



Becoming Well Tuned

by Susan H. Bonnett

MUCH LIKE A PUZZLE, sometimes different, seemingly unrelated people and ideas come together to create something bigger and more obvious than any one individual piece. In this example, several elements, when they came together, produced a really important and meaningful product for the northshore. Stay with me for a second, because it will all make sense in the end ...

First, there are countless community issues, important dialogues and challenges going on in this region on a daily basis that impact all of our lives—homelessness, human trafficking, land and water management issues and arts education, just to name a few. The piece that many people don't know, however, is that along with all of the challenges and exciting opportunities that our region faces, we also have countless nonprofit organizations, volunteers and community resources to address them.

Somewhat separately, in our region there are many individuals who are committed to public radio. They use public radio as their primary source for news and local information because they love the vehicle, outlet and format that public radio has to offer. The station that reaches the airwaves in our area is WWNO, the NPR-member station for New Orleans and the 13 parishes of southeast Louisiana. It not only broadcasts news, but classical music, jazz, variety programs and unique local

content. But historically, the station has been challenged with not having abundant content about the northshore region; a gap has existed in the coverage of issues that affect the area in which these devoted listeners live.

Some of these committed individuals, many of whom already have a relationship with the Northshore Community Foundation, came to us for a solution. Thanks to a few, who are also generous donors to causes throughout the region, together we reached out to WWNO to have a conversation about what we could do to take these individual pieces and create a solution for everyone.

The outcome of this collaboration is a weekly 3 to 5-minute segment called *Northshore Focus* that was begun a few years ago. The professionally produced news spot runs twice monthly on Wednesdays in one of the most prime drive-time slots—during *Morning Edition* at 8:45 a.m. In any 15-minute period, an average of 9,900 people listen to *Morning Edition*, which gives the piece a chance for excellent exposure.

The benefits of this partnership are not only that important, impactful information about our area is now being distributed, but that awareness is being heightened about our issues and the organizations that work so hard to address them.

An unintentional, but still important byproduct

Above: Tegan Wendland, producer of Northshore Focus on WWNO 89.9 FM, which runs on Wednesday mornings at 8:45 a.m.

Opposite page: Debbie Schimmeck, Director, Community Christian Concern



of this work is that every nonprofit that is highlighted now has a professionally produced, important spot that becomes almost a “commercial” it can use to promote the organization, the issues it is addressing and its events. It is an incredibly valuable product that serves so many needs.

The many articles that WWNO has already done on local nonprofits for *Northshore Focus* have featured topics such as how the lives of homeless men are being transformed at the Miramon Center in Slidell; how the National Alliance on Mental Illness in St. Tammany Parish is using its counselors to shape behavioral health in our area; and how preservationists and music lovers in Mandeville are working to promote the historic jazz hall, the Dew Drop. See all of the spots that have been produced at WWNO.org/Northshore-Focus.

How lucky is the Foundation to be at the center of these otherwise disparate organizations, with the ability, vision and support to pull it all together? 🌱

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