

MARFA PUBLIC RADIO

Radio For A Wide Range



Photo by Carlos Morales

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear West Texas,

As I look back at this year, so much has come to fruition. This fall, we launched three podcasts that represent the spirit and range of the station to tell compelling stories. This year also marks the first anniversary of Travis Pope's leadership as station manager and the addition of Yvonne Lujan as office manager and Kelly Schaber as development director – all of whom make the station a better place.

We are living through a critical time, and we know that what we do has a **critical** impact on our lives. Our tiny station serves the expanse of West Texas, connecting communities from the border to the Permian Basin. This is why our motto is *radio for a wide range* – both literally and metaphorically.

We are invested in your daily and immediate access to essential information via our local and national news coverage. Under the direction of Carlos Morales, the station's newsroom – Mitch Borden, Annie Rosenthal, and Travis Bubennik – have reported on stories ranging from unsafe drinking water in Toyah to StoryCorps interviews in Presidio, and hazardous weather conditions across the Big Bend and Permian.

We are also invested in your access to joy and connection, which is why we both honor the dead and celebrate love on our airwaves.

In these critical times, your support is not just appreciated but essential. Your contributions enable us to carry out the vital work that serves our communities, ensuring that Marfa Public Radio remains a beacon of information, connection, and creativity.

As an NPR Board member, I am filled with pride to represent our station. Thank you for being an integral part of Marfa Public Radio.

Elise Pepple
Executive Director



Executive Director Elise Pepple at
NPR Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

PROGRAMMING

One half of Marfa Public Radio's mission is to bring intelligent discussions and all the happenings of far-flung places to listeners in West Texas. *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* deliver the news of the day every day. Whatever your interests, both shows feature deep dives fit for the person who needs to know stuff.

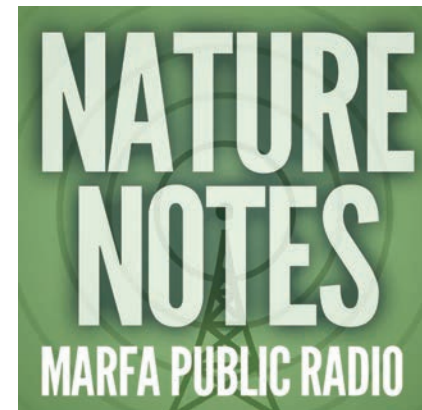
The station's afternoon programs offer even deeper conversations into some of the topics you'll hear during these shows. Kai Rysdal and *Marketplace* have added moments of economic context in recent years that focus on small business owners and what changing market forces mean for local economics and small businesses. *Fresh Air* introduced a new co-host this year, Tonya Moseley, and continues to ask questions of musicians, politicians and writers. There's *Science Friday* – which brings listeners a more robust discussion of weather, engineering, design, and biology you won't find anywhere else.

And Saturday morning is when you can tune in for *Wait Wait Don't Tell Me*, a show that makes fun of the news and culture explored in all the other national news shows that we air.

Of course, if half of our mission is to bring the world to West Texas, the other half is to act as a showcase for Texas. *THINK* is the only national talk show on the radio that's produced in the state. You can hear it on our airwaves and live stream every weekday afternoon just after lunch. *Stardate*, a daily exploration into all things space-related, is now something you can catch on your way to work and again on your way home. We have public radio's only look at the natural world of West Texas, *Nature Notes*. And *Caló* continues to explore borderland dialects exclusively on Marfa Public Radio.



All Things Considered



2023 SUPPORT

“I am truly grateful for the privilege of collaborating with Marfa Public Radio—a beacon of community connection and meaningful storytelling. The enriching experience has been a joyous journey, resonating with the spirit of purpose and shared dedication to fostering a vibrant and informed public.”

– Karmen Bryant

Marfa Public Radio Board

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Marfa Public Radio is generously supported by The Prentice Farrar Brown & Alline Ford Brown Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, FMH Foundation, King Foundation, Moore Foundation, Permian Basin Area Foundation, Report for America, The Rea Charitable Trust, Shield-Ayers Foundation, Still Water Foundation, Yarborough Foundation, and listeners like you.

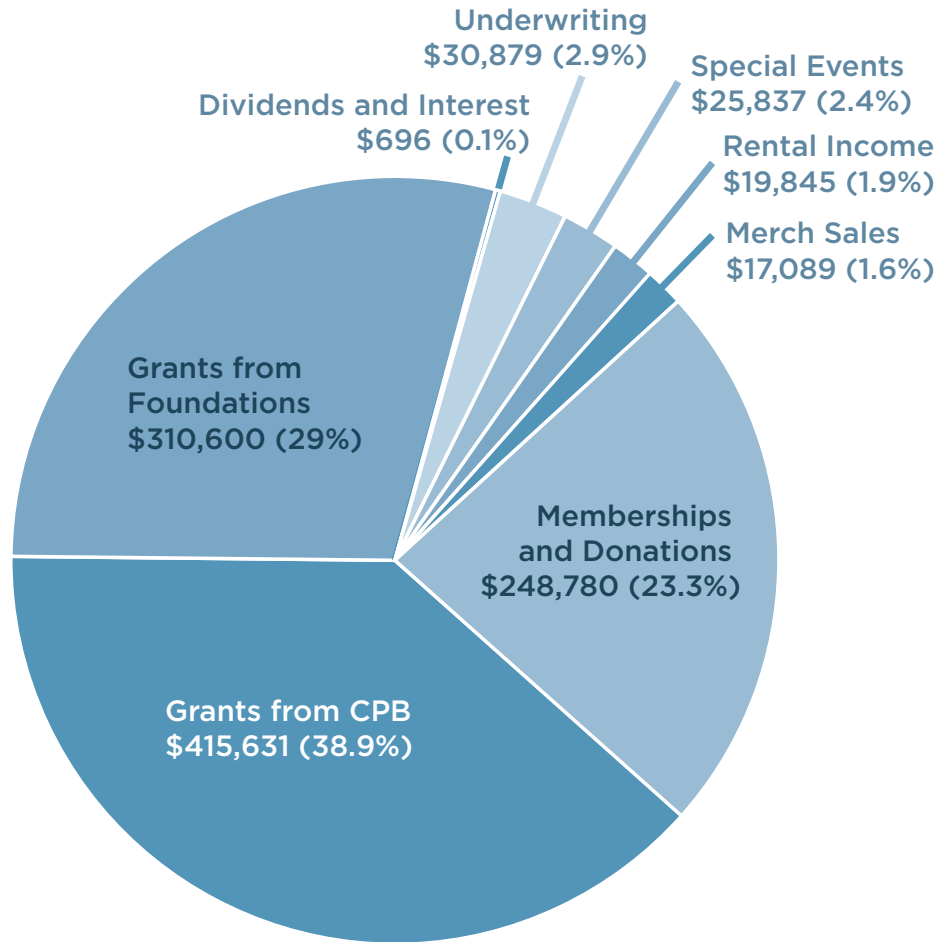
“Marfa Public Radio is magic. It is the lifeline for a remote region and manages to reflect the character and personality of its neighbors. It’s what radio was meant to be.”

– Jennifer Ferro



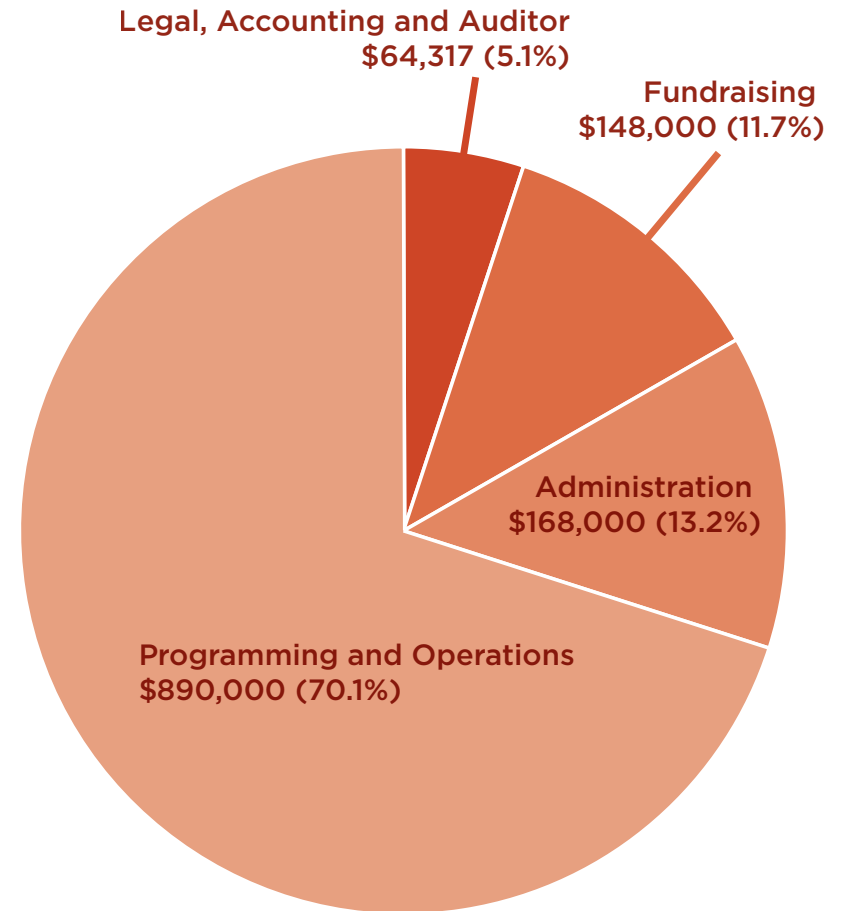
Photo by Carlos Morales

REVENUE & EXPENSES



2023 REVENUES

YTD Total (Jan-Oct): \$1,069,357



2023 EXPENSES

YTD Total (Jan-Oct): \$1,270,317

LOCAL MUSIC SHOWS

Marfa Public Radio listeners can find a curated selection of music that spans a wide range of genres, showcasing the varied musical tastes of the community. From indie rock to classical, folk to electronic, Marfa Public Radio has something for everyone, including the local programs below.

DOS HORAS CON PRIMO

Tuesdays 11am-1pm • A Spanish language radio program featuring music from several different genres, but featuring norteño, conjunto, bolero, tejano, tex-mex, and borderlands music. Hosted by Primo Carrasco with co-hosts Tim Johnson and Erica David.

HONKY TONK HAPPY HOUR

Thursdays 8-10pm • Host David Branch specializes in an enthusiastic assortment of country, western, swing and everything in between.

MARFA MYSTERY HOUR

Wednesdays 8-9pm • Hosted by a rotating cast of guest DJs from around the area with a variety of formats including thematic music programs, spoken word, comedic radio plays, and interviews with local artists, musicians and writers.

THE ROCK PILLOW

Thursdays 10pm-1am • DJ Michael Camacho brings his 1000+ vinyl record collection to put listeners to sleep as he drops the needle on classic rock, metal, and punk records.

TEXAS MUSIC HOUR OF POWER

Saturdays 7-9pm • From a “secret location in an unmarked cave at the wrong side of the Rio Grande,” music historian Joe Nick Patowski showcases all kinds of Texas sounds recorded over the past century of recorded music. Genres include indigenous music, including western swing, hillbilly, TexMex, Tejano, Cajunto, swamp pop, Cajun, Zydeco, and much more.



Photo by Carlos Morales



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez



Photo by Carlos Morales

PERMIAN BASIN REPORTING

It never fails that an interesting story will emerge from the desert landscapes of the Permian Basin. Even after five years in West Texas, I'm still surprised by the people and places I come across while reporting.

There are two stories from this year that highlight this for me.

In the spring, I found myself in the tiny community of Toyah, which is located on the western edge of the oil patch. The town was divided over its drinking water. Even though local officials claimed it was safe – Toyah had been under a boil water notice for years.

Once I saw the condition of the community's water plant and spoke to concerned residents – it was clear this story needed to be told.

Months later, standing in the lobby of Midland's Centennial Library, I waited for a county official and their allies. They were coming to remove books they deemed inappropriate. Targeting books in the children's and teen section – works about the LGBTQ community and other titles that touched on sex education and race.

It doesn't matter if I'm parsing out the sad story of a small town, looking into censorship at libraries or whatever the situation – it's always a thrill to be surprised out in the field and experience something new while bringing stories to our listeners.

Mitch Borden, *reporter*

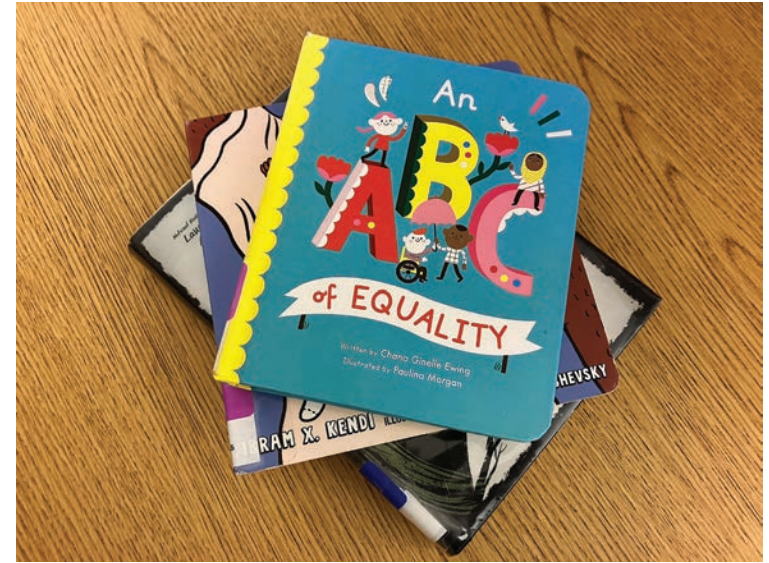


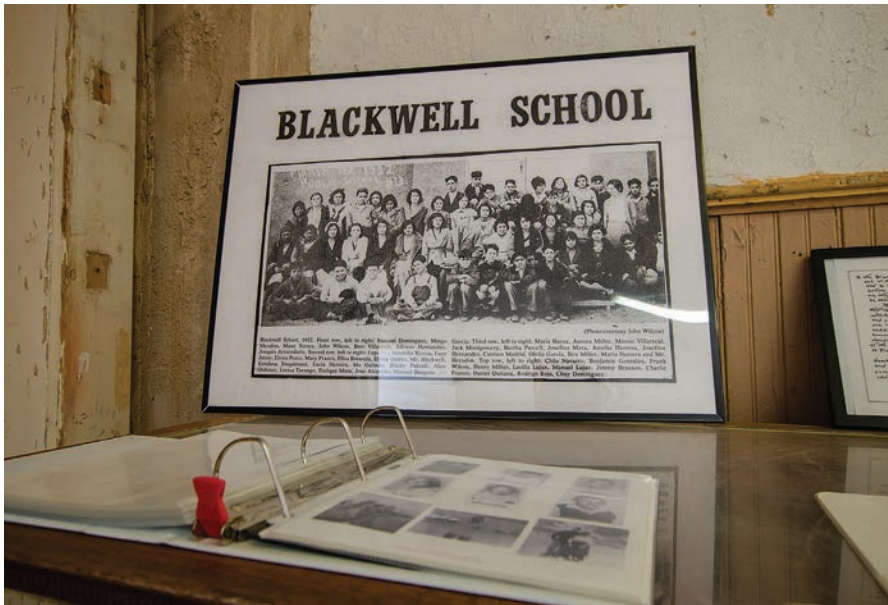
Photo by Mitch Borden



Photo by Mitch Borden

BIG BEND & BORDER REPORTING

Photo by Carlos Morales



This year, through in-depth reporting and poignant, thoughtful stories, the team of reporters and producers at Marfa Public Radio took our audience across the station's sprawling broadcast range.

At the start of the year, we highlighted stories celebrating the rich history of our border communities. In the spring, we created a series focusing on a small town in the Permian Basin that has struggled to access safe drinking water for years. Over the summer, we looked at how the iconic prickly pear cactus has inspired an alternative to fossil fuels. And then, we reported on the fight brewing over plans for a major natural gas pipeline in West Texas. But that wasn't all, Marfa Public Radio's work this year has also highlighted reproductive care issues, examined the natural

world of the Chihuahuan Desert and brought you *Caló* – a weekly segment focused on a unique border dialect.

And all this work, the journalism and story-telling you've come to expect of Marfa Public Radio, is simply part of our commitment to you. It's our mission to tell the stories of our wide region and amplify the voices of West Texas – and to do that with compassion and thoughtfulness.

Carlos Morales, *news director*

Photo by Carlos Morales



AWARDS RECEIVED IN 2023



Photo by Carlos Morales

In 2023, Marfa Public Radio was once again recognized by the Radio Television Digital News Association, receiving seven regional Edward R. Murrows including awards for excellence in innovation, sound and writing.

From the impact Texas' drought has had on ranchers to an uptick in earthquakes in the Permian Basin, the stories the station received awards for reflect the wide range of our region. Since Marfa Public Radio began entering the annual award awards competition in 2011, the station has received more than 70 Regional Edward R. Murrow Awards, and five National Edward R. Murrow awards.

MARFA PUBLIC RADIO PODCASTS



Marfa Public Radio Studios is a new initiative to deepen the station's commitment to telling stories, creating engagement opportunities, and training new voices. The Studios is dedicated to using old-school and new-school techniques to create public media that is not only relevant but speaks to the original mission of public media: "to enrich the human spirit."

The Studios builds on the station's legacy of being a beacon for storytelling and a space for audio innovation. Earlier initiatives included: Marfa Public Radio School, Transom Audio workshops, engagement programming like Love Drive and the Día de los Muertos on-air ofrenda, live storytelling events, block parties, *West Texas Wonders*, and visiting producers.

This season, our podcast offerings include *Marfa For Beginners*, *So Far From Care*, and *Marfa Public Radio Puts you to Sleep*.

The aim of *Marfa for Beginners* is to be like an album, to hit different notes of human experience: wonder, love, change, existential dread, loneliness, and generosity. In many ways, it is a love letter to Marfa, a place full of contradictions where the truth can be both beautiful and complicated. *Marfa for Beginners* is a tourism podcast for locals. Our hope is that if you live here, this podcast might make you laugh and cry. Maybe it will feel therapeutic.

What listeners are saying about *Marfa For Beginners*:

"I just wanted to say I'm greatly enjoying this podcast series and this new edition may be my favorite so far. The series inspired me to pick up one of the Boyd Elder shirts." – Joseph

"Great episode and great series! I have already referred several people who have asked 'what's so great about Marfa?' to it. Now I have to ask – what is Liz Rogers driving? My guess would be a mid-60's Ford convertible, but I need more information because she's blocking the center of the steering wheel in the photo. Cheers!" – Mac

"Love this!!" – Rena

"I freaking love Liz Rogers. Listening right now. 'that girl's like a porchlight to a Junebug...' I just read your message, and I'm so flattered and also I love what you're doing there. So I'm waving right back at you. Honestly, I just wish there were shows like ours ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. Hyper-local shows from rural places everywhere. I mean, urban's fine, too, but we already hear a lot from America's cities. We don't hear enough from small rural communities and I want a MILLION shows like ours. I love falling into these worlds." – Erica

"Amazing. This should be mandatory listening for anyone who wants to move here." – Sarah

Thank you to NPR National, The Current, and Poynter institute for featuring *Marfa For Beginners*.

Tired of tossing and turning at night, struggling to find the elusive land of dreams? Let our new podcast *Marfa Public Radio Puts You To Sleep*, Marfa Public Radio is literally never asleep. It operates 24/7 (except when lightning strikes) and there's so much that goes on behind the scenes to make this happen—fundraising, compliance, protocols, emergency response, maintenance... the list goes on and on.

Do you lay awake wondering what FCC compliance entails? Ever wondered what NPR's code of journalistic ethics involves for the newsroom? We may never be able to explain what it takes to operate the station, but we can put you to sleep trying to.

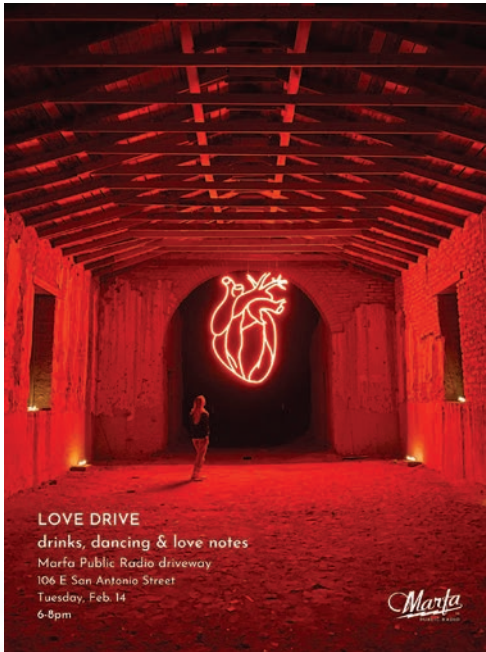
Living in a small town in West Texas can feel magical. And part of that magic is how isolated we are. But when it comes to accessing reproductive health-care, that remoteness can also be terrifying.

In the Big Bend, the idea of “choice” was complicated long before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. Out here, you can't legally get an abortion – but as recently as last year, depending on the day of the week, you also couldn't have a baby in a delivery room. *So Far From Care* explores the contradictions of living in Far West Texas, and how people decide when, how or if to become parents close to the border and far from the hospital, where you have a literal village to help you raise a child but daycare can be impossible to find.

These are stories about isolation that's not just physical – all the challenges we deal with in silence. But also, about how a place without options can become the site of community and care.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



At Marfa Public Radio, we pride ourselves on creating unique and meaningful opportunities for our community to come together. From our Love Drive, coinciding with Valentine's Day, where we share heartfelt messages over the airwaves and send handwritten postcards postmarked from the charming Valentine, Texas post office, to Mobile StoryCorps events that capture and celebrate the diverse narratives of our community, we are always striving to strengthen the bonds that make our region special.

One of our latest initiatives, the "I Am Thankful For You" campaign, allows individuals to submit dedications of appreciation. These expressions of gratitude are then shared with our community during a special Oldies Edition broadcast, creating a platform for acknowledging and celebrating the positive connections that weave through our lives.

These initiatives, born out of a deep commitment to community engagement, are at the heart of what makes Marfa Public Radio a cherished institution.



EVENTS

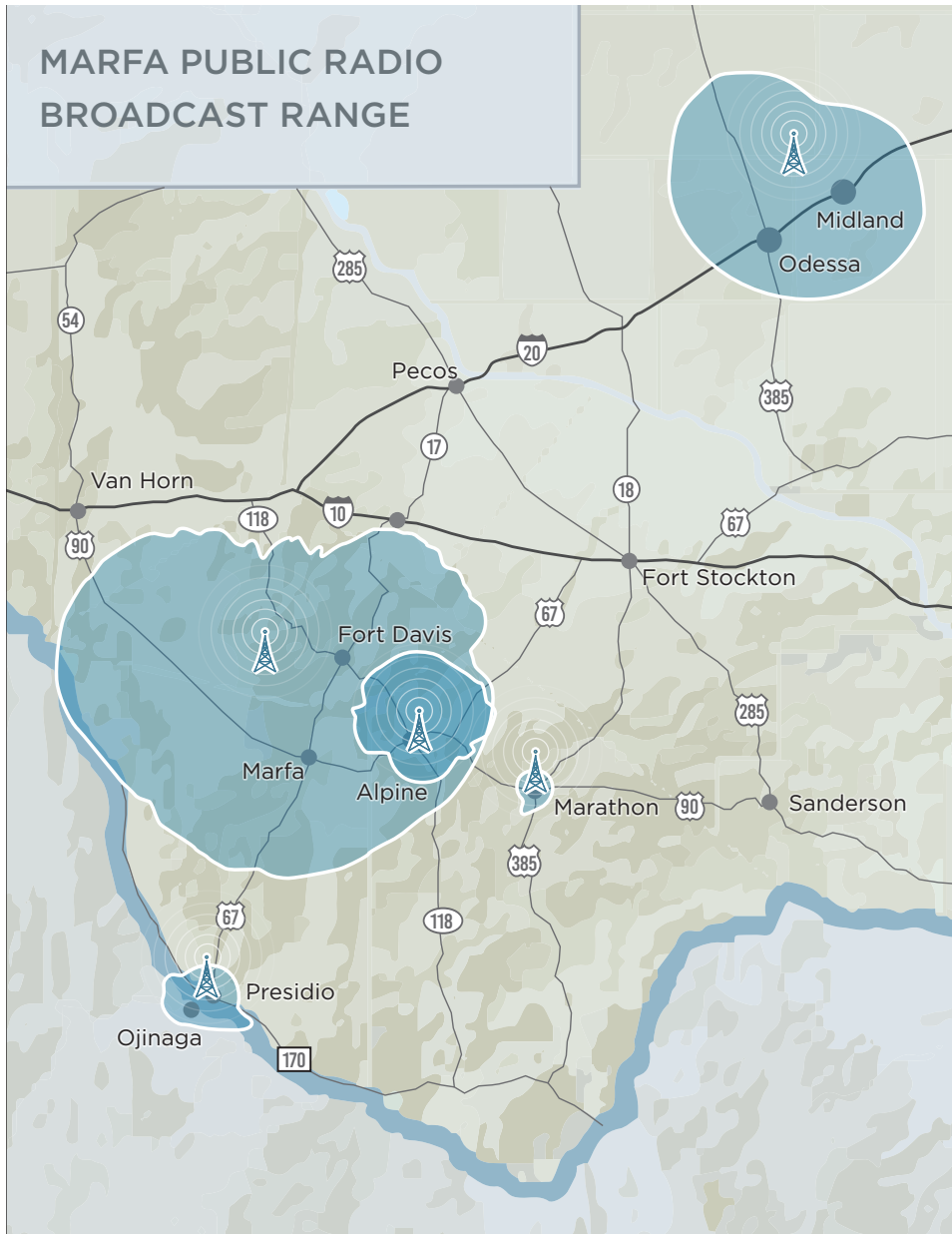


As we kicked off the new year, the spirit of West Texas came alive at our highly anticipated **Marfa Comes to Midland** gala! The festivities showcased the vibrant culture of West Texas, featuring local musicians and culinary delights from the Gage Hotel. It was a true celebration of community, highlighting the essence of our shared journey and the bonds that connect us.



All photos by Sarah M. Vasquez

LISTENERS



What listeners are saying about Marfa Public Radio!

"Love Marfa public radio!!"

– Laura in Midland, Texas

"Keep up the good work!"

– Sam in Odessa, Texas

"I donated in honor of Texas Music Hour of Power, destination radio for a wide, wide range, including my unmarked beach on the Left Coast."

– Stephen in Newhall, California

"Officer Tyler came out and helped me through a rough spot at BIBE. You're the only radio entertainment he gets for most of the day, so sending a thanks to him and a thanks to Marfa Public Radio for bringing cheer to his day."

– Jonathan in Katy, Texas

"Love my Marfa Public Radio peeps!!"

– Allison in Marfa, Texas

"I take Marfa Public Radio with me wherever I go."

– Krista in Santa Fe, New Mexico

"Thank you for being a clear voice for West Texas!"

– Julia in Midland, Texas

"For my money, I depend on KDKY Marathon for the best programming west of the Pecos."

– Paul in San Antonio, Texas

SUPPORT MARFA PUBLIC RADIO



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez

Become a monthly sustaining member and receive a thank you gift.
For more information, visit:
www.marfapublicradio.org/donate

MERCHANDISE

Bandana KRTS - Blue

Square Square Cow Socks

Trucker Hat

Marfa Public Radio Logo
Extra Large Tote Bag

Classic Grey Logo T-Shirt

Boyd Elder Designed
T-Shirt

Limited Edition
Roseland Klein T-Shirt

West Texas Wonders
T-Shirt

Filthmart Marfa Radio
T-Shirt

Limited Edition
Primo Como No! T-Shirt

As we navigate the airwaves of West Texas, we're reminded of the invaluable support that keeps Marfa Public Radio alive and thriving. Your commitment to sustaining quality programming and community connection through your donations has been the heart-beat of our station. Every donation, regardless of size, is a testament to the belief that community-driven radio is essential to our lives.



Make a donation today with the QR code above and ensure that Marfa Public Radio will continue to thrive for generations to come.



Photo by Sarah M. Vasquez