

# The Uphill Battle for Donor Acquisition: Strategies for Success

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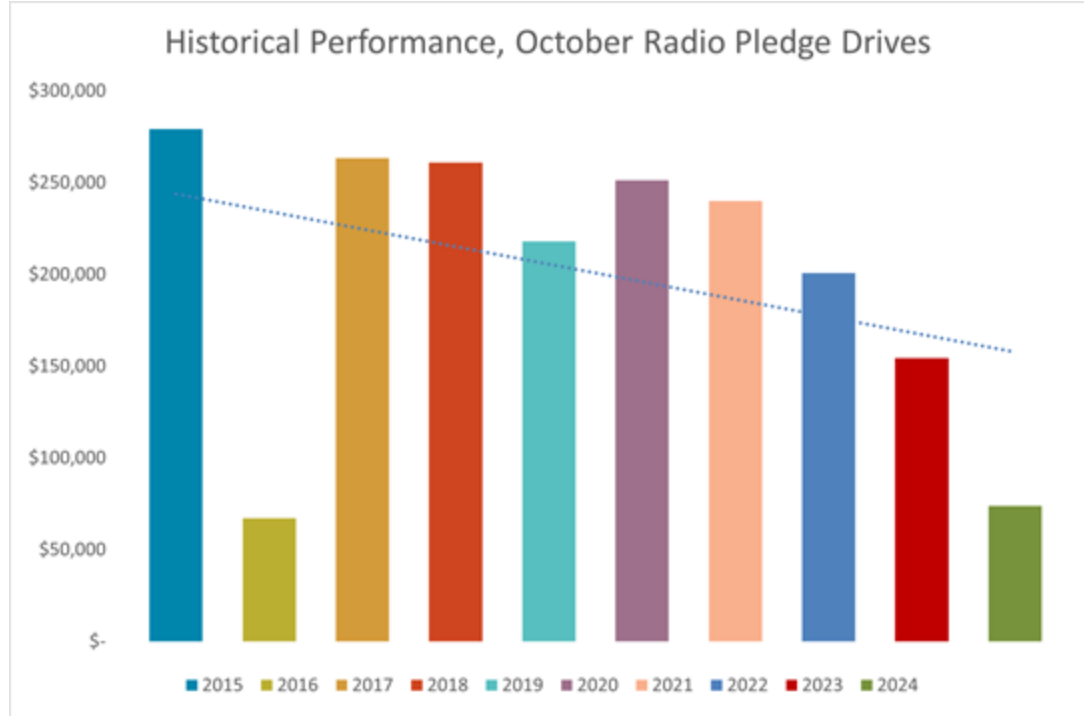
August 2024



# South Carolina Public Radio

## Background

- Statewide radio station with News and Talk streams and News and Music streams
- No Pledge Drive Pledge Drives from 2016-2023
- October 2023 (FY24) was the first week-long pledge drive in recent memory
- Culture of philanthropy was missing internally and externally; fundraising was positioned as punitive



# South Carolina Public Radio

## Changing the narrative - March 2024

- Pitch training and deck refreshes
- Community guests
- Matching and challenge gifts
- Digital engagement strategies ahead of the launch of the campaign
  - 26.7% increase in social media impressions
  - 54% increase in link clicks

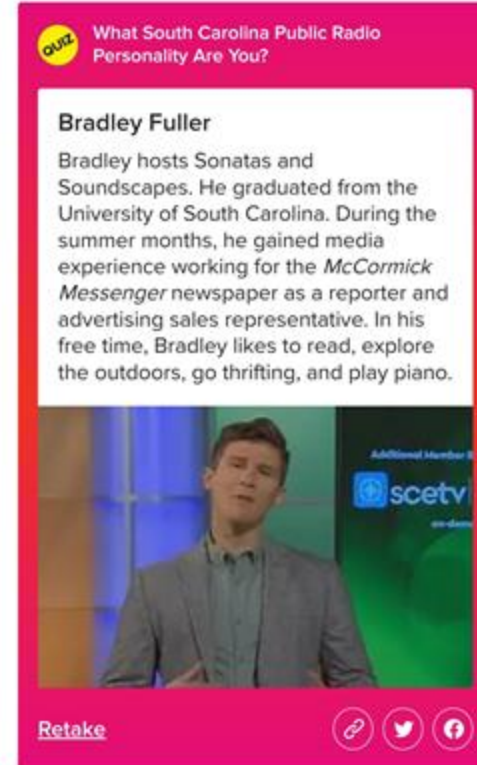


# South Carolina Public Radio



## Expanding Engagement - June 2024

- Dog Days of Summer
- Tune In Tuesday
- BuzzFeed quizzes
- 32% increase in website users and 20% increase in website page views week over week



# Vermont Public



## Background:

- **Joint Licensee:** News radio, classical radio, TV, and podcasts
- **Service Area:** Vermont, some areas of New Hampshire, New York, and Quebec/Montreal metro area.
- **Reach:** Average 80,000 ish e-mail subscribers, 298,000 monthly website users
- Broadcast radio combined weekly cume: 104,000
- Broadcast TV monthly cume: 192,000
- **Membership:** Approximately 40,000 members, 60% of which are sustainers



# Vermont Public



## FY 2024 New Member Acquisition:

- In FY 24, Vermont Public netted about 1,000 new members, compared to the previous year.

Organizational focus on digital strategies and a “younger, more diverse audience”

- **Most effective methods:**
  - New Donor Day during radio pledge
  - Pre-drive incentives
  - Mass-appeal drive prizes and timely premiums
  - Push notifications, e-mails, and pop ups during drives
  - But Why Fan Club

### FY 2024 - NEW MEMEBRS BY SOURCE

Ongoing Online - General	1610	51.4%
Radio Pledge Drives	1103	35.2%
TV Pledge	239	7.6%
But Why Fan Club	73	2.3%
Unsolicited / White Mail	59	1.9%
Ongoing Online - Sustainer Form	35	1.1%
Acquisition Mail	7	0.2%
Add Gift Mail	2	0.1%
Email Newsletters	1	0.0%
Brave Little State	1	0.0%
<b>Total New Members FY24:</b>	<b>3130</b>	

# Vermont Public



## But Why Fan Club:

- Three membership levels and a merch store
- Does not include VP member benefits
- Audience is outside of usual listening area
- 73 sustainers in year one, totaling about \$9,600 annually

## Lessons Learned:

- Time-based campaigns with a specific dollar goal motivated the audience to give.
- Offering the option to donate 1x or a sustainer yielded better results.
- Most compelling offer was a merch store credit.
- It took far longer to build momentum than we expected.

# Vermont Public



## What's next?

- **New Member Acquisition Squad:**
  - Cross-departmental team focused on creating acquisition plans for key identified groups. (Digital audience, merch store customers, events, etc.)
  - Working with our digital team to A/B test some strategies including digital drives, in-line news story asks, and campaigns for newsletter subscribers.
  - Utilizing the PBS Free Streamers leads to promote Passport.
  - **FY 25 Goal:** 4,000 new members





# WAPS The Summit



## Who We Are:

- Format: AAA
- Currently in three markets: Akron, Youngstown, and Athens
- 35,000 weekly listeners over the air plus additional via online stream and app
- Owned by Urban Public School District
- Financially independent from district for 15 years
- Membership staff - Me!



**THE SUMMIT FM**  
91.3 FM AKRON-CANTON  
90.7 FM YOUNGSTOWN  
90.1 FM ATHENS

# WAPS The Summit

## New Member Acquisition:

- Car Donations
  - Increased number of donors/cars by 117% and dollars by 103%



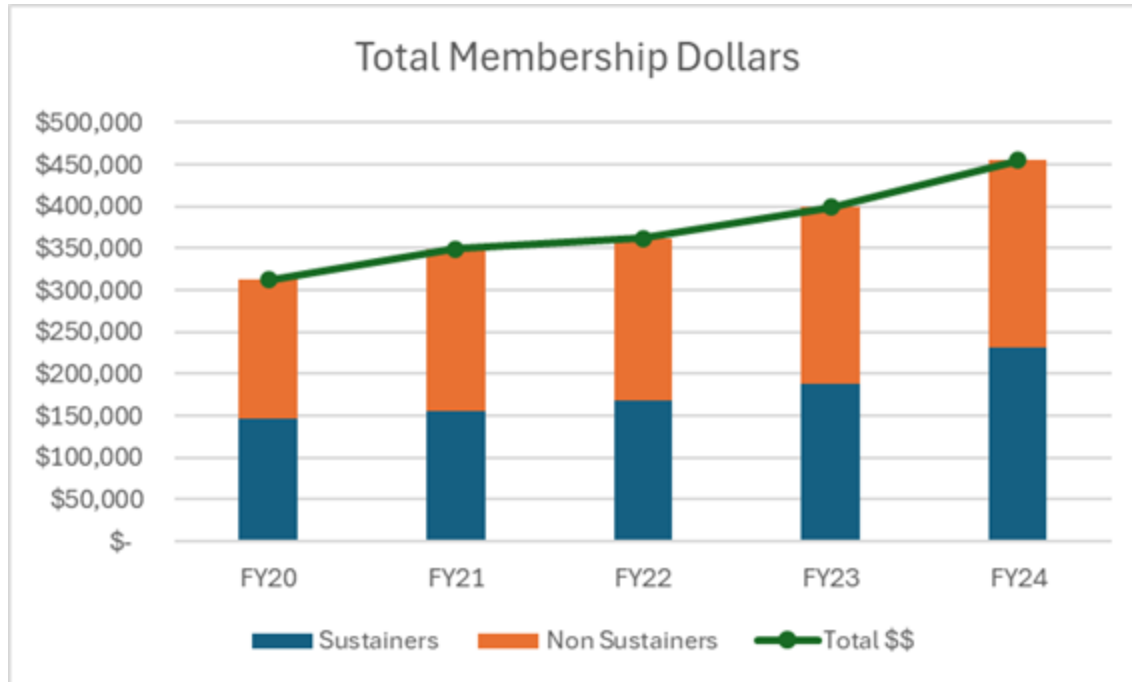
## How I Did It:

- New, fun spots recorded
- These played twice as often as before
- Included in all eblasts
- GAVE MEMBER BENEFITS



# WAPS The Summit

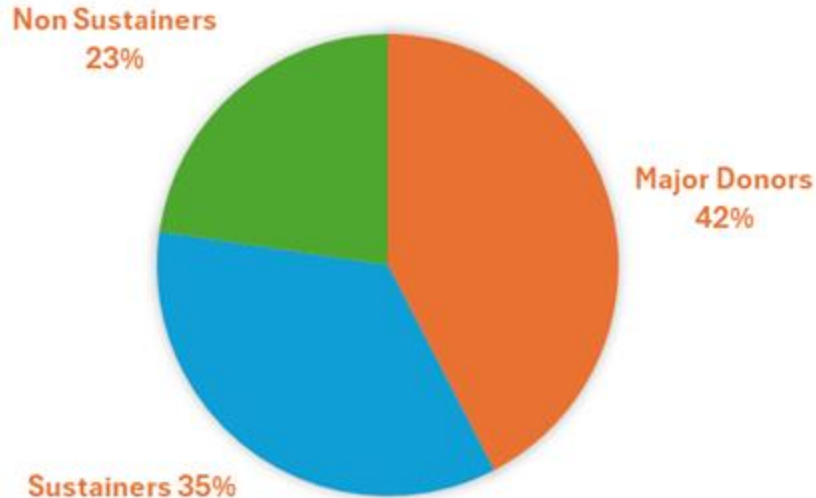
## Membership Trends at WAPS



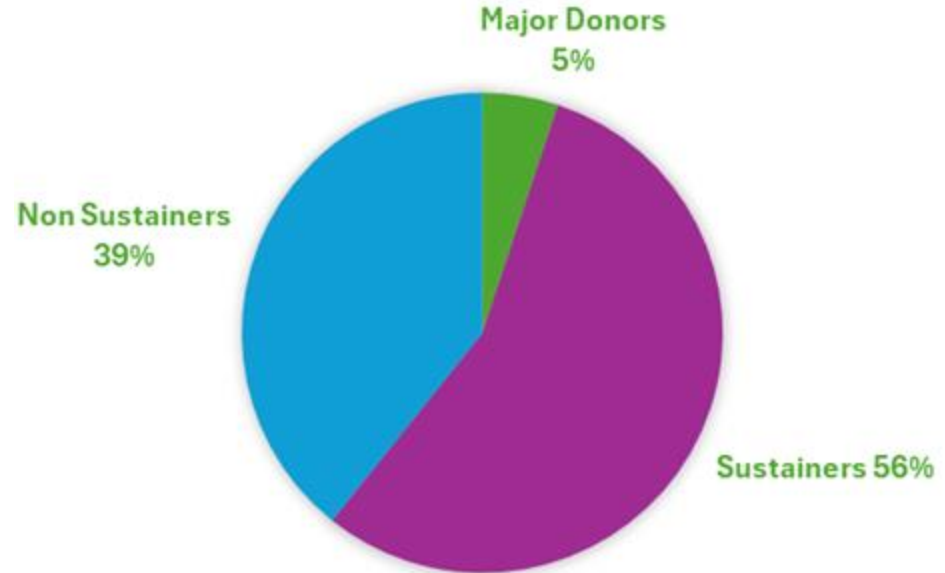
# WAPS The Summit

## Current Membership:

### MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS



### MEMBER DISTRIBUTION



# WAPS The Summit



## Focus on Major Donors

### Major Donors in Last 18 Months:

- 5% increase in number of donors
- 46% increase in revenue
- 15% increase in average gift

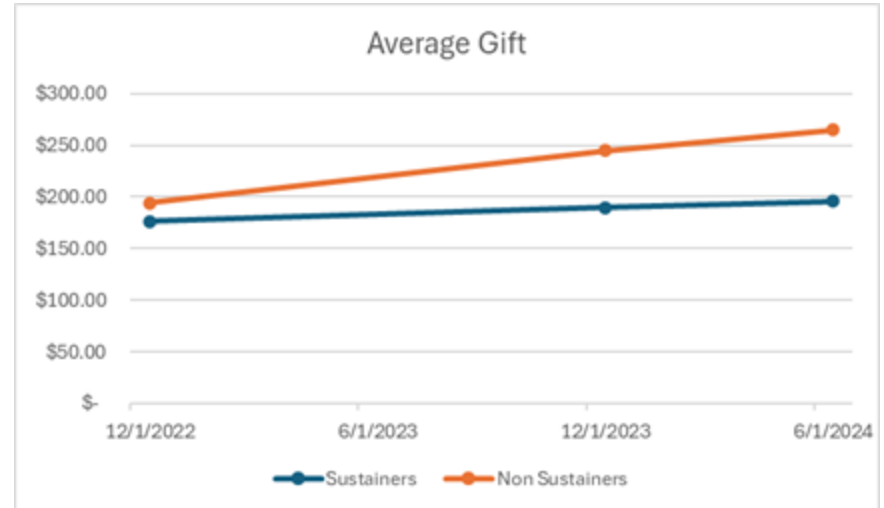
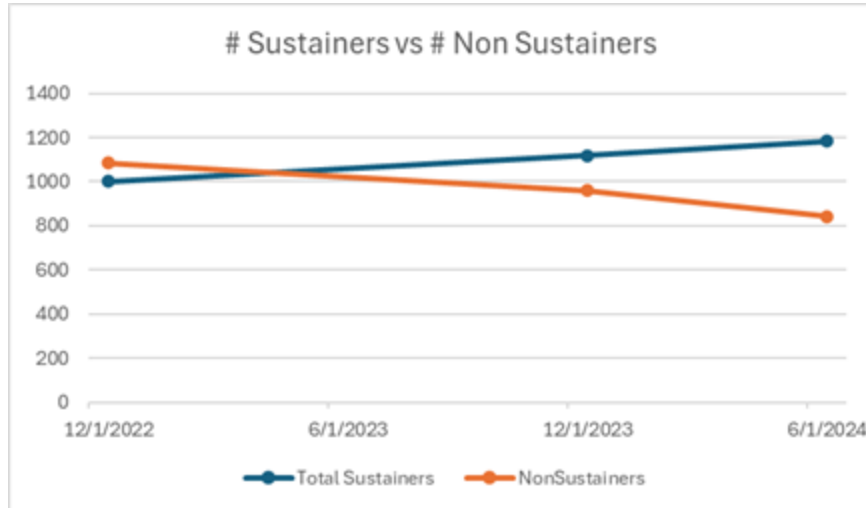
### How I Did It:

- Created 3 new levels with enhanced experiential benefits



# WAPS The Summit

## Focus on Sustaining Members

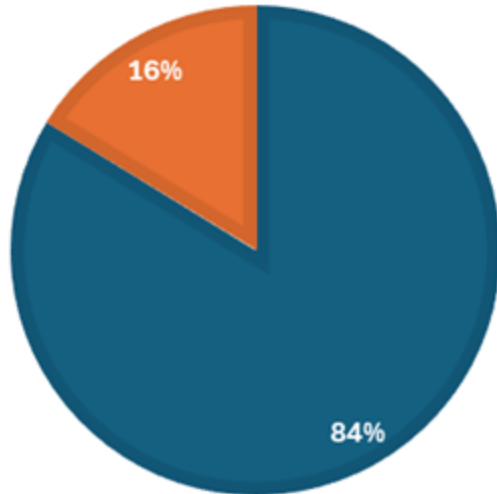


# WAPS The Summit

## Focus on Sustaining Members

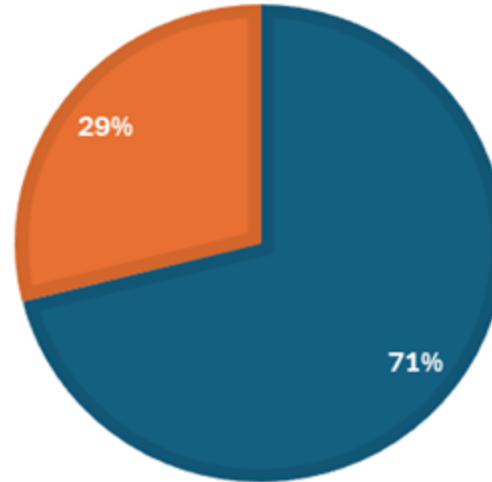
AS OF JAN 1, 2023

■ CC Sustainer ■ EFT Sustainer



AS OF JUNE 30, 2024

■ CC Sustainer ■ EFT Sustainer



## About us:

- Audience: 70,000 weekly listeners
- Format: News/AAA/Eclectic
- Membership staff FY24: 1.25 (me and an intern)

## Two things we implemented in FY24 improve member acquisition/reacquisition:

- Inbound and outbound texting
- Adding NPR member leads to our email solicitation list

**Result: our new member number ticked up 3.6%--our first increase in 3 years!**



# WYSO: Implementing Inbound and Outbound Texting



## Why:

- We needed a new way to engage with our audience during drives and other campaigns.
- I could do the set-up and testing myself, and it didn't require a significant financial investment.

## When we implemented it:

- **Inbound texting: June 2023.** We used our summer drive as our first major test because it is the smallest by both revenue and donor participation.
- **Outbound texting: March 3, 2024.** It was the last day, and I wanted to do a push to donate because we had an incentive (enter a drawing to win a trip for 2) that would be appealing.

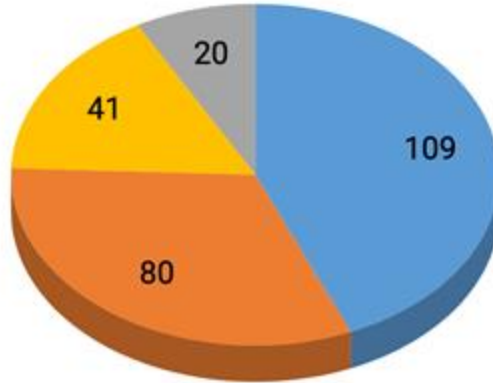
## What we currently use:

- **MailChimp:** required enabling SMS for our primary email list to send out text messages—the only “new” cost @ \$45/mo.
- **GiveLively:** mobile giving platform—easy onboarding and includes a text #, ability to reserve multiple codes, and easy-to-use donation forms.
- **Stripe:** payment processor required by GiveLively—we already used it to accept NPR/NPR+ donations.



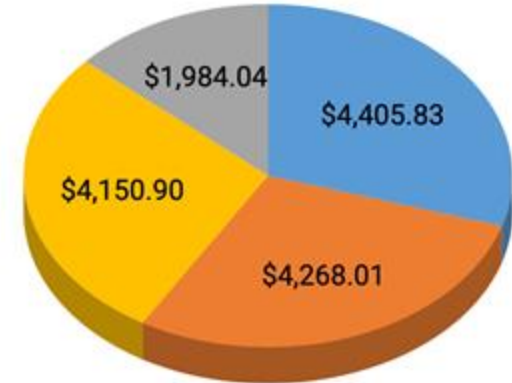
# WYSO: Texting Results for FY24

- Additional Gifts
- New Members
- Rejoining Members
- Renewing Members



- Total donations: 250
- 48% of donors were new or rejoining members.
- 13% of new members were acquired via text.

- Additional Gifts
- New Members
- Rejoining Members
- Renewing Members



- Total revenue: \$14,808.78
- Avg. donation amounts were smaller, except for rejoining members.
- Seems promising for acquisition/reacquisition.

# WYSO: Outbound Text Test 1 & 2 (3.3.24, 5.2.24)



Test 1 Incentive: last day of our spring drive and last chance to enter to win a trip for 2 to Chicago. Sent 3.3.24, 8 AM.

Results:

- 2,486 recipients, 472 clicks, 36 donations
- \$2,592.02 in donations (\$72 avg. donation)
- Recipients clicked through to our GiveLively form.

Text 2 Incentive: last chance to get a WYSO pin (available only during Public Media Giving Days 2024). Sent 5.2.24, 11 AM.

Results:

- 1,377 recipients, 33 clicks, 8 donations
- \$582.64 in donations (\$73 avg. donation)
- Recipients clicked through to our GiveLively form.

**What I learned: people respond to an incentive with an expiration date, graphics are not always necessary, and people are quicker to unsubscribe from texts (1.6%) vs. email (0.07%)**

A screenshot of a text message. The text reads: 'WYSO: It's the last day to enter WYSO's drawing for a trip for 2 to Chicago! Donate now for a chance to win: <https://mssg.io/s/65hu1w> Text STOP to opt out'.

WYSO: It's the last day to enter WYSO's drawing for a trip for 2 to Chicago! Donate now for a chance to win: <https://mssg.io/s/65hu1w> Text STOP to opt out



WYSO: Support WYSO during Public Media Giving Days! Give today and receive a WYSO enamel pin as our thanks. <https://mssg.io/s/wd23r3> Text STOP to opt out

A screenshot of a mobile app or website donation form for WYSO. At the top is the WYSO logo. Below it is the text 'MAKE A DONATION WYSO'. There are three buttons for \$365, \$250, and \$150. Below these are input fields for \$85, a dollar sign, a text box, and USD. There are also buttons for 'One Time' and 'Monthly'. At the bottom is a button that says 'Continue'.

# WYSO: Outbound Text Test 3 (6.14.24)

Incentive: last chance to participate in our summer drive and enter a drawing for a prize package worth \$500. Sent 6.14.24, 1 PM.

## Results:

- 1,518 recipients, 43 clicks, 4 donations
- \$642.25 in donations (\$161 avg. donation—one \$600 donation and three \$10-15 donations)
- Recipients click through to our main donation form.

**PET WARS**  
A friendly bottle to crown the best pet.

Donate June 12-14  
to cast your vote!

Donate \$100+ and be entered for a chance to win a WYSO pet prize pack valued at \$500.

See the best pet win!

91.3 wyso [Donate now](#)

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WYSO: Support WYSO news & music!  
Donate by 6 pm TODAY to vote in the  
WYSO Pet War for your fave  
companion animal:  
<https://mssg.io/s/ljwf6t>  
Text STOP to opt out

---

11:20

91.3 wyso

Thank you for supporting WYSO! YOU make WYSO happen when you donate—music, podcasts, independent journalism, and so much more.

After completing this form and clicking "Continue", you will be redirected to our payment processor to enter your bank account or credit card details.

**Method of Payment**  
How would you like to pay? (Direct withdrawal from a bank account is pre-selected as WYSO's preferred choice.)

☒ Withdraw from my bank account monthly

☐ Charge my credit/debit card monthly

☐ Charge my credit/debit card a one time payment

Your first payment will be deducted from your bank account in 2-3 business days, and then on or around the 7th of each month until you contact us to stop. Please check the box to acknowledge your agreement to these terms. (If you do not agree to these terms, please select another method of payment.)

AA wyso.secureallegiance.com

**What I learned: link to donation forms that are optimized for speed and accept methods like Apple or Google Pay.**

# WYSO: Adding NPR member leads to our prospect audience



## Why:

- They are free!
- These people have an affinity with NPR programming, and they have been localized to your area.
- NPR has already obtained their consent to share their name and email with their local station(s).

## What you get:

- Name
- Email address
- What NPR source they came from (website, newsletter, app)
- Date of localization.

## Starting in January 2023:

- Weekly, download new prospects from NPR, then add them and tag them in our database and email list.
- They receive 1-2 informational emails per month, like news series announcements or station updates.

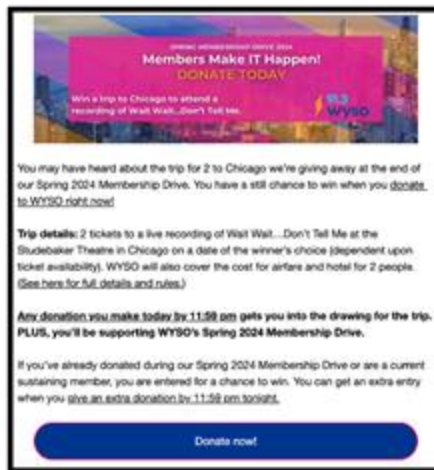
## Starting in December 2023:

- They are included in email fundraising in their own segment, receiving 1-2 emails per campaign (4 campaigns so far)
- 606 people added to our prospect list so far, 14 have become members.
- Avg. donation is \$82.

# WYSO



12.30.23 acquisition email



3.3.24 acquisition email



5.2.24 acquisition email

# Minnesota Public Radio



## Background

- 119,000 members
- 3 brands: news, classical, AAA
- Statewide reach with 40+ radio towers
- Part of American Public Media Group
  - MPR | APM | LAist
- Membership Team: 8 FTE
  - Fundraising gifts <\$2500 annually

**MPR**  
**news**

 **Your  
Classical  
MPR**

**the  
current®**

# Minnesota Public Radio (intro)



1. **We're not growing.** Many public media outlets share this uphill battle.
2. MPR has *slowed* the **downward slide of total members** YoY.

	<u>FY20**</u>	<u>FY21</u>	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY24</u>
Change from prior year	+3%	-2.6%	-4.5%	-1.9%	-0.5%



The same revenue from fewer and fewer members. *What does this mean?*

3. MPR has mostly **avoided revenue declines** YoY.

	<u>FY20**</u>	<u>FY21</u>	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY24</u>
Change from prior year	+10.7%	+1.02%	+1%	-1%	+1%



\*\*pandemic giving was an outlier



# Minnesota Public Radio (intro)



4. MPR increased new member acquisition after sharp declines.

	<u>FY20**</u>	<u>FY21</u>	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY24</u>
New Members	10,521	7,838	5,985	6,773	8,040
Change from PY	+36%	-25%	-24%	+13%	+19%

## How did we manage this boost in new member acquisition?!

- **Member drives and on-air fundraising:** rebalanced member drive dominance
- **Digital fundraising:** liberated digital channels from amplifying *just* broadcast tactics
- **Premiums:** boosted engagement with premiums by increasing their perceived value

# MPR: On-Air Strategies



## HERE'S WHAT WE DID:

- **Collapsed member drives** to just 5 days, Monday through Friday
- **Strengthened pre-drive and post-drive** tactics
  - 7 days before drive: stronger early giving CTAs and incentives
  - 5 days of regular member drive (preemptive double pitching)
  - 7 days after drive: gratitude messaging ~or~ CONTINGENCY PLAN
- **Streamlined messaging and tools** = smaller workloads
  - 10+ pre-recorded promos → 5 promos
  - 100s of potential scripted cases → 3 hours of scripting, repeated
  - Daily hot sheet, live reads, solo pitching scripts → 1 daily hot sheet

# MPR: On-Air Strategies



## THE RESULTS:

- 5 day drives worked!
- Spring member drive comparison:

	<u>Spring FY23</u>	<u>Spring FY24</u>
<b>Double Pitching</b>	8 days	5 days
<b>Donations</b>	5,439	4,698
<b>Revenue</b>	\$334,999	\$345,645 <b>(+3.2%)</b>

### **BONUS:**

MPR's largest final day of a member drive: \$218,000

# MPR: On-Air Strategies



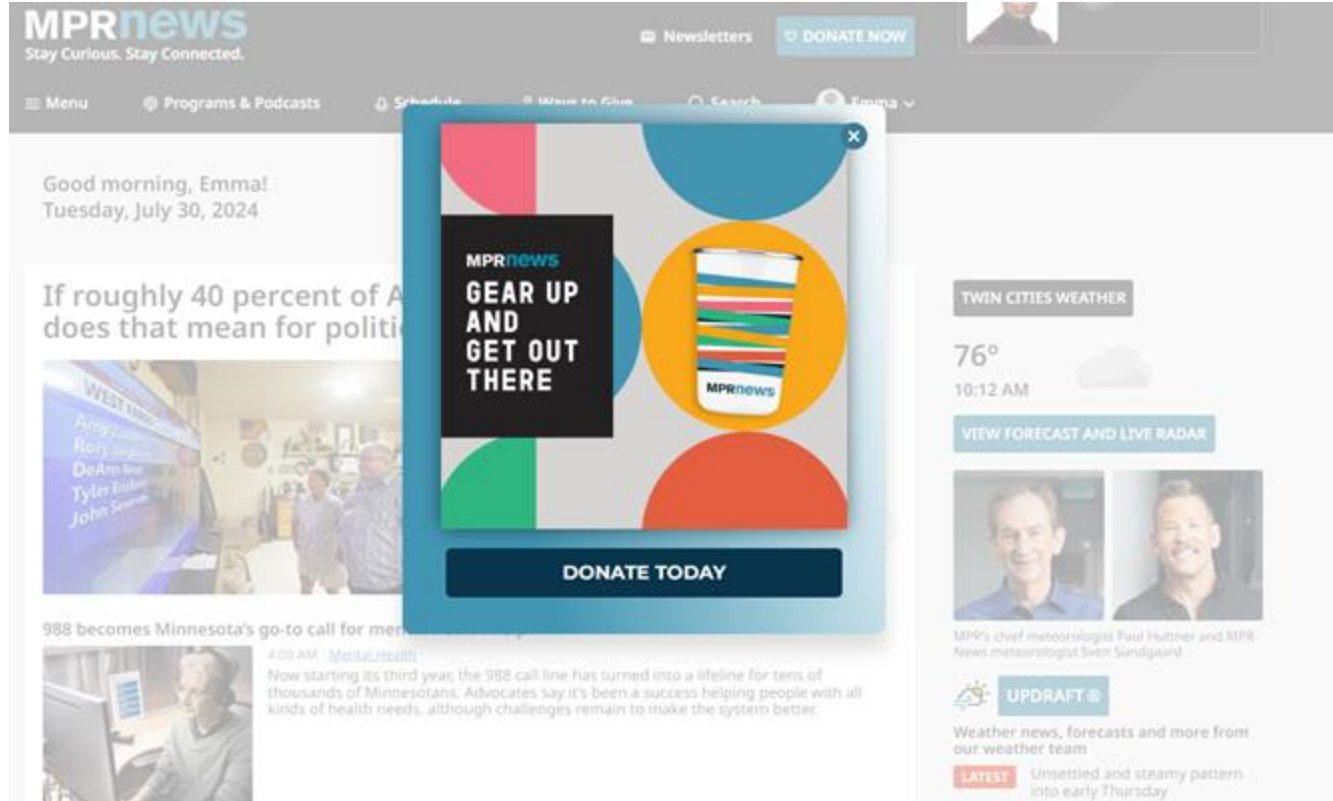
## OTHER BENEFITS!

- No negative impact on listenership
- Additional **capacity** to plan for new strategies
  - More messaging throughout the year (non-member-drive campaigns)
  - Increased digital fundraising results
  - Grew engagement with premiums

# MPR: Pop Ups, Slide Ins, and Sticky Bars



# Example: What is the user experience?

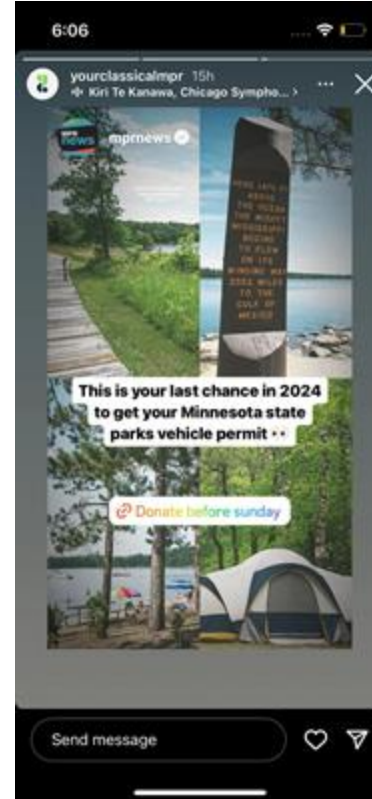


# MPR: Turning the Tide with Email



- Focus on incremental improvements with email
  - Improved benchmarking
  - A/B test send times, sender, buttons, hyperlinks, images, etc.
- Email exclusive offers
  - Premiums offers, usually a unique bundle, offered exclusively through an email
  - Matching opportunity exclusive to a specific email
  - Bonus pay-it-forward impacts through unique emails
- A/B test with prospect audience
  - Does our prospect audience respond best to host senders, staff senders, or brands?
  - Do our prospects respond more often to premium incentives or values-based messaging?

# MPR: Improved Social Strategy





# MPR: Improving the Web Form Experience



- When an audience member hears that there's a matching opportunity on the air or reads about a special offer in their inbox, the copy at the top of the donation form confirms that special, timely opportunity.
  - *Ex: MPR News is your trusted resource for the news you need. When you donate right now, your gift will be MATCHED, dollar for dollar, by the MPR Member Fund.*
- Testing and Optimization: Run A/B tests each campaign on web forms
  - How many giving level buttons should be on the form?
    - Does there need to be a corresponding button for a premium?
  - Does photography and premium descriptions impact form completion?
  - Institute digital wallet options (Apple Pay and PayPal)
  - Single page or multi-step form?

## MPR: Premiums Work for Acquisition

6,773 new members in FY23

8,040 new members in FY24



**54% of new members in FY24 chose a premium, a 40% increase over FY23**



# MPR: FY24 Premium Tactics



1. Increased spend per item & perceived value
2. Collaborated with Local Vendors
3. Increased storytelling
4. Lead generation



# MPR: Increased Spend & Perceived Value

## Spend:

- Re-allocating spend to focus on growth
- Bundling items

## Perceived value:

- Thoughtful designs and collaborations
- On-air focus on product details
- Host enthusiasm
- When possible, items in studios



# MPR: Collaborated with Local Vendors



# MPR: Increased Storytelling





## MPR: Acquisition or Lead Generation?

New tote donors: 1,685  
Average gift: \$14.75  
Initial revenue (new): \$24,856

Converted: 51  
Additional revenue: \$4,782



# MPR: FY24 Items

