

**PRESS RELEASE:**

Contact – Renee Rallos

Email – [rrallos@wfae.org](mailto:rrallos@wfae.org)

Phone – 704.926.9314



## **WFAE Ends 2017 Fiscal Year with Record Increases in Listenership and Financial Support, Numerous Awards** *Charlotte's NPR News Station Plans to Invest Support by Growing Newsroom/Content Production Staff by 50 Percent*

**Charlotte, N.C. (August 30, 2017)** – WFAE, Charlotte's NPR News Source, finished its 2017 fiscal year on June 30, with record increases in listenership, membership, major donor contributions and corporate underwriting. The strong journalism that drove these dramatic increases was recognized with two regional Edward R. Murrow Awards for excellence from the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTNDA). As WFAE's audience and revenues grow, the organization plans to grow newsroom staff by 50 percent in the next year.

"WFAE's long tradition of balanced, publicly funded local journalism is flourishing," said Joe O'Connor, WFAE President and General Manager. "I commend the staff and board of WFAE for a job very well done, and thank our listeners and contributors who are funding our increased commitment to our public service mission."

The station closed the fiscal year with a cumulative audience of 236,800 in June, which is more than double WFAE's audience size just two years ago. According to the Nielsen Company, the audience peaked at 251,300 listeners in March (for Persons 6+, Monday-Sunday, 6 a.m.-midnight.)

As the overall audience has grown, so too has the number of individuals contributing to the station. At the close of FY17, nearly 20,000 members had contributed to WFAE, up from 15,000 two years ago. These members donated more than \$3.4 million to the radio station, which translated to a 20 percent year-over-year growth in Membership contributions (donations less than \$1,000) and a 11 percent year-over-year growth in Major Donor contributions (donations of \$1,000 or more).

The NPR news affiliate station, which currently broadcasts from University City, also saw significant growth from its corporate underwriting department. More than 292 businesses sponsored WFAE programs in FY17, generating a record of \$2 million in underwriting revenue, which was a 23 percent increase from FY16.

In total, WFAE generated \$5.9 million in FY17, surpassing FY16's record revenues by more than 19.9 percent.

When asked about the future of WFAE, O'Connor responded enthusiastically saying "The future of WFAE is bright! While we have posted record performance in every measurable performance metric, our analysis shows that we still have significant opportunity to grow our services to help the greater Charlotte community."

-more-

“Our immediate future is one of growth,” added O’Connor. “We are immediately investing the surplus revenues of FY17 into new positions for our newsroom, which will grow that team by a full 50 percent from 14 to 21 journalists, editors, producers and hosts. This will further enhance our award-winning local news operations digital news capabilities. We intend to inform ALL Charlotteans where they are – on-air, online, social media, podcasts and in-person events.”

## **Other FY17 Highlights:**

### **Listenership**

Audience numbers peaked with 251,300, according to the Nielsen Company’s March 2017 survey (for Persons 6+, Monday-Sunday, 6 a.m.-midnight.) The station’s metro share, or percentage of the Charlotte radio listening audience reached 4.2 in February. Also in February, the number of people listening to WFAE during an average quarter hour (AQH) or 15-minute period was 7,200, another first for WFAE.

### **Membership/Major Donors**

The number of WFAE supporters reached 19,335 members, which is an all-time record for the station. This increase in the number of donors represents a 20 percent year-over-year growth in member contributions. Forty-six percent (8,828) of WFAE supporters are “sustaining” members, who agree to donate to WFAE on a monthly or annual basis in perpetuity, an increase of 6 percent from FY16. WFAE’s Major Donor revenue also grew by 11 percent.

### **Corporate Underwriting**

In FY17, corporate underwriting sales totaled \$2,076,688, another record for WFAE and a 23 percent increase over FY16.

### **Newsroom**

With 14 journalists, editors and producers, WFAE’s newsroom generated 527 hours of *Charlotte Talks* shows, 43.5 hours of local news, and over 30 news stories for national broadcast on NPR’s *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, and WBUR’s *Here and Now*. The number of staff in the newsroom will increase by 50 percent in FY18.

### **Professional Recognition**

**EDWARD R. MURROW AWARDS:** The RTNDA recognized WFAE with two awards in its regional Edward R. Murrow Awards competition. WFAE ranked first among large market stations for reporting in the categories of Breaking News and Hard News for its coverage of the Keith Scott shooting and unrest in Charlotte.

**SUNSHINE AWARD:** Lisa Worf, assistant news director, received the 2017 Sunshine Award for journalism by the North Carolina Open Government Coalition at its annual Sunshine Day event. The Sunshine Awards “recognize government officials, journalists and citizens who work to make North Carolina governments transparent.” She was recognized for her reporting on a new North Carolina law that requires court approval for obtaining video footage from police departments.

**LEADERSHIP CHARLOTTE AWARD:** CEO Joe O’Connor was the recipient of the 2017 Newcomer of the Year Award by Leadership Charlotte. This award is given to an individual “who has lived in Charlotte less than five years, has actively sought opportunities to improve the quality of life in our community, and has made significant contributions, both personally and professionally, to the betterment of Charlotte.”

### **About WFAE**

WFAE 90.7 FM is a non-profit public radio station, licensed to the University Radio Foundation Inc. With 90.3 FM in Hickory, 106.1 FM in Laurinburg and 93.7 FM in Southern Pines, WFAE serves over 200,000 weekly listeners with an award-winning lineup of local, national and international news, and weekend entertainment programs from NPR®, American Public Media, Public Radio International and Public Radio Exchange.

###