion" celebrates the local arts community by focusing on the creativity, passion and perseverance of the artist. The program showcases each individual artist's story in an engaging audio and visual vignette.

"UF Homecoming Parade 2024" was a two-hour live broadcast of the University's annual celebration. WUFT staff and students served as emcees, reporters and production crew.



"UF Sounds of the Season 2024 – Songs of Hope and Joy"
The annual holiday special featured the UF Symphony Orchestra, the UF Concert Choir and Gainesville Master Chorale recorded in the Phillips Center in the UF Cultural Plaza in Gainesville.



"Antiques Appraisal Day" featured highlights from the inaugural appraisal event at the UF Hilton and Conference Center. Two 30-minute episodes captured the "best finds" from the live event.

"Knight Talks" is a 30-minute weekly radio and television show featuring UF students interviewing media industry leaders and UF alumni.



"WUFT Amplified" The WUFT-TV produced 30-minute program showcases local music groups in performance in the WUFT studio.

***"WUFT News First at Five"** The 30-minute weekday newscast is produced and directed by UFCJC broadcasting students.

***** The 10/8/24 newscast received "Best of Festival" in Television News at the 2025 BEA Festival of Media Arts

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STORIES OF IMPACT

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SUMMARY:

WUFT's Innovation News Center provides news and information to North Central Florida. As a training facility for the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, students can hone their skills in print, video and digital reporting and production. Student work is honored in numerous student and professional competitions including the National Broadcasting Society, Florida Association of Broadcast Journalists, Hearst Journalism Awards, Society of Professional Journalists and the Public Media Journalists Association.

Digital:
In 2024, WUFT.org featured stories about the ongoing instrument sterilization issues at a local hospital, changes in Gainesville Regional Utilities governance, UF eliminating all DEI jobs and programs, UF eliminating Regional Transit funding for students, police arrests of pro-Palestinian protestors at two state universities, collaboration with Florida public media stations on a statewide voter guide, Q&A compilations of local political candidates, live results of the Florida primary election, Hurricane Helene's and Hurricane Milton's impact on Florida, environmental controversy in Archer, Florida, the strange decline of love bugs and efforts to memorialize local victims of lynchings in Alachua County.

WUFT-FM:

- A range of stories about government, arts and entertainment and homelessness issues
- Newberry "Education First's" promotion of the conversion to a charter school
- Florida Museum of Natural History, Southern Illinois University and Smithsonian Museum of Natural History receive $1 million grant
- Alachua County School Board proposes a year-round school calendar for Metcalfe and Rawlings Elementary Schools
- A look at the fleet of new laws taking effect in Florida
- Why the governor vetoed arts funding
- An explanation of the tension between the City of Gainesville and Gainesville Regional Utilities
- How and why the city of Gainesville will help the Hippodrome Theater
- A look at how North Florida Springs might be better protected
- A look at why Florida parks may include lodges and recreational facilities
- Protest at the UF Plaza of the America's over the situation in Gaza
- WUFT students traveled to the Democratic and Republican conventions in Chicago and Milwaukee to provide coverage focused on Florida
- Extensive live coverage of Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton
- A look at Proposition 3 and 4 before the election and local initiatives
- Alachua County proposes year-round calendar for two elementary schools
- WUFT partnered with Florida Public Media to produce comprehensive voter guides helping citizens understand candidates, their backgrounds and their positions on public policy issues

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WUFT NEWS

UF Plaza of the Americas Protest Coverage

WUFT reporters provided continuing coverage of high-profile arrests on the Plaza of the Americas during protests over the situation in Gaza. Reporters were on scene for the arrests, then continued to follow the subsequent court cases through the criminal justice process.



University of Florida President Resignation

UF President Ben Sasse stepped down unexpectedly in July, citing concerns about his wife's health. Since his resignation, reports about excessive spending on parties, trips and his remote staff have come under investigation.



DNC and RNC On-Site Coverage

Two separate groups of student journalists attended the national political conventions in Chicago and Milwaukee. They focused their coverage on the Florida delegations at each, generating distinctive reports compared to what the national media outlets would have given our audience.

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WUFT-TV Highlights

- Gainesville Regional Utilities board changes, operations expenses, lawsuits and resignations
- Controversy over UF eliminating all DEI jobs and programs
- Gainesville's controversial removal of homeless encampments across the city
- Coverage of the U.S. Presidential race
- UF President Ben Sasse Resigns
- Hurricane Helene's threat and damage to Florida
- Hurricane Milton's threat and damage to Florida
- Campaign 2024 election results: local, state and national
- Alachua County School Superintendent scrutiny, firing and Search process
- North Central Florida food drive and free food distribution
- Why the Governor of Florida vetoed arts funding



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WUFT NEWS

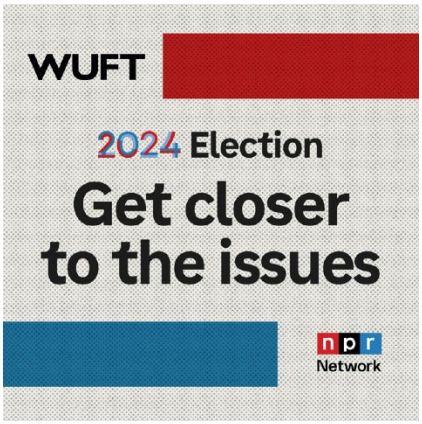
"**The Point"** enewsletter and podcast offers a weekly roundup of the best of WUFT's reporting from North Central Florida, produced by students at the UF College of Journalism and Communications.

Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton Coverage
When three hurricanes landed across the Florida peninsula during the 2024 Atlantic storm season, WUFT swung into extended coverage status, offering viewers, listeners and users hour-by-hour updates on WUFT-TV, WUFT-FM and WUFT.org. These included all-night broadcasts and website posts as part of the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network statewide service. Student journalists gained hands-on experience understanding continuing coverage within an emergency situation, anchoring and producing newscasts online, in the control room and in live studios.

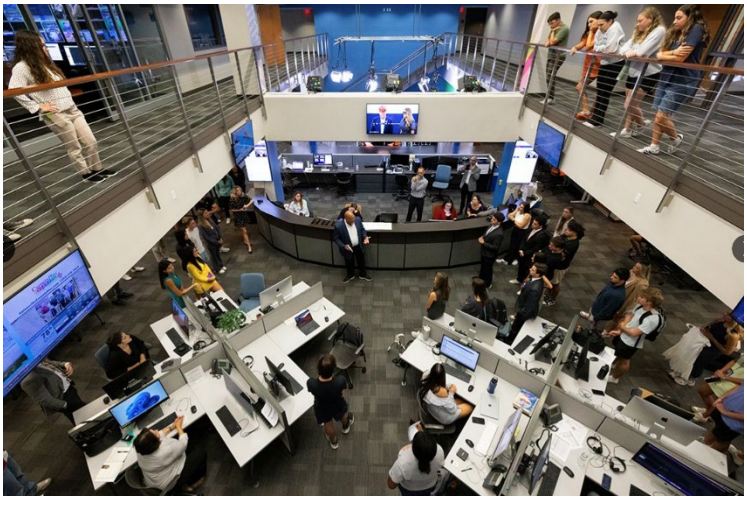




"WUFT-TV News First at Five" is a weekday newscast featuring national, regional and local news, sports and weather. UF student journalists serve as anchors and producers. WUFT news managers train and advise students on their stories and features.



Comprehensive Voter Guides Collaboration
In the leadup to the primary and general elections, WUFT.org partnered with the entire Florida Public Media network to produce comprehensive voter guides, helping citizens understand candidates, their backgrounds and their positions on public policy issues. On election night itself, over 100 members of the newsroom provided the audience results of every single contested race across North Central Florida, offering up-to-the-minute updates online and on-air. Students received guidance directly from UF College of Journalism and Communications Dean Hub Brown before heading to their assignments.



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SUMMARY:

WUFT and the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network (FPREN) continue to provide news, information and weather on a timely basis. FPREN, known also under the social media alias "Florida Storms," provides weather information and storytelling support to all public radio stations throughout Florida. WUFT acts as a contributor of content (through FPREN) to the other 13 stations for use in their audio broadcasts, website stories, and social media posts. FPREN staff also trains UF College of Journalism and Communication students to become weather forecasters. The Meteorologist's-in-Training (MITs) are often featured on "WUFT News First at Five" newscasts, on the low-power commercial cable station WRUF-TV and on social media platforms.

The Florida Storms Facebook Page reaches a diverse audience of more than 65,000 followers, not only in Florida but across the entire country. In addition to the page, the most effective tools for informing the public of a potential or current weather hazard are live radio broadcasts and social media such as Facebook Live and X.

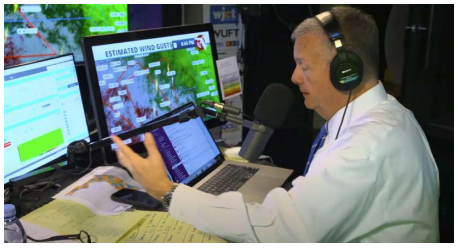
Just in time for Hurricane season, Chief Meteorologist Tim Miller joined meteorologists Megan Borowski and William Maxham to provide daily weather updates to Florida public media stations. The team of WUFT meteorologists also serve public media audiences across the Palmetto State through the South Carolina Emergency Information Network. This arrangement is similar to the arrangement FPREN has made with Florida public media stations and content is distributed for over-the-air radio broadcasts, website articles and on social media.

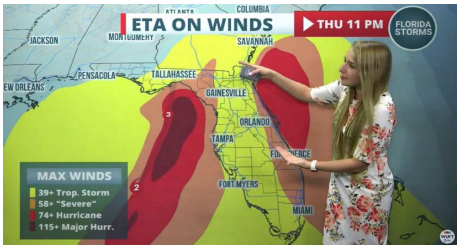
In December, WUFT-TV/FM, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, FPREN and Futuri Media collaborated to launch BEACON, the first-ever public safety messaging system that uses AI and the reliability of radio to deliver real-time messaging during hurricanes or other weather emergencies. Florida residents can receive BEACON via the app or in North Central Florida on WUFT-FM 89.1 HD4.



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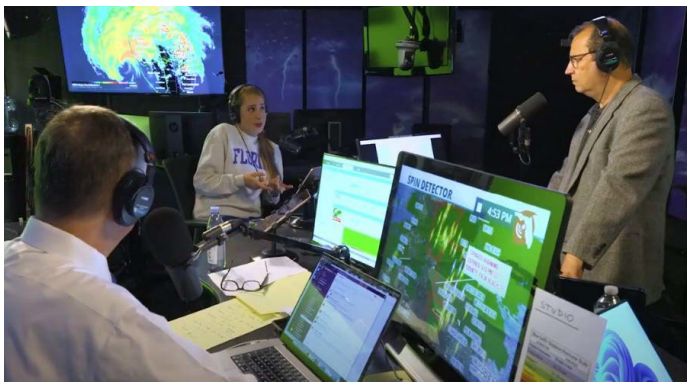




The following list of activity represents only a portion of the total catalog of FPREN content produced for Florida and South Carolina during the past year.

Feb. 7:	Severe Weather Awareness Week begins
March 19:	24-hour temperature changes as they plummet between 10 and 20 degrees
April 30:	Countdown to hurricane season begins and the previous season is reviewed
June 1:	The 2024 hurricane season begins
June 27:	Monitoring the tropics as Tropical Storm Beryl develops
Aug. 1:	Hurricane Debby brings tornado and flood threats as well as wind impacts to Florida
Aug. 12:	Hurricane Ernesto brings rip currents and flooding along Atlantic coast
Aug 24:	Disaster Preparedness Sale Tax Holiday
Aug. 30:	One year anniversary of Hurricane Idalia
Sept. 7:	Hurricane Francine impacts the Panhandle region
Sept. 23:	Impacts from Hurricane Helene bring extensive damage
Oct. 8:	Hurricane Milton to make landfall as a Category 3 hurricane
Oct. 9	Hurricane Milton makes landfall near Siesta Key with winds of 120 mph
Oct.19:	Hurricane Oscar develops over the Dominican Republic
Nov. 30:	Atlantic hurricane season ends with 18 named storms
Dec. 1:	2024 Hurricane season is one of the costliest on record
Dec. 18:	BEACON launch





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SUMMARY

WUFT-TV/FM provides programming and services to viewers and listeners in North Central and mid-Florida. WUFT strives to be the standard-bearer in the region and is dedicated to serving and enhancing the quality of life for a diverse audience. WUFT/FM offers unlimited access to free high-quality programming and services on-air, online and via social media platforms. The Florida Public Radio Emergency Network continues to provide forecasts and severe weather information updates on-air, online and on the Florida Storms app on a timely basis.



