

# Mobile Freedom School Brings History to Life

BY JADA WRIGHT-GREENE

This summer, community spaces in Bradenton and Sarasota will once again buzz with the energy of young minds discovering their roots, reclaiming their narratives, and building future leaders.

The Manasota ASALH Mobile Freedom School is returning for eight-week sessions, serving elementary and middle school students across four sites in the region.

Led by the Manasota branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the Freedom School is not a typical summer program. It’s a living, breathing classroom on wheels — a mobile learning environment dedicated to teaching African and African American history in ways that are honest, engaging, and affirming. It’s about truth-telling, empowerment, and equipping young people with knowledge often missing from traditional curricula.

The sessions will build on the momentum and success of previous years. Certified teachers will guide students through a powerful, age-appropriate curriculum that explores the richness of Black history. It’s not just about history — it’s about identity, critical thinking, and cultivating future



leaders who understand the world and their power to shape it.

Each week, students will gather in community

centers and trusted neighborhood spaces, creating a consistent rhythm of learning and connection. Manasota ASALH Freedom School aims to provide

*continued on page 10*

## Harvard Can Wait (a Little Longer): Organizer Focuses on ‘Midterms on Our Terms’ in Florida

BY CAROL LERNER

Zander Moricz founded the SEE (Social Equity through Education) Alliance in 2019 at just 15 years old. What began as a student club quickly became a statewide movement. Today, SEE Alliance is known as one of the most influential youth-led political forces in Florida, organizing school board races, training hundreds of young leaders, and reshaping the fight for public education and democracy. In this interview, Moricz shares the personal story behind the movement, his national advocacy work, and why he’s staying in Florida through the 2026 midterm elections to lead the “largest school board-centered campaign in the country.”



Zander Moricz, founder of SEE Alliance. Photo by Cassie Wegeng

*CL: How did your journey into politics begin?*

ZM: When I transferred from Manatee County to Pine View School in Sarasota, I was struck by the inequities between the two public schools. Pine View was privileged: advanced programs, supportive teachers, immense resources. My former school struggled to meet basic needs. It made me realize how uneven access to opportunity is, even within the same county. I felt a responsibility to act.

*CL: How did that become the SEE Alliance? How old were you?*

ZM: I was 15. I started SEE Alliance as a club with a handful of friends. We weren’t thinking about “organizing.” We were just trying to make sense of the world: climate change, racial justice, economic inequality. We met after school

*continued on pages 4 and 5*

## Summertime, and Saving Lives Should be Easy

BY CAROL CONYNE RESCIGNO

Brady Sarasota and other gun violence prevention activists kept their eyes on the Florida Legislature this season and, fortunately, most of the concerning bills did not pass.

One would have allowed the open carry of guns in Florida; another would have lowered the minimum age to purchase a rifle or shotgun from 21 to 18; and a third would have allowed guns on college campuses.

There were 23 school shootings in the U.S. as of May 13. Fifteen were on college campuses and eight were on K-12 school grounds. One, at Florida State University on April 17, ended with two people dead and six others wounded. Imagine how many there might have been if the campus carry bill had passed.

Brady, a bipartisan gun violence prevention organization, reminds parents, grandparents and other caretakers about the importance of safely storing their guns and urging family and friends to do the same.

The gun death rate among children ages 1-17 increased by 106 percent from 2013 to 2022, according to recent research by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, with firearms becoming the leading cause of death for American youths.

ASK Day took place on June 21, the beginning of summer. Brady, whose team includes gun owners and non-gun owners, developed the ASK program several years ago, encouraging adults to ask about firearms in the homes their children visit, just as they would ask about other child safety issues: “Is

*continued on page 3*

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mural Honors Sarasota Legacy.....	Page 2
Fogartyville Concerts & Events.....	Page 6
WSLR: What’s New on Air   Schedule.....	Page 7
Parents Identify Critical Needs in Newtown....	Page 8
UnidosNow Teens Get College, Career Prep....	Page 9
Media, Music and Art Belong to Everyone.....	Page 11
Summer of Resistance in Photos.....	Page 12

# Mural Honors Legacy of Sarasota Pioneers

In early June the artist known as Swirly Painter (Kaitlin Ramirez) completed a mural depicting Irene and Rev. Lewis Colson on a 1,240-square-foot wall at the Sarasota School of Arts & Sciences.

A public dedication ceremony takes place Thursday, July 3 at 10 a.m. at the school, located at 717 Central Ave.

The large-scale public painting honors the Colsons and their contributions to Overtown (Sarasota’s first Black community), which is now known as the Rosemary District. It was funded through the City of Sarasota’s Public Art Program’s Florida Legacy

Art Mural Series after receiving approval from the Public Art Committee.

Current members of the Public Art Committee are Jonathan Parks, Heather Gorman, Josh Botzenhart, Bianca Clyburn and Cassia Kite Jaeger. A “STAR Student” position is listed as open on the City of Sarasota’s website. Ciera Coleman is the city’s public art administrator.

A call for artists is underway for a new mural in the series; the application deadline is Sunday, July 6.

It will be painted on the exterior of a residential building at the corner of 10th Street and Osprey

Avenue adjacent to Gillespie Park. The mural will reflect the theme Florida Flora and Fauna, with a focus on local and native bird species.

The selected artist will receive a commission of up to \$45,000, inclusive of all project costs. For more information and submission requirements, search Sarasota under the Find Calls tab at [callforentry.org](http://callforentry.org)

For more information about the City of Sarasota’s Public Art Program, visit [sarasotafl.gov/our-city/public-art](http://sarasotafl.gov/our-city/public-art)

—Compiled by Kathleen Murray



The Colson mural is located at Sarasota School of Arts & Sciences, located at 717 Central Ave.



Critical Times is a publication of WSLR, Inc.

**CONTACT US:**

(941) 894-6469

[criticaltimessrq@gmail.com](mailto:criticaltimessrq@gmail.com)  
[wslr.org/news](http://wslr.org/news)

**Editor:** Kathleen Murray

**Layout:** Mark Zampella, Rob Demperio

**Contributing Writers:** Jesse Coleman, Jada Wright-Greene, Vilia Johnson, Leon Kerber, Carol Lerner, David Lionel, Rhonda Peters, Carol Conyne Rescigno, Juan Pablo Salas, Yazmil Soriano



The artist Swirly Painter took a break from painting the Colson mural to appear on WSLR’s ArtBeat on May 12. ArtBeat features one-on-one conversations with artists, curators, gallerists and art educators, who also share the music that is fueling their creative practice. It airs alternating Mondays at 9 a.m.



(Photo courtesy of City of Sarasota)

The next mural in the Public Art Program’s Florida Legacy Art Mural Series will be located on a wall at the corner of 10th Street and Osprey Avenue.

there an unlocked gun where my child plays?” It’s a simple question that has the power to save a life.

Another important safe-storage program is EFF, or End Family Fire. Whether you have a young child in your home, a distraught teenager, a depressed veteran or other senior, or anyone who picks up a gun, they can be at risk. Intentional shootings get most of the attention, but unintentional shootings by a child or by someone cleaning a gun, happen all the time. In addition, a gun used to commit suicide is generally successful; suicide attempts by other means often are not. So, if there’s a gun in your home, lock it up and lock up your ammunition separately! Tell others to do the same.

Unfortunately, many laws and programs that had been instituted on the federal level to curb gun violence have been rolled back under the new administration, including programs that had been funded to work with at-risk young people or to research gun use. It remains to be seen how many people will be affected by these decisions. In the meantime, personal responsibility may continue to be among the best ways to prevent shootings.

Carol Conyne Rescigno is the president of Brady Sarasota.

## Gun Safety & Family Fire Statistics

- 1 in 3 children live in a home with at least one firearm
- 4.6 million children in the U.S. live in a home with access to a loaded, unlocked firearm
- Every day, 8 children are unintentionally injured or killed by family fire
- 76 percent of school shooters under the age of 18 used a gun from the home of a parent or close relative
- 89 percent of unintentional shootings involving kids happen at home
- Locking all firearms in the home could reduce youth firearm suicides and unintentional deaths by up to 32 percent.

Source: Brady

### Celebrating Artistry, Identity & Community.

### New Exhibition Season Starts in Fall 2025.

This season, Ringling College Galleries presents nearly 24 exhibitions exploring identity, community, and creativity. From student and faculty showcases to tributes to Sarasota’s art legacy, the season features powerful voices like Lino Tagliapietra, Faith Ringgold, and more.

MORE INFORMATION:  
[www.RinglingCollege.Gallery](http://www.RinglingCollege.Gallery)

**GALLERIES / EXHIBITIONS**

Ringling College of Art + Design

STREAMING **WSLR.ORG**

**96.5** FM

Returns October!

# Talk of the Town

A WSLR NEWS WEEKLY ROUNDTABLE

ON WSLR & IN FRONT OF A LIVE AUDIENCE MONTHLY AT FOGARTYVILLE

**SATURDAYS 11 A.M.**

**HOST**  
**CARRIE SEIDMAN**

# Harvard Can Wait (a Little Longer): Organizer Focuses on ‘Midterms on Our Terms’ in Florida

*continued from pg 1*

and asked, “What can we actually do?” It grew quickly. Within months, we became the largest student group on campus. Then we were banned from campus entirely.

*CL: Why were you removed?*

ZM: The administration never gave a formal reason, but it was clear we were making some people uncomfortable. Parents had started monitoring our meetings. We were discussing racial justice, the Black Lives Matter movement, immigration — nothing inappropriate, just honest, important topics. This was before “critical race theory” became a flashpoint, but the panic had already begun. Ironically, the thing we were accused of, pushing CRT, was never taught in our schools in the first place.

*CL: How did you respond? Did you consider giving up?*

ZM: Honestly, for a moment, yes. It felt like the universe was closing in. We had just been kicked off campus, and then COVID hit. But instead of folding, we reimagined everything. If we couldn’t meet in classrooms, we’d meet online. If we couldn’t speak on campus, we’d build our own platform. That’s when SEE Alliance became something bigger than a club. It became a nonprofit. A real organizing engine. We launched a virtual civic engagement tour. We emailed every teacher and club advisor in the state and said, “You’re exhausted. You don’t know how to transition online? Let us help. We’ll give your students a fun, nonpartisan, one-hour session on civic engagement. Totally free.” The response was overwhelming. And suddenly, we were in every county in Florida.

*CL: How quickly did the movement grow?*

ZM: Between 2019 and 2022, we grew from a few friends in a high school classroom to over 2,000 organizers across Florida. We didn’t just “go viral.” We built real structure: trainings, campaigns, strategy meetings. I stopped being a student who organized on the side. I became an organizer who attended school when I could. And that’s when the “Don’t Say Gay” bill arrived. Everything escalated.

*CL: When the “Don’t Say Gay” bill was introduced, how did SEE Alliance respond?*

ZM: The moment the bill was filed, we knew it would be catastrophic. Not just for queer students, but for the entire public education system. It targeted the most vulnerable kids while manufacturing a crisis to distract from the real issues facing schools. We moved immediately. We launched statewide walkouts, coordinated voter registration drives, and organized protests. It activated our entire base. That’s also when I was approached at a rally by Tom Kirdahy, a Broadway producer. He introduced me to Roberta Kaplan, the attorney who won marriage equality at the Supreme Court. Days later, I was on a Zoom call with Kaplan and nearly two dozen attorneys from the Empire State Building.

*CL: What was it like being pulled into a national legal battle at 18?*

ZM: Surreal. I thought I was going to speak to one or two people, maybe offer a quote for a press release. Instead, I was at the center of the lawsuit. They didn’t want a figurehead. They wanted a partner. I was involved in legal strategy, media, everything. It consumed my senior year. Some days, I’d go straight from calculus class to a national press interview. Other days I’d meet with lawyers for hours after school. I made mistakes. But I also contributed real strategy. The stakes were high, and I felt all of it. But it was worth it.

*CL: And in the middle of all this, you had to prepare your high school graduation speech?*

ZM: Right. Because I was class president all four years, I had one consolidated speech to deliver. Before I even wrote it, my principal sat me down and told me I couldn’t mention being gay, the lawsuit, or anything related to the bill. If I did, my mic would be cut and the graduation ceremony would stop. I was crushed. This was someone I had respected. But it wasn’t his words. It was the fear behind them. That’s when I realized the bill was working exactly as designed. It didn’t need to pass to be effective. It had already created a chilling effect, forcing good educators into silence.

***I realized I had built something in Florida that no one else was building. A youth-led, statewide infrastructure that could flip school boards and mobilize communities. And the 2026 midterms are the fight of our lifetime.***

*CL: What was your response?*

ZM: I escalated. If I was being censored, I knew others were too. We launched the “Say Gay” campaign, a simple action where students wore “Say Gay” stickers while walking across graduation stages. It exploded. Within hours, (“Star Wars” actor) Mark Hamill, the cast of “Star Trek,” and the team from “Schitt’s Creek” all reposted. We raised \$50,000 from over 5,000 individual donors in two days. We activated 25,000 students statewide. That was the first moment I realized we weren’t just responding to hate. We were building power.

*CL: And what about your speech?*

ZM: I only had a day to write it. The school board had doubled down and formalized their restrictions in writing. I didn’t want to ruin the graduation for my classmates. They deserved to celebrate. But I also couldn’t stand there and

pretend everything was fine. I sat with a pen and paper and just started scribbling. Then I thought about my hair. My curly hair, which I had spent years trying to flatten. And the metaphor unfolded from there. I wrote the speech in one sitting. My mom, my head of staff Anya (Dennison), and Roberta Kaplan all approved it. I turned it in.

*CL: Did you think it would go viral?*

ZM: Not at all. I thought people would be disappointed I didn’t get the mic cut. Some major public figures had told me outright, “If you get silenced, we’ll fly you out, do an interview, make it a moment.” But that wasn’t the right thing for my classmates or my movement. I thought the speech would land quietly. A local gesture. Instead, it took off. People instantly got the metaphor. They saw it wasn’t just about hair. It was about identity, dignity, and power. It was satire, protest, and strategy all at once. Suddenly, I was “the curly hair speech guy.” And the message cut deeper than anything I could have shouted at a microphone.

*CL: What happened after the speech?*

ZM: Everything exploded. National press, viral interviews, speaking tours. I remember getting booked for a Zander-themed weekend in Savannah. I was speaking at bars, churches, art events. Yes, seriously. But there were terrifying moments too. One day I was followed into a Publix by men yelling slurs at me. One shoved me. I locked myself in a bathroom and called Anya, scared to leave. That was my reality. Death threats one hour, a panel with senators the next.

*CL: After the speech and viral campaign, you headed to Harvard. What was that transition like?*

ZM: It was chaos. I barely moved in. I had just come from an event in New York, met my parents at Harvard with two suitcases, and they said, “We’ll ship the rest.” I didn’t have a dorm setup. I didn’t have time. And I quickly realized I wasn’t going to get a break. The calls didn’t stop. The invitations kept coming. Within weeks, I was being asked to speak at the White House. Twice. Meanwhile, I was trying to be a full-time student studying government, sociology, and education. But it felt backward. I wasn’t learning how to do the work. I was missing the work I’d already built. One night, I journaled, “Studying the work is preventing me from doing the work.” And that was the turning point.

*CL: So what did you do?*

ZM: I called my team and said, “I’m coming home.” It wasn’t impulsive. It was strategic. I realized I had built something in Florida that no one else was building. A youth-led, statewide infrastructure that could flip school boards and mobilize communities. And the 2026 midterms are the fight of our lifetime. If I’m serious about that, I have to be here, not watching from the sidelines.

*CL: Did Harvard support the decision?*

ZM: Honestly, yes. My professors were incredible. One pulled me aside and said, “You deserve to be a student here. But right now, your work matters more.” I still finished the semester, all A’s somehow, but I knew I needed to shift. I’ll



Zander Moricz, founder of SEE Alliance. Photo by Cassie Wegeng

finish my degree eventually. But right now, I'm focused on Florida.

*CL: What happened when you got back to Sarasota?*

ZM: The school board was on fire. Proud Boys-endorsed candidates had just won. They moved fast to fire the superintendent and bring in far-right consultants from Hillsdale College. It was a full-on political takeover. So SEE Alliance escalated. We partnered with other local orgs, launched rallies, packed school board meetings. We made it clear these attacks wouldn't go unanswered. Our slogan was simple: Students Before Politics. In 2024, we defeated Amendment 1, which would have turned school board elections partisan. We registered thousands of voters, mobilized young people door-to-door, and proved that even in red counties like Sarasota, power can be built.

*CL: That brings us to your recent viral moment, the Jubilee debate. What made you say yes?*

ZM: I wanted to shift the narrative. Jubilee Media's "Surrounded" series had been platforming people like Michael Knowles and Charlie Kirk, people spreading hate under the guise of debate. I wanted to show what real leadership looks like in those spaces. Not yelling. Not ego. But facts, strategy, and humanity. They asked me to represent the LGBTQ+ community, and I said yes. I brought three SEE organizers with me. We prepped for days, ran simulations, studied policy, and practiced rebuttals. We weren't just there to perform. We were there to win.

*CL: What was your goal in the debate?*

ZM: Three things: debunk misinformation in real time, give people watching at home talking points they can use in real life, and drive people toward real organizing. Toward SEE Alliance. I didn't want views. I wanted infrastructure. And it worked. The video hit over a million views, my following doubled, and we funneled that energy into

new chapters, new donors, and new action. It was the most strategic viral moment we've ever had.

*CL: What's next for SEE Alliance?*

ZM: Everything we've built has been leading to this. In June, we're launching our biggest campaign ever: Midterms on Our Terms. It's a two-year, statewide movement to flip school boards, register voters, and change the political culture of Florida, county by county. It's not just reactive. It's offensive. We're using data, media, organizing, and coalition-building to engage every corner of this state. We're focused on the seven most winnable counties, building teams of young and older organizers, and training hundreds of new fellows to lead. And I'm not leaving. I'll be here through November 2026 to see it through.

*CL: What's the theory of change behind Midterms on Our Terms?*

ZM: It starts at the school board because that's where we can win now. In red states especially, people feel hopeless, like the political machine is too big to fight. But school boards are different. You can change one vote and flip an entire district. You can get dozens of young people to a meeting and shift the conversation. You can register 2,000 voters and swing an election. We're going where we can build real power. In places like Sarasota, that means focusing resources, building local teams, and winning over time. We're not scattering energy. We're acting like a laser beam.

*CL: Why focus so much on young people, and why multigenerational support?*

ZM: The movement has to be youth-led. That's where so much of the energy, cultural fluency, and innovation come from. Young people have always helped shape culture. We adapt quickly, we understand the moment, and we move with urgency. But we can't do it alone. SEE Alliance is a multigenerational community. Retirees, educators, and parents have been essential. They

bring wisdom, professional experience, and long-term strategic insight. They understand how systems work and how to sustain movements over time. What makes SEE work is that we build shared leadership across generations. Everyone brings something different, and everyone is respected. We're not a short-term campaign. We're building a durable political home, and that requires all of us.

*CL: You're clearly not done. Where do you see yourself in four years?*

ZM: In Florida. Still organizing. Still building. I want SEE Alliance to be the kind of community where young people come to fight and stay to win.

*CL: And 10 years from now?*

ZM: In 10 years, SEE Alliance will have brought civic life back into the daily rhythm of millions of Floridians. People won't just vote every few years. They'll organize school board campaigns with their kids, show up to budget hearings with their neighbors, and rebuild trust in public life. SEE will be everywhere: in classrooms, community centers, and living rooms: training, supporting, strategizing, staying.

And because of that, Florida will feel different. It won't be defined by its politics anymore. It will be defined by its people. By our cultures, our landscapes, and our joy. When people think of Florida, they'll think of who lives here and what we've built, not what's been done to us. SEE Alliance won't just still be here. We'll be one of the reasons Florida finally feels like home.

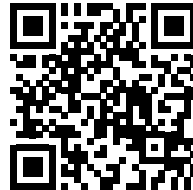
*Carol Lerner is the director of Support Our Schools.*

*Note: This interview took place at the SEE Alliance office in Sarasota with an email followup. Some excerpts have been reordered for clarity.*



Fogartyville Community Media & Arts Center is Sarasota's premier listening room, but concerts aren't all we do. We also host film screenings, talks, exhibitions, camps, and fellow nonprofits.

For more information and tickets: visit [fogartyville.org](http://fogartyville.org), call 941-894-6469, or scan this QR code »



If an event is sold out, add your name to the waitlist by emailing: [info@wslr.org](mailto:info@wslr.org)

# SUMMER of SIZZLE

at 525 Kumquat Court's West entrance.

# FOGARTYVILLE.ORG

Saturday, July 12, 8 pm \$20/\$25



**Ariella & Nicolaas**

Award-winning singer-songwriter & passionate guitar virtuoso

**BOTH NIGHTS SOLDOUT!\***  
Friday, July 18, 8 pm \$30/\$35  
Sat., July 19, 8 pm \$30/\$35

\*Get your name on the list for patio seating [info@wslr.org](mailto:info@wslr.org)



**Selwyn Birchwood Band**

Fogartyville favorite blues guitarist returns with his band

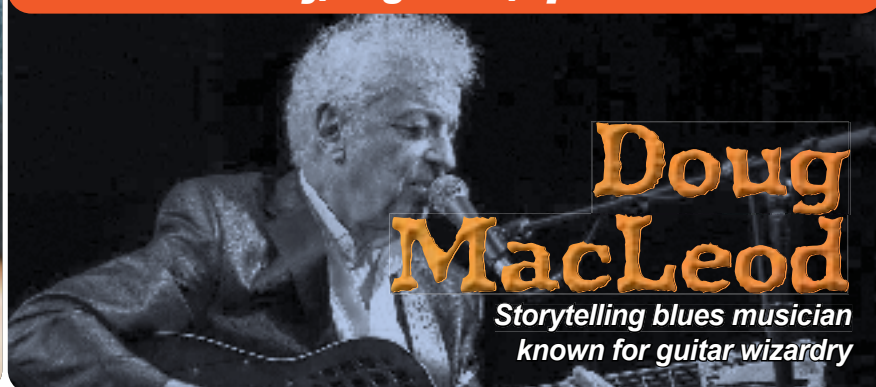
Friday, July 25, 8 pm \$25/\$30



MULTICULTURAL JAZZ TRIO FROM TAMPA

**La Lucha**  
FEATURING VOCALIST **ALLISON NASH**

Saturday, August 23, 8pm \$20/\$25



**Doug MacLeod**

Storytelling blues musician known for guitar wizardry

Friday, September 12, 8 pm \$25/\$30



**Colleen ORENDER**

BLUES/ROOTS ARTIST WILL TRANSFORM FOGARTYVILLE INTO A SULTRY AFTER-HOURS CLUB

Wednesday, September 17, 6 pm \$5/\$10



**DRINK & DRAW**  
Sarasota

Figure drawing with a costumed model in our cabaret setting, all levels are invited.

Saturday, September 20, 8 pm \$25/\$30



**Zachary Bartholomew Trio:**  
CELEBRATING **CHICK COREA**

Award-winning pianist returns to Fogartyville to pay tribute to jazz icon

Saturday, September 27, 8 pm \$25/\$30



**ella & The BOSSA BEAT**

Daughter-father duo Ella Blu + Magrus Borges mix jazz + soul with Brazilian jazz influences

## RADIO in Motion:

## NEW VOICES, YOUNG CREATORS, & COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Radio only works when it reflects the people it serves. We at WSLR are working to better serve our community by mentoring new voices, implementing new tools, and welcoming fresh energy.

### Youth Voices on the Rise

In the spring we hosted dozens of local students at our studios as part of the free Suncoast Remake Learning Days. They got behind the mic, played music, recorded PSAs, and went live on the air. For many of them, it was their *first time*. For us, it was a reminder of how this platform can serve the next generation of *community voices* and *creators*.

We're building on that experience this July with three one-week Summer Radio Camps, running Monday through Friday, 9am to 2pm. Each camp ends with a live broadcast *created and hosted entirely by the students*.

Weeks 1 & 2 focus on music and production. Campers learn DJ skills, playlist curation, soundboard operation, scriptwriting, audio editing and FCC compliance.

Week 3 is our News Intensive.

Students take on the role of reporters, developing local stories, conducting interviews, and producing a *live* youth-led newscast for WSLR.

Prices are affordable; scholarships are available. For more information and registration, visit [wslr.org](http://wslr.org) or by calling 941-894-6469.



wslr

lp96.5fm

WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE

listen on the air

- WSLR-LP 96.5 FM Sarasota
- WBPV-LP 100.1 FM Bradenton

listen online

- WSLR.org (desktop)
- WSLR App at wslr.org (mobile)

listen on demand

archive.wslr.org Music shows are archived for two weeks. News and public affairs are available for download, and expire later.

listen to it all

Music	Public Affairs
-------	----------------

MONDAY										TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
12 mid.	Music Automated playlist		Down The Road (Syndicated)		Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio		It's All Happening (Syndicated)		Inside The Head: After Hours Ted Sipes (monthly)		All Mixed Up (Syndicated)		Dave Radio Dave Wilkens		Milo After Hours Milo						
1 a.m.	Deep Threes (Syndicated)		Midnight Special (Syndicated)		Music Automated playlist		Music Automated playlist		Music Automated playlist		Synthelectico (Syndicated)		Cafe Chill (Syndicated)								
2 a.m.	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		And You Don't Stop (Syndicated)		Music Automated playlist								
3 a.m.	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)		Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)		Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)		Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)		Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)		Donne Del Mondo (Syndicated)		Keeping Democracy Alive (Syndicated)								
4 a.m.	Blues to Bluegrass John D.		Corduroy Sebastien Wegeng		Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan		Indie Psych Show Alecia Harper		Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen		Latin Explosion Juan Montenegro		Saturday Morning Gospel Beat Jonah Ray		A Way With Words (Syndicated)						
5 a.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta		The Bradenton Times Mitch Maley						
6 a.m.	ArtBeat Kathleen Murray		Voices Up Shai & Andrew		Our Changing Environment		Healthy Living Hour		Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors		The Detail Cathy Antunes		Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris		The Bradenton Times Mitch Maley						
7 a.m.	Blues to Bluegrass John D.		Corduroy Sebastien Wegeng		Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan		Indie Psych Show Alecia Harper		Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen		Latin Explosion Juan Montenegro		Saturday Morning Gospel Beat Jonah Ray		A Way With Words (Syndicated)						
8 a.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta		The Bradenton Times Mitch Maley						
9 a.m.	ArtBeat Kathleen Murray		Voices Up Shai & Andrew		Our Changing Environment		Healthy Living Hour		Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors		The Detail Cathy Antunes		Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris		The Bradenton Times Mitch Maley						
10 a.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)		Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta		The Bradenton Times Mitch Maley						
11 a.m.	ArtBeat Kathleen Murray		Voices Up Shai & Andrew		Our Changing Environment		Healthy Living Hour		Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors		The Detail Cathy Antunes		Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris		The Bradenton Times Mitch Maley						
NOON	Music of the World Marco Ciceron		World Rotations Rotating		Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniero		The Blue Groove Mark Gruder		Metropics Carlos Pagan		Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella		Talk of the Town Carrie Seidman		Folk Alley Elena See (Syndicated)						
1 p.m.	Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Thom Hartmann Show (Syndicated)		Rhythm Revival Reverend Billy C. Wirtz		Nurture The Blues Laf Reid						
2 p.m.	Longboat Luau The Ho-Dad		Second Wind Seany G		Louisiana Gumbo Kid Red		High Tide Susan Runyan		Outta the Basement, On the Road Purple Mike		The Joy of Jazz Dr. Dean		Just Fusion Ma'Re		Dadee-O's Collector's Corner Dadee-O						
3 p.m.	Music Museum Ed Foster		Indie-licious Sheila Jane		Synthetic Age JR		Broken Reel Leon Kerber		Ted's Head Ted		Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.		Community Conversations Mel Lavender		Velvet Hammer Blues Beth Hammer						
4 p.m.	Economic Update		Ralph Nader Radio Hour (Syndicated)		WSLR NEWS		Alternative Radio (Syndicated)		WSLR NEWS		HipRawk Nation (Syndicated)		Femininomenom Becca & Cece		Positive Friction John Haupt						
5 p.m.	Capitol Update State News		Ralph Nader Radio Hour (Syndicated)		WSLR NEWS		Alternative Radio (Syndicated)		WSLR NEWS		HipRawk Nation (Syndicated)		Femininomenom Becca & Cece		Positive Friction John Haupt						
6 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder		Blues and Beyond Roger Young		The Dorm Room Peter Gentile		The Cat's Meow The Cat Lady		The Backbeat Andy Franklin		Discovery Road Louise Coogan		Ripper's Rarities Russ Yodice		Lavender Blue Radio Lindsey Hudson						
7 p.m.	First Voices		SynthWorld Damon		Bullwinkle's Corner Keith Winkle		In My Room (Syndicated)		Eclectricity Ishmael Katz		Cardwell's Cove (Syndicated)		The Witching Hour Dylan Howell		Dirty Laundry Karen Hazelwood (Syndicated)						
8 p.m.	Indigenous Nation ALTERNATE WEEKS		Bullwinkle's Corner Keith Winkle		In My Room (Syndicated)		Eclectricity Ishmael Katz		Cardwell's Cove (Syndicated)		The Witching Hour Dylan Howell		Dirty Laundry Karen Hazelwood (Syndicated)		That Driving Beat (Syndicated)						
9 p.m.	Down The Road (Syndicated)		Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio		It's All Happening (Syndicated)		Inside The Head: After Hours Ted Sipes (monthly)		All Mixed Up (Syndicated)		Dave Radio Dave Wilkens		Milo After Hours Milo		Train To Skaville (Syndicated)						
10 p.m.	Down The Road (Syndicated)		Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio		It's All Happening (Syndicated)		Inside The Head: After Hours Ted Sipes (monthly)		All Mixed Up (Syndicated)		Dave Radio Dave Wilkens		Milo After Hours Milo		Train To Skaville (Syndicated)						
11 p.m.	Down The Road (Syndicated)		Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio		It's All Happening (Syndicated)		Inside The Head: After Hours Ted Sipes (monthly)		All Mixed Up (Syndicated)		Dave Radio Dave Wilkens		Milo After Hours Milo		Train To Skaville (Syndicated)						
12 mid.	Down The Road (Syndicated)		Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio		It's All Happening (Syndicated)		Inside The Head: After Hours Ted Sipes (monthly)		All Mixed Up (Syndicated)		Dave Radio Dave Wilkens		Milo After Hours Milo		Train To Skaville (Syndicated)						

Streaming live 24/7/365 at **WSLR.org** · Studio line **941-954-8636**

## Broadcasting from BEYOND THE STUDIO...

WSLR is no longer confined to the booth. We've upgraded our gear, and we can now broadcast **live from anywhere**—parks, festivals, schools, libraries, and public events! Our mobile setup includes everything we need to bring the station into the heart of the community. We're asking you—our programmers, listeners, neighbors, and partners—to help us put it to use. If there's a story to tell, a place that deserves to be heard, or a gathering that deserves a mic, let's get it **on the air**.

**Have an idea for a live broadcast? Want to take your show out into the world? Contact: leon@wslr.org**

## New and Evolving Programs

Our lineup continues to grow, with new shows and evolving formats.

**"Blues and Beyond"** with Roger Young explores the deep roots and wide branches of the blues.

**"The Dorm Room"** with Peter "the Gent" Gentile blends jazz, soul, rock and intergalactic funk into a genre-bending ride.

**Both air alternating Tuesdays from 7 to 9 p.m.**



On May 24 we launched a six-week pilot of **"Talk of the Town: A WSLR News Roundtable"** with journalist Carrie Seidman. Most weeks, Seidman and her panelists are broadcasting from the studio, but **once a month she hosts the program live from the Fogartyville stage** with a packed audience. These editions are also streamed on Facebook and YouTube. It's also available as a podcast on your favorite streaming platforms!

**"Discovery Road"** with Louise Coogan airs **Thursdays from 7 to 9 p.m.** Once a month Coogan has also

been broadcasting the show live from Fogartyville, welcoming special guests, featuring interviews and standout performances for an audience of live music fans, with full radio and livestream coverage.

The **Live-from-Fogartyville editions** of both **"Talk of the Town"** and **"Discovery Road"** will resume again in the fall. We hope you'll join us in the audience and be part of the broadcast magic!



Leon Kerber  
WSLR Program Director  
Leon@wslr.org

## Let's Build It Together

As Program Director, I'm not just filling time spots on a schedule. I'm helping **build a culture**—one where community members shape the sound of their station. **WSLR** is powered by its programmers, and we welcome music lovers, storytellers, public affairs hosts, cultural voices, and creators from **all walks of life**.

Whether you're brand new or decades in, young or old, on the mic or behind the scenes— if you have something to say, or want to help others be heard, I want to hear from you. **Let's talk.**

Find out what's playing On Air on the website. You can also find a playlist for the day, all playlists, AND NOW you can leave a "tip" for your favorite show! Instant Karma!

# Parents Identify Critical Needs in Vision for Newtown Family Center

BY YAZMIL SORIANO

On a Friday evening in May, Newtown residents gathered for the first codesign workshop for the Newtown Family Center, a beacon of hope for a community that often feels overlooked.

Parents and guardians from the four Title I schools in Sarasota’s 34234 zip code shared their dreams for their children, their faces reflecting daily triumphs and struggles.

The facilitated conversation was led by Talethia O. Edwards, a national speaker on community resilience and sustainability. She emphasized the growing focus at both the state and federal levels to invest in community-led projects, especially after hurricanes devastate economically depressed neighborhoods.

Newtown is Sarasota County’s only Racially and Ethnically Concentrated Area of Poverty (RECAP), a HUD designation that is key for the county to receive Community Development Block Grants for Disaster Recovery. In accepting these funds, the county commits to addressing the unmet needs of its most economically distressed, low- to moderate-income households.

Parents identified critical needs, including access to healthcare, healthy food, childcare, transportation and youth activities, especially after school and during the summer. The discussion quickly highlighted the immense stress caused by the three 2024 hurricanes (Debby, Helene and Milton).

Residents shared stories of helping neighbors despite their own homes being damaged, showcasing the community’s spirit and unwavering hope. “Most of us were affected one way or another,” offered Sarah, a long-time resident and grandmother. “We look out for each other. When the hurricanes hit, we were the first ones helping our neighbors, even when our own homes were damaged.”

United Way Suncoast reported that its disaster recovery grants program served 2,658 people in Newtown’s 34234 zip code from December to March, the highest concentration in Sarasota.

The workshop also laid bare Newtown’s severe lack of resources. Half of the children in this area of 2 square miles live below the poverty line, with the remaining families falling within the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold, just one unexpected expense away from crisis.

A single car repair or a few days off work can set a single mother like me back months, especially when considering the 2024 survival budget for a family of four in Sarasota County is more than \$104,000, a figure many Newtown families cannot meet despite working.

Sarasota’s poorest zip code also had one of the highest child removal rates in the three-county region. Nathan Scott, Child and Family Well-Being System Coordinator for the Family Safety Alliance, noted that a lack of options in such difficult circumstances can “cement poverty and learning deficits that define a lifetime” for children.

The Newtown Family Center, with its vision of permanent spaces for medical care, parenting classes, literacy programs, food distribution and tuition-free early learning, emerged as a vital solution. This center is not just a building; it’s a promise of resilience and self-reliance.

To Sarasota County leaders, we urge you to allocate HUD federal funds to help build the Newtown Family Center. This would allow our county’s non-profit sector and social service organizations immediate access to support the 3,200 children of poverty attending Emma E. Booker



Elementary, Dreamers Academy, Booker Middle and Booker High School.

To the tremendously generous and financially blessed Sarasota philanthropic community, with its more than 17,000 millionaires, the parents of Newtown extend an urgent call to action. You have celebrated the arts with magnificent donations; now, we ask you to extend that same spirit of investment to the human potential residing just a few miles from our coastal playground, in our historic neighborhood of Newtown.

To be part of co-designing and co-founding the Newtown Family Center, email: [info@newtownfamilycenter.org](mailto:info@newtownfamilycenter.org) or call 941-867-0779.

*Yazmil Soriano is a Newtown resident and single mother caring for her daughter and goddaughter. Formerly community engagement liaison and special programs manager of Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota, she is a neighborhood leader of Newtown Estates. As a member of the Newtown Family Center Steering Committee, Soriano is developing the Parent Advisory Committee, a critical component of the placed-based model.*

# Celebrate Humanity Day

## At Fogartyville

### October 18, 2025

IAmHumanity.net

For more information

Call Jane Grandbouche 941-809-3168



# College Preparation, Career Readiness: UnidosNow Cohort Experiences Summer of Growth

BY JUAN PABLO SALAS

The Future Leaders Academy (FLA) of UnidosNow has enrolled 68 low-income and mostly first-generation college students from Sarasota and Manatee counties in this year's program, marking another record-breaking cohort following last year's 65 participants. Summer activities are already underway for the intensive program that runs from June 2025 to May 2026.

Andrea Doggett, Director of Strategy and Program Operations at UnidosNow, explained that the comprehensive FLA program includes four summer weeks of workshops followed by 10 monthly sessions throughout the academic year. Applications open between January and March annually, with the program culminating in Celebration Day, when graduates receive recognition before advancing their careers.

**Building Connections and Essential Skills**

Since students arrive from different counties and schools, initial activities focus on network building and trust development. Through small groups, partnered work and affinity games, participants build connections that enhance their learning experience. Students practice finding common ground with others and develop confidence through activities like mock interviews.

Public speaking development stands as one of the program's most crucial components. Every student participates in activities designed to stretch their comfort zones, with many graduates showcasing these newfound skills during speeches at Celebration Day.

**Self-Discovery and College Preparation**

Students then transition to college preparation and self-discovery. They explore career interests while navigating family expectations and



personal pressures. The program helps broaden their understanding of available pathways, emphasizing that multiple routes exist to achieve educational goals.

Some students may thrive in smaller college environments; others might need additional English support or technical training before pursuing four-year degrees; and some benefit from staying close to family. The key is expanding students' awareness of their options while developing personalized plans that consider timing, costs and locations.

Students observe their peers' journeys in real time, gaining insights into how different paths might work for their own situations.

**Campus Experiences and Practical Outcomes**

The program includes visits to local institutions, including Suncoast Technical College, Ringling College of Art and Design, Manatee Technical

College and State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota. However, recent legislative changes granting federal authority to campus police departments may complicate some visits for certain enrolled students.

By program completion, participants will have developed college lists, comprehensive plans and college admission strategies. Students gain access to a college and career readiness platform for completing aptitude and interest assessments, creating resumes, and working with college coaches on individualized readiness plans.

The FLA program represents UnidosNow's commitment to empowering Hispanic students through comprehensive support that extends far beyond traditional academic preparation, creating pathways to higher education and professional success.

*Juan Pablo Salas is the director of development and communications for UnidosNow.*

# Opinion: Let Us Strive to Make Sarasota a Paradise for All Who Call It Home

BY DAVID LIONEL

Sarasota is a virtual utopia for many who live here. But not everyone enjoys the good life. Perhaps it is time for this wealthy community to embrace its possible future by taking care that all residents have an excellent standard of living.

**Cultivating the Beautiful Life**

I arrived in Sarasota from upstate New York to stay the winter in early November, 2008, and observed right away that this area dedicates itself to public art. Thirty-seven statues made of stone, bronze or marble and representing classical or Renaissance themes adorn St. Armands Circle. Fantastic sculptures grace Sarasota's roundabouts. The cost of the foundation alone for "Poly" on U.S. 41 was nearly \$350,000!

The annual Embracing Our Differences exhibit in Bayfront Park is typical of the cultivation of the transcendent that thrives here. I made time on its last day to visit this year's rendition. The scene was magnificent: boats bobbing on the bay, the sparkling water shimmering behind the inspiring messages on giant placards.

The whole town is dedicated to the beautiful. It is blissful to live in this locale during the cold season. A high percentage of the population is reasonably comfortable, well-fixed.

**The 17 Sustainable Development Goals**

I've been following a rather under-reported public policy initiative signed on to by all the members of the United Nations in 2015. They promised to deliver the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for their entire resident populations by the year 2030.

These provide a model framework for municipal betterment. The SDGs urge quality education for all, guaranteed decent work, equality for women, affordable clean energy, environmentally responsible production and consumption, along with strong local institutions supporting peace and social justice.

The Goals, which include 182 indicators of well-being, are attainable, but they are not yet a serious objective for politicians, locally or globally.

Prosperous Sarasota could take on monitoring fulfillment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for all its inhabitants. Using these objective criteria, we can connect with each resident to ensure that our community has done its best to improve their quality of life. Civic leaders, clergy, nonprofits, and philanthropic foundations working together could ensure sufficiency for everyone.

A while back at the Ivy League Club of Sarasota-Manatee, a documentary played about Second Heart Homes, showing the nonprofit's multiple cooperative residences for homeless people. This year's Sarasota Film Festival included a screening

of "The Light They Cast," a documentary on Project 180 that follows eight men as they navigate re-entry into society after incarceration. These two tremendous examples demonstrate what supporting and believing in individuals can accomplish. The key mantra needs to be: "everybody in, nobody out."

One of the ways we can build a more inclusive and equitable local society is through the pursuit of community land trusts, which provide homeownership opportunities for low-income people. This route for the same money as the current punishing system will reduce homelessness, incarcerations, crime, hunger, and discrimination.

The well-to-do contributing their fair share as well could enable a comprehensive social adequacy, a general bonhomie.

Once one small city demonstrates to the world that universal sufficiency is implementable, it will begin to happen elsewhere. Sarasota has the potential to transform into that trailblazing municipality.

*David Lionel is a veteran producer and editor of advocacy videos from social movements.*

# Opinion: Abrego Garcia Case Underscores Issue of Due Process

BY RHONDA PETERS AND VILIA JOHNSON

The founders of our nation included in the Constitution the command that “No person shall . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”

In the past 236 years, Americans of all political beliefs have rightly expressed pride in our Constitution. All have agreed that the government cannot just invade people’s homes without a warrant, or arrest and imprison people without recourse to judicial oversight. That appeared to be universal, conventional wisdom among all Americans, at least until the past several months.

We have witnessed individuals forcibly removed from their homes, schools and places of employment by armed law enforcement personnel and imprisoned, sometimes in a foreign country. One of the most stunning examples was the seizing and incarceration of a Maryland husband and father, Kilmar Abrego Garcia. Abrego Garcia was flown to a prison in El Salvador without any judicial process at all. Making it even more egregious, the Trump administration acknowledged this man was removed from the country in error.

Nevertheless, it argued there was nothing it could do because he was under El Salvadorian control – notwithstanding that our country put him there and was paying for his incarceration. Abrego Garcia was returned to the U.S. on June 6 and will answer charges in court (as of this writing). The return demonstrates the administration’s ability, but refusal to do so earlier.

Numerous judges have found these actions violate due process. Most importantly, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously agreed that all persons who are detained “are entitled to notice and an opportunity to challenge their removal.”

The issue has been best summarized by Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III (nominated to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals by President Ronald Reagan) when he wrote in the Abrego Garcia case: “It is difficult in some cases to get to the very heart of the matter. But in this case, it is not hard at all. The government is asserting a right to stash away residents of this

country in foreign prisons without the semblance of due process that is the foundation of our constitutional order. Further, it claims in essence that because it has rid itself of custody, that there is nothing that can be done. This should be shocking not only to judges, but to the intuitive sense of liberty that Americans far removed from courthouses still hold dear.”

As Americans, we should all join Judge Wilkinson in his shock. We must not stand idly by, thinking these transgressions do not affect us. What happened in Maryland can happen here, on Sarasota’s streets, in our businesses, or in our schools. When rights are taken from one, they are taken from all.

We must all take action now to preserve our rights. Speak up in whatever way you are able: write or call your elected officials, attend governmental meetings, or join events where these issues are discussed. Now is not the time for silent acquiescence.

*Rhonda Peters and Vilia Johnson are co-presidents of the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County.*

## Mobile Freedom School Brings History to Life *continued from pg 1*

not just academic enrichment, but also joyfulness, pride and purpose. The vision behind the Mobile Freedom School is rooted in a response to a growing need. As educational policies in Florida increasingly restrict the teaching of Black history, initiatives like this become even more vital. We are not just filling gaps — we’re building bridges. We want our children to see themselves in the story of America, not just as footnotes, but as central characters.

This mission wouldn’t be possible without the generous support of community partners. The 2025 program is funded by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and the Masala Giving Circle. Their support ensures that the program remains free and accessible to families across the region.

Parents and guardians interested in enrolling their children can register at the local community partner sites: Roy McBean Boys & Girls Club and Sarasota Housing Authority in Newtown, Boys & Girls Clubs of Manatee County and The 13th Avenue Dream Center in Bradenton.

We welcome all students in grades K–8, regardless of background, who are curious and eager to learn in an affirming, culturally rich environment.

As the Manasota ASALH Mobile Freedom School rolls into its next chapter, it brings with it a sense of empowerment and purpose. This summer, history will come alive — not just in textbooks, but in the hearts and minds of a new generation.

*Jada Wright-Greene is the executive director of Manasota ASALH.*

2025-2026  
SEASON



**PURPLE**  
OCT 8-NOV 9, 2025



**BLACK NATIVITY**  
REIMAGINED  
NOV 20-DEC 21, 2025



**PARADISE BLUE**  
JAN 7-FEB 8, 2026



**HOW I GOT OVER**  
A GOSPEL REVUE  
FEB 18-MAR 29, 2026



**Lies Spells & Old Wives' Tales**  
APR 8-MAY 17, 2026

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

WESTCOAST  
BLACK  
THEATRE  
TROUPE

westcoastblacktheatre.org

941-366-1505

1012 N ORANGE AVE SARASOTA

Sarasota County  
Tourist Development Tax  
Paid for in part by Sarasota County

Florida's  
CULTURAL  
COAST



Page 10

The Critical Times, Vol. 32 | July – September, 2025

# Media, Music and Art Belong to Everyone

**BY JESSE COLEMAN**

What if your local radio station didn't just talk to you, but invited you in?

Walk into the WSLR station on any given weekday morning and you'll hear a mix of sound and voices: a volunteer DJ spinning records in one studio, a community leader being interviewed down the hall, a new volunteer learning how to cue up the next track. It's radio, but it's also something more. It's an open invitation to create, to participate, and to belong.



Talk of the Town

W S L R began as part of the low-power FM movement, which aimed to bring localism back to the airwaves and democratize content creation. In Sarasota, we filled a gap. This community needed a space where people could tell their own stories and speak to the issues that mattered to them. Volunteers made the programming. Listeners heard their neighbors on the air. It was grassroots, accessible, and built on trust.

That mission continues today. And while many media outlets now promote themselves as "local," there is a difference between sounding local and actually being rooted in a place. What we offer isn't just content about the community. It's content from the community. Our shows are created by students, activists, elders, musicians and everyday neighbors.

With that vision in mind, we've been hard at work expanding our training programs and engagement opportunities, because access to media, music and art should never be out of reach.

This summer, thanks to support from the Rotary Club of Sarasota Bay, we're hosting Youth Radio Camps for students ages 12 to 17. These weeklong sessions teach students how to DJ, produce a radio show, and contribute to a full WSLR News broadcast. They get hands-on experience in the studio and learn skills in interviewing, editing and storytelling. But even more important than technical training, they walk away with confidence, connection and a deeper sense of belonging.

Our journalism work has always been rooted in participation. Our original news program, "The Jumping Mullet Report," set the tone for a model that values collaboration and community input. Today, our internship program, supported by the Olson Family Foundation and Florida Veterans for Common Sense, builds on that legacy. Students and volunteers work alongside our News Director to produce real, relevant stories that reflect the concerns and perspectives of our region.

Last year, we added a new layer with the launch of our Public Newsroom series. Funded by Florida Humanities, we created a space for everyday people to explore the role of citizen journalism

in a changing media landscape. The series included conversations with reporters, editors and media lawyers, followed by hands-on workshops in interviewing, sourcing and ethics. The response was overwhelming.

Tamara Solum was one of the participants. A graduate student and community advocate, Solum became more active after the political upheaval at New College. She missed the first workshop round but stayed in touch and joined the next session as soon as it opened.

"I hesitated because I had just started graduate school," she told us. "But it was on Saturdays, and I figured it would be a good opportunity for me to learn some new skills and also become involved in bringing local news issues that I'm particularly interested in and passionate about to our community."

Johannes Werner, our News and Public Affairs director, says the program aims to bring a wider range of voices to our local news ecosystem. "Our workshops combine hands-on training with the chance to learn from experienced reporters and fellow citizen journalists," he said. "It's about building skills and building community while asking the questions that matter to working people in Sarasota and Manatee Counties.

Solum is relishing this new way of participating in public life. "Letting members of the community know I'm now a reporter for WSLR has opened up a sort of fearlessness in me," she said. "I have become more confident in approaching

people and engaging with both local citizens and elected officials. There is something that creates cooperation when you say, 'I'm doing a story,' and ask to speak. I really like the responses and feedback I've received from friends and community members."

This fall, we're building on that momentum. WSLR News is preparing to update its formats and expand live programming. We're currently looking for community members to join us as on-air citizen anchors. If you've ever been told you have a voice for radio, or if you've just always wanted to be part of the magic, this is your chance. We want voices that reflect the full spectrum of Sarasota and Manatee counties.

And of course, storytelling doesn't stop with the airwaves.

Fogartyville, our community arts and events space, plays a central role in shaping the creative life of Sarasota. It's where concerts, open mics, documentary screenings and workshops bring people together, not just as audience members but as contributors.



Drink and Draw

We've continued our commitment to artist development through programs like Creative Nexus, in partnership with Mosaic Movements and funded by the Live Music Society. This initiative brought LGBTQ+ and BIPOC artists together for skill-building in branding, business strategy and media production. Gatherings culminated in the Creative Nexus Summit, a vibrant celebration of mentorship and community connection, much of which was broadcast live from the Fogartyville stage.

We've also expanded our programming to support young and emerging musicians through partnerships like EveryOneRocks, which brings youth bands and solo performers to the Fogartyville stage to share their talents in a welcoming, professional environment.

The Sandbox, our open mic bonanza, offers one of the most inclusive and eclectic performance platforms in the region. It is a space for storytelling, poetry, original music and surprise collaborations. And through our Fogartyville Songwriter Series, made possible by support from the Watts Family Foundation, we continue to lift up homegrown talent and bring neighbors together through song.

And our newest monthly offering, Drink & Draw Sarasota, brings artists of all skill levels together to sketch dynamic models in costume and to socialize.

All of this speaks to our core belief: access to the arts, to storytelling, to a public platform, should never be limited to those with money, influence or connections. We've worked hard to keep these programs accessible, but to grow this work and make it sustainable, we need

support. Philanthropic investment is what makes it possible to train young journalists, host emerging musicians, and give neighbors a mic when they have something to say.

There's a place for everyone in this vision. Whether you want to help tell stories, support the work, perform on stage, or just show up and be part of the crowd, we're building this together.

And we're just getting started.



Creative Nexus



EveryOneRocks performers



Tamara Solum



Jesse Coleman is general manager and executive director of WSLR+Fogartyville.

# Summer of Resistance

The summer of 2025 has been marked by largely peaceful anti-Trump demonstrations across the country, including in Southwest Florida. Thousands of protesters in Sarasota and Manatee counties participated in No Kings on June 14, the

same day as a military parade in Washington D.C. celebrating the Army's 250th anniversary and coinciding with President Trump's birthday. But the demonstrations have not been limited to just one day. There have been weekly protests against

the administration's mass deportation policies and marches in support of migrants. June was also Pride Month, lending a sense of intersectionality to the gatherings. Here is a sampling of the memorable images from the summer of resistance.



Photos contributed by Mason Chambliss, Ramon Lopez, Kathleen Murray and Johannes Werner.