

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



As the Executive Director of WRBH and a supporter just like you, I'm happy to report that 2015 brought us many positive changes. We are upgrading our recording studios to improve the volunteer experience, we added an additional fundraiser – The Out of Sight Women's Tennis Tournament – and we are continuing to expand relationships throughout the community. Through these developments, the organization you support is that much closer to supporting itself so your contributions will go farther.

Your support of WRBH Reading Radio means the world to us. It doesn't matter whether your donation is large or small – we put every penny to good use, making sure that the blind and print impaired receive current information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year.

With your support WRBH fills a major human service need throughout southeastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi, empowering a traditionally overlooked and underserved segment of our population – the blind and print impaired, alleviating the isolation that can come from a lack of current information. I always like to quote Helen Keller as I believe her words perfectly sum up the mission of our station:

*“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision.”*

**Thank you for having the vision to support WRBH.**

**Natalia P. Gonzalez**

Letter from Natalia

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"WRBH's mission is to turn the printed word into the spoken word so that the blind and print impaired can receive the same ease of access to current information as their sighted peers."

WRBH 88.3 FM is a non-profit reading radio station dedicated to providing thoughtful, informative, and entertaining programming that enriches the lives of listeners. Over 150 volunteers donate their time and talent each year to make the station's 24 hours of programming, 365 days a year, possible.

WRBH began as the dream of New Orleans mathematician Dr. Robert McClean, who himself was blind. His vision? To create a reading radio station that would operate on the FM dial rather than on a sideband frequency that requires a special radio. He sought to improve the lives of blind and visually impaired individuals by providing programming with current information and content that encourages cultural, educational and emotional enrichment. In 1975, Dr. McClean began leasing airtime from WWNO and renting studio space from Lighthouse for the Blind in New Orleans. His efforts expanded in 1982 when he purchased the 88.3 FM signal, officially making WRBH the first 24-hour reading radio station for the blind in the United States.

Looking to make a long-term commitment to its listeners, in 1994 WRBH purchased a 4,000 square foot 19th century Victorian building on famed Magazine Street and moved into its permanent home.

In 2000, the station expanded its reach by offering live audio streaming via the Internet and most recently added a library of on-demand podcasts onto its SoundCloud page.

In 2014, WRBH partnered with HEROfarm, a New Orleans based marketing and public relations firm, to rebrand the organization and to redesign its website, making it fully compatible with screen reader software.

WRBH.org's streaming allows the blind and visually impaired not only in the New Orleans region, but also all over the world to have the same ease of access to current information as their sighted peers, and creates a convenient hub of resources.

Today, WRBH remains the nation's only full-time FM reading radio service in the US and is one of only three such stations in the world.

## What does WRBH do?

The majority of information in print and on the Internet is inaccessible to those who cannot read. For the blind and print impaired community, this lack of access to information can increase their sense of isolation, lower their standard of living,

and become a serious obstacle in everyday life. WRBH seeks to keep everyone equally informed by providing access to news and information, promoting cultural enrichment, and encouraging mental and emotional independence for the blind and print impaired.

WRBH offers a wide variety of programming including local and national news, best-selling fiction and non-fiction books, magazine articles, children's books, event calendars, health programs, "The Writer's Forum" hosted by Sherry Alexander and David Benedetto which provides an opportunity for authors to discuss their work, "Public Affairs" with host Lyn Koppel who focuses on community organizations and ongoing local issues, and grocery store ads, as well as shows geared toward Latino, Haitian, and Vietnamese communities. This programming is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year thanks to over 150 dedicated volunteers who donate nearly 5,000 hours annually.

Additionally, WRBH produces several in-house shows including "Charlie's Music Show" where host Charles Smith interviews musicians of all genres, "The Writer's Forum," which provides an opportunity for local authors to discuss their work, and "New Orleans by Mouth," a culinary interview show moderated by Amy Sins.

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## WRBH and the New Orleans Community

WRBH's goal for the New Orleans community and beyond is to engage, energize, and empower its listeners through access to information and entertainment. In service of this goal, WRBH has been recognized with several awards including a Proclamation of Recognition for 30 Years of Service from the City of New Orleans in 2012, the 1999 Governor's Media Award, the 1998 Mayor's Medal of Honor, and in 1990 was named the 257th Point of Light by President George Bush, Sr.

To further its outreach in the community, the station collaborates with the following organizations that share common goals or serve the blind and print impaired in other ways:

**Lighthouse Louisiana** serves the blind and visually impaired community by providing quality products, services, and opportunities for independence. WRBH refers listeners to their services and supports their organization through PSAs.

**Blinded Veterans Association** promotes the welfare of blinded veterans so that they may take their rightful place in the community and work with their fellow citizens toward the creation of a peaceful world. WRBH participates in their annual expo and supports them through PSAs.

**New Orleans Filipino-American Lions Club** refurbishes used eyeglasses for the needy. WRBH acts as a drop off spot for used glasses and supports them through PSAs.

**Entergy:** Since 2009, WRBH has partnered with Entergy to broadcast "Going Green," which educates listeners on environmental issues and en-

ergy efficiency. Entergy underwrites the program, while WRBH generates the educational content.

**Ben Franklin High School:** WRBH partners with Ben Franklin High School during "Hogs for the Cause," a fundraising festival that provides aid and relief of those variable expenses and economic burdens which families face while their child is being treated for pediatric brain cancer. Ben Franklin High School's Student Council Members volunteer with WRBH at the event.

**Young Leadership Council:** WRBH partners with the Young Leadership Council (YLC) to broadcast "One Book One New Orleans." YLC spearheads the campaign for literacy, which calls on residents to share the experience of reading the same book each fall. WRBH records and broadcasts an audio recording of the book.

**The Big Read,** a project of the National Endowment for the Arts, supports community-wide reading programs that encourage reading and participation by diverse audiences. Southern Food and Beverage Museum acts as host, and WRBH records the book and advertises the program.

**Dawn Busters Kiwanis Club** is a local chapter of an international organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time. Dawn Busters is the largest club in the Greater New Orleans Area, with over 90 active members. Dawn Busters generously supports the station through in-kind contributions and by volunteering at WRBH events.

## Who listens to WRBH?

WRBH's target audience includes the blind and illiterate as well as individuals who are unable to read due to illness, spinal cord injuries, eye muscle damage, learning disabilities, lack of access to print media, and loss of vision due to age. While the majority of reading services for the blind use mechanized voice software, WRBH is the only organization providing this variety of programming via the human voice thanks to WRBH's dedicated volunteers. This makes WRBH's programs particularly of interest to the newly blind or those who have experienced vision loss due to age, since it can take several years for the untrained ear to become accustomed to the speed and cadence of the mechanized voice software.

In addition, WRBH's content is also of interest to the general public, who tune in to listen to the news, event listings, best-selling fiction and nonfiction books, short stories, magazine articles, and an array of programs encouraging cultural, educational, and emotional enrichment.

Since 2000, WRBH has served blind and print impaired people all over the world by making audio streaming and podcasts available free of charge over the Internet. Additionally, WRBH has operated as an FM radio station since 1982. WRBH's terrestrial broadcasting power is 25,000 watts, making the station's FM signal available across a 90-mile radius stretching over Hancock County, Mississippi and the following Louisiana parishes: Orleans, Jefferson, St. Tammany, St. Charles, St. John, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines.

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Poetry Competition



Brothers from the Bottom



Volunteer Luncheon



Little Free Library



Smiling Readers



Pat Browne Golf Tournament



Out of Sight Tennis Tournament



Celebrity Guests

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Over 175 Volunteer Readers



111,425 Individuals served  
per week on average



8,760 Hours of Annual  
Programming

*Counting the ways YOU make US possible*

**WRBH is the ONLY FM Reading  
Radio Station in the United States**



61 Unique Weekly  
Programs



Over 100 Publications Read



Broadcasting 24 hours a day,  
7 days a week, 52 weeks a year

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\$10,000+

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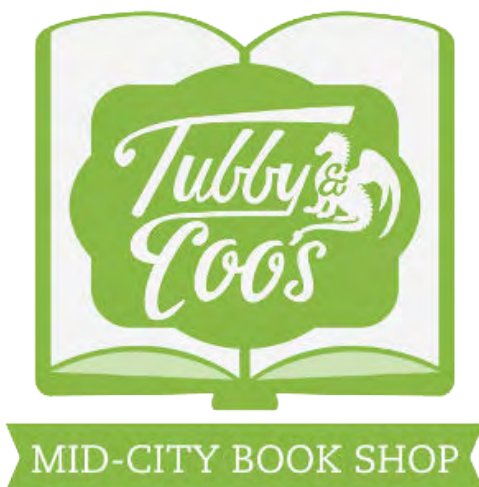
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## Tubby and Co's

WRBH partnered with Tubby & Co's Mid City Book Shop during 2015 to produce a fifteen-minute weekly podcast on book news in New Orleans and Beyond. Store Owner Candice Huber and her business partner Rob Harrison record in WRBH's studio and a new episode is released every Wednesday on the station's SoundCloud page.



## ONE BOOK

ONE NEW ORLEANS

*A Campaign for Literacy and Community*  
*A Project of the Young Leadership Council*

## One Book One New Orleans

The Young Leadership Council's One Book One New Orleans project is a campaign for literacy and community that calls on New Orleans residents to share the experience of reading the same book at the same time every fall. WRBH participates by recording and airing the book on 88.3 FM and promoting OBONO events throughout the reading season's duration.



## New Orleans Public Library

The NOPL provides extended loans on books for WRBH's volunteers to read, as well as advanced reader's copies of new books.

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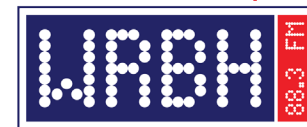
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## Natalia P. Gonzalez, Executive Director

Natalia graduated from Tulane University with a degree in history and received Post-Baccalaureate Secondary Certification from the University of New Orleans. She previously worked as an Office Manager and Program Director at large organizations. Natalia has been with WRBH since 2002, starting in the position of Director of Development before being promoted to Executive Director.



## Tim Vogel, Program Director

Tim received a Bachelor of Sciences degree from Pennsylvania State University in 2004. He worked at a commercial sports station in Eastern Pennsylvania before moving to New Orleans. Tim was hired at WRBH as a Studio Engineer in 2009 and has since been promoted to Program Director.



## L. David Benedetto, Assistant Program Director and Marketing Director

David received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Louisiana State University in 2013. He worked as Music Director, Production Director, and Station Manager of KLSU in Baton Rouge. David was hired at WRBH as a marketing lead in 2013, and has since been promoted to Marketing Director and Assistant Program Director. David also hosts WRBH's "The Writer's Forum" and "Audio Portraits."



## Sarah Holtz, Development Director

Sarah graduated from Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota with a degree in American history and French in 2013. She worked as General Manager of WMCN in Saint Paul and in the communications department at Minnesota Public Radio before relocating to New Orleans. Sarah was hired at WRBH as Development Director in February of 2015.

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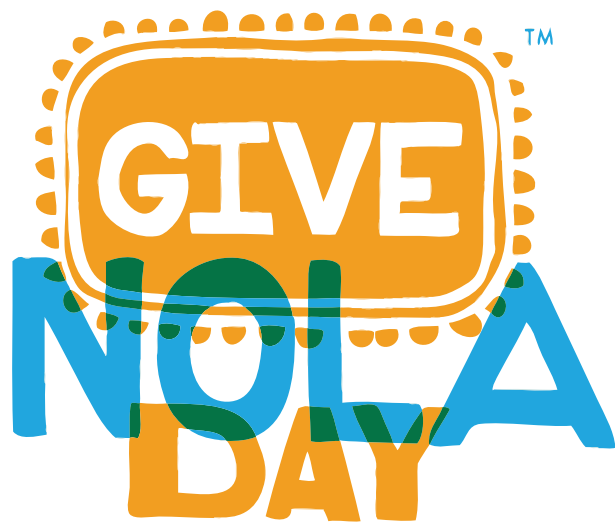
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**ONE DAY TO  
GIVE AS ONE**

**GiveNOLA.org**

**TUESDAY, MAY 3, 2016**

**Midnight to Midnight**

hosted by:



**GREATER NEW ORLEANS  
FOUNDATION**

*For a vibrant region.*

## GIVENOLA DAY

### What's Going On?

May 3rd is GiveNOLA Day, a one-day, online giving event to inspire people to support nonprofit organizations like WRBH that make our region a stronger and more thriving community for all.

### How Can I Help?

Commit to making a monetary donation to WRBH on May 3rd that will help us to continue providing our services year round. Email [listen@wrbh.org](mailto:listen@wrbh.org) or call 504.899.1144 for more information.

### What Will My Donation Do?

WRBH is a tax-deductible nonprofit that relies upon donations and grants to help support our operations and services. Through those donations, grants and the generosity of our 150+ volunteers, we are able to air 24 hours of content a day, seven days a week — that's 8,760 hours a year of original programming made possible because of supporters like you!

Your donation helps ensure we are able to continue providing thoughtful, informative, and entertaining programming that enriches the lives of listeners and that the blind and print impaired have the same ease of access to current information as their sighted peers.

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