

# 2024 KOSU IMPACT REPORT



**"I have been a listener from childhood. As an adult, I am eternally grateful for the exposure to NPR that helped me grow into a better adult and citizen. Thank you for everything you've done and will continue to do."**

**Micah F. in Broken Arrow, OK**

# DEAR FRIENDS

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It was a year of great change and growth at KOSU. While we had been planning for some time, many opportunities came to fruition at the same time.

As so many sources of local news available to Oklahomans have continued to contract, we felt it was imperative to step in as part of our public service mission. We're not just the broadcasters of yesteryear. We live in and love Oklahoma, and we feel the urgency to innovate to create a news service to truly serve the state we love. That mission, with the support of our community backing us, drives us forward every day.

With your help, we created new information resources around state government, mental health and addiction in 2024. You also helped us expand Indigenous Affairs reporting, and you helped us make information available in short form video on social media.

All of these new journalists needed a place to work, so you also helped us move a radio station! In late 2024, KOSU cut the ribbon on a new facility that more than doubled the capacity of the newsroom and created space for new journalism collaborations.



**RACHEL HUBBARD**  
KOSU Executive Director

Let's continue building together. Oklahoma has lost nearly 75% of its local journalism over the last 20 years. We deserve better. Research continues to show that people who have access to local news feel more connected to the place they live. They're more likely to vote in local elections, more likely to have better health outcomes and more likely to be engaged.

With your thought leadership and financial contributions, you have helped us prove that there's a solution. We have the early seeds of success, but there is much work to do to help Oklahomans have access to information they need and deserve.

I'm looking forward to our partnership as we continue our work together. Onward.



## NEW STATE GOVERNMENT BEAT

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KOSU expanded coverage of Oklahoma government and the state capitol in 2024 with the help of a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This allowed KOSU to hire Lionel Ramos to cover state government and share his reporting with news outlets including other public radio stations, *The Oklahoman*, rural newspapers and others. Research shows journalists covering the statehouse help increase civic engagement and government transparency.

In his first year of reporting, Lionel reported dozens of stories ranging from the implementation of new immigration laws in Oklahoma to the rollout of a grocery tax cut and how it affected cities. The work is funded by a two-year grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and KOSU is fundraising to make the position permanent.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"I listen every day. KOSU helps teach me English."

**Jesus T. in Oklahoma City, OK**



## MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

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In July 2024, KOSU welcomed Sierra Pfeifer as a Report for America Corps member. Similar to Teach for America, Report for America is a national service organization that places emerging journalists in newsrooms across the country to report on under-covered issues. The program awards selected newsrooms a declining match of the reporter's salary over three years with the goal of generating sustainable local support.

KOSU applied to cover mental health and addiction because Oklahoma has among the highest rates in the country for mental health disorders. The most recent data available indicate more than a quarter of the state's population struggles with mental illness, and 16 percent of residents have a substance abuse disorder. Less than 20 percent of those needing services are receiving care. The gap has downstream effects on how the state delivers health care, education and correctional services.

In the initial months of this work, Sierra broke the story about how an obscure state law caused the unintended consequence of closing Oklahoma County's Social Services Department. She also covered practical stories, such as how people can access low barrier resources at a county health fair and solutions stories including one about how therapists are using Dungeons and Dragons to treat mental illness.

**"I love the programs, especially the Oklahoma Rock Show! It's programming that literally doesn't exist in non commercial formats, and my family and I thank you!"**

**Manish R. in Oklahoma City, OK**



## TULSA LOCAL NEWS INITIATIVE

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In December 2024, a new collaborative effort to expand local news access in Tulsa was announced. The Tulsa Local News Initiative is a project of the American Journalism Project that will launch a newsroom in Tulsa to increase the journalism available to Tulsans.

It also builds the capacity of existing newsrooms including KOSU. With funding from this project, KOSU has expanded Indigenous Affairs news coverage by hiring an additional reporter. Additional collaborative journalism will begin publishing in 2025.

### WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"KOSU continues to be the best source for news most relevant to Oklahomans, everyday. Thank you for giving voice to and highlighting matters such as education, Indigenous affairs, and agriculture."

**Katelyn R. in Oklahoma City, OK**



## WE MOVED A RADIO STATION!

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As KOSU's newsroom and local service started to grow, it became increasingly apparent that a larger and more flexible space was needed. In partnership with several significant supporters, we began looking for a new building that could be a dynamic space expanding beyond KOSU's on-air presence.

It would be a place where news, music, new ideas and community could meet. In 2023, we began renovation of the historic Farmers Union building on the west end of downtown Oklahoma City.

This new development was supported by significant gifts from Ann and Burns Hargis, Ferris O'Brien, Inasmuch Foundation, Dana and Larry Stone, the Kerr Foundation, Brent and Valerie Gooden, Royce and Kathy Caldron, the Chickasaw Nation, Bill and Becky Duckworth, P.B. Odom III and Kirkpatrick Foundation.

It includes collaborative journalism space, new studios for increased audio production and a converged studio space for KOSU and the Spy. The new facility officially opened in November 2024 and supports KOSU's existing service in Stillwater and Tulsa.



## BUS TOUR

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**KOSU is not just a news organization, we're a community partner.**

After more than a year of reporting inside the Osage Nation about the filming of *Killers of the Flower Moon*, we started discussing other opportunities with our partners and friends at *Osage News*.

Together, we decided to apply for a grant from the Oklahoma Humanities Council to host a tour of several historic sites important for context. The goal was to allow people to experience the Osage story by personally interacting with Osage elders and experts.

The tour sold out in just a few days, and in February 2024, we got onto a pair of buses with 100 of our new friends to tour several sites of historic importance in the Osage Nation. The day ended with a traditional dinner. We expected people would leave the day with more knowledge and context about a terrible era in Oklahoma's history.

It was surprising to see people volunteer for future events and the new friendships that developed. We also saw local people, including Osages, truly experience this history for the very first time.



## NEXT GENERATION OF JOURNALISTS

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KOSU started in 1955 as a student-run radio station, and today we remain committed to training the next generation of journalists through the Casey Gosnell Internship Program. In 2024 — with funding from the Gosnells, Inasmuch Foundation, Scripps Howard Fund and InternOSU — we hosted students from Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Maryland.

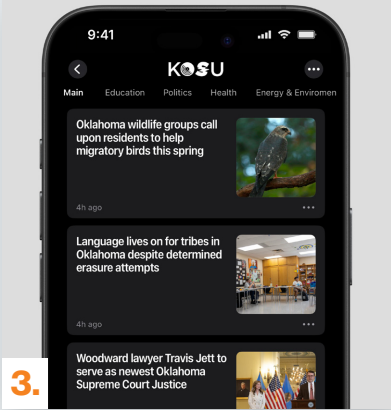
Cheyenne Leach, Luisa Clausen, Anusha Fathepure and Cait Kelley reported dozens of stories about OKC's homeless community, pedestrian safety on OSU's campus, the 2024 election cycle and more.

The young journalists gained experience in the field with veteran reporters and immersed themselves in our newsroom, learning how to write for radio, host a daily newscast and tell stories visually through Instagram and TikTok.



# AT A GLANCE

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## 1. EARLY MORNING, EVERY MORNING

Michael Cross celebrated 10 years of hosting Morning Edition at KOSU. That's 10 years of waking up at 2:30 a.m. without a single sick day.

## 3. APPLE NEWS

KOSU started publishing to Apple News, reaching new audiences with locally relevant fact-based information.

## 2. NPR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rachel Hubbard was elected to the NPR Board of Directors in February 2024. She became the first Oklahoman to join the governance board.

## 4. PUBLIC SAFETY

KOSU plays a critical role in public safety. We serve as the primary distributor of emergency alerts for the northeast corner of the state. In 2024, we distributed 242 alerts including tornado warnings, Amber alerts, flood warnings and fire evacuation warnings.

# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

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## JESSICA S. IN MIAMI, OK

"I love KOSU and stream or listen on the radio throughout the day while painting, working around the house, or driving. I enjoy all the programs from NPR and appreciate feeling connected to the state from my far northeast corner of Oklahoma"



## TIM D. IN ENID, OK

"I'm really proud of the expansion of local news coverage on KOSU. The more we can do, the better off we are."



## FRANK H. IN MIAMI, OK

"I'm constantly writing down the name of an Oklahoma musician I hear about."



## JORDAN S. IN MOORE, OK

"My friend showed me the Spy years ago, and now I listen to KOSU every time I'm in the car. I'm way more involved in politics and current events because I am so much more informed."



## SYLVIA A. IN OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

"I become more and more impressed as I see KOSU news reports appear on my phone news feed....Yours are timely, accurate, and pertain to Oklahoma! Thank you."

**"KOSU online has been one of my go-tos for independent, local journalism for several years. You have introduced me to so many great artists, and unearthed a whole world to the Oklahoma music scene I had no idea existed!"**

**Nathaniel H. in Edmond, OK**



## YOU MAKE IT ALL POSSIBLE!

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**In 2024, you and thousands of others paid it forward and made news, information and music from KOSU available without a paywall for people across Oklahoma.**

More than half of KOSU's budget comes from our local community members. The most common way people give monthly and yearly financial gifts, but there are many different ways to support KOSU, such as:

- including KOSU in your will and estate plans
- making a gift through a donor-advised fund
- donating your old car, truck or motorcycle
- underwriting with KOSU through your business
- enrolling your small business in the KOSU Business Circle

If you want to learn about how to make a transformational gift large enough to have a profound and lasting effect on KOSU, please reach out to Jenny Mae Harms at [jennymae@kosu.org](mailto:jennymae@kosu.org) or by phone at 405-896-4330.

Thank you for making a difference!