

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

THE  CURRENT

*Celebrating 5 years of in-depth,  
independent journalism for Coastal Georgia*



## FROM THE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

We know 2024 was a difficult year, from the pinch in our pocketbooks to threats to public safety, our environment and our democracy. Yet we at *The Current* ended the year with renewed determination and pride in our mission: publishing fact-based local accountability journalism that empowers Coastal Georgians to become more civically engaged.

Our staff size grew last year — we hired a full-time reporter in Glynn County as well as a new chief revenue officer — and our readership expanded as well, especially in one of our key demographics: young adults and first-time voters.

We started publishing a fifth daily newsletter, one that focuses on government accountability and offers the only centralized calendar of public meetings in our part of the state. We launched an event series to bring nationally recognized authors to our university students. We mentored student journalists who want to take up the calling of watchdog reporting. And of course we investigated wrongdoing among our local leaders and employers — reporting that the Society of Professional Journalists cited when awarding *The Current* its award for best digital news outlet in the Southeastern United States.

At a time when legacy media outlets continue to shrink, our revenue grew. More of our fellow Georgians donated to support our work, believing like we do, that trustworthy, nonpartisan facts are a basic necessity in these uncertain times.

As *The Current* looks forward to its fifth anniversary this fall, we have a new strategic business plan and expansion goals. We'll be showing up to more community events, making more phone calls to government officials and insiders to explain more complex policies and problems. And, as always, we'll tell our readers transparently and comprehensively what we learn — and we will correct the record when we have made a mistake.

As you move through the year, I hope you will take inspiration from the impact that we have had locally in Coastal Georgia and in the state that you can read about in the following pages. And I hope you will be empowered by the example of so many of our neighbors helping to build a better society for all Georgians. The business leaders and individuals in Glynn County trying to solve housing insecurity; the public servants in Liberty County rolling up their shirt sleeves to tackle fiscal challenges and the residents of Savannah defending civic treasures like Forsyth Park.

With your ongoing support, we will continue uncovering and examining problems, holding our leaders accountable and finding solutions to our shared problems.

Thank you for your trust,

**Margaret Coker**  
Editor in Chief



## ABOUT THE CURRENT

Launched in 2020, *The Current* is an independent nonprofit news organization that provides trustworthy journalism without bias, fear or favor, with the goal of empowering the communities of Coastal Georgia to solve our shared problems.

We believe that journalism is a public service and a key pillar of a healthy democracy by illuminating public threats and fostering a better society built on trustworthy facts.

### OUR STORIES ARE YOUR STORIES

We listen. We research. We provide data-based stories on issues that affect all our local communities, regardless of demographic or socioeconomic background. We ask hard questions and go behind the scenes to report important stories, without fear or favor.

We seek to be a catalyst for improving the quality of life for all Coastal Georgians through our coverage of health and education, public safety, social issues and the environment.

Now, five years after our launch, we are proud to renew a commitment to our mission.

“

*We continue to be impressed by the leadership you are showing in the local media sphere. We know that these efforts will be more essential than ever, and we are proud to be your partner.”*

**Elise Eplan**

Advisor, Atticus Fund

Learn more at [thecurrentga.org](https://thecurrentga.org)



## OUR TEAM

**Margaret Coker**, Editor in Chief

**Susan Catron**, Managing Editor

**Jeffrey Woolverton**, Chief Revenue Officer

**Mary Landers**, Environment Reporter

**Jake Shore**, Public Safety Reporter

**Robin Kemp**, Accountability Reporter, Liberty County

**Jabari Gibbs**, Accountability Reporter, Glynn County

**Maggie Lee**, Data Reporter

**Sarah Harwell**, Social Media Editor

**Craig Nelson**, Politics Reporter

**Justin Taylor**, Visual Journalist





## 2024 JOURNALISM FELLOWS



Julia  
Gentin



Catherine  
Goodman



Gillian  
Goodman



Brianna  
Leonard



Amira  
McKee



Serra  
Sowers



## 2024 TOP STORIES & IMPACT



### ENVIRONMENT

**Environment Reporter Mary Landers’ story,** [“Stopping Sapelo zoning referendum costs McIntosh County more than holding it,”](#) is part of the continuing coverage of the Hogg Hummock community on Sapelo Island, Georgia, and the community’s battle for civil rights with local government. Mary’s coverage has revealed potential violations of public access laws by the McIntosh County Board of Commissioners, information that has empowered citizens to be civically engaged in a referendum to repeal that zoning.



**Impact:** As a result of Mary’s reporting, more than 1,800 citizens signed a petition and over 800 people voted early on the referendum. Residents of McIntosh County await the Georgia Supreme Court’s case brought by the commissioners to halt the election.

“

*Thanks for your ongoing coverage of events on Sapelo Island. I’ve been using your reporting in class discussions. I appreciate your work!”*

**John R. Bennett**  
University Professor in Savannah

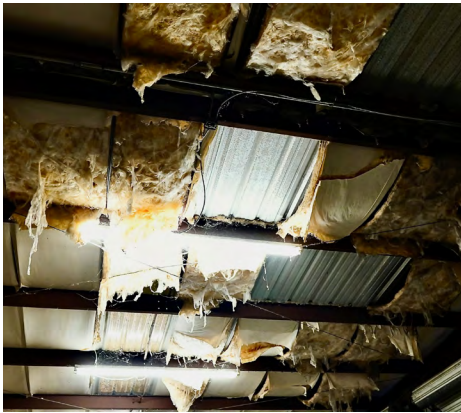
### TRUSTED JOURNALISM

*The Current* is Georgia’s first newsroom to join [The Trust Project](#) after a rigorous review of our journalistic standards. This international consortium of over 300 news organizations is committed to responsible journalism through transparency, inclusion and fairness.



**ACCOUNTABILITY – LIBERTY COUNTY**

**Accountability Reporter Robin Kemp’s story, “Midway’s assistant fire chief: ‘Someone could die,’”** launched a series that exposed the lack of fire protection in Midway, Georgia. Robin’s reporting of dangerous conditions at the fire station — including inadequate safety gear for firefighters — informed city residents of increased costs for fire insurance or lost coverage due to poor relations between elected officials and firefighters.



**Impact:** As a result of Robin’s reporting, Georgia state fire regulators suspended Midway’s fire certificate for noncompliance. This ongoing story is forcing government officials to bring Midway’s fire protection up to standards.

“

*I believe in the coming years it will be the smaller news providers that will help us move forward with full truth in reporting as a community and as a nation. Thank you for all that everyone does at The Current.”*

**Susan Arnett**, reader and supporter of *The Current*



## ACCOUNTABILITY – GLYNN COUNTY

**Accountability Reporter Jabari Gibbs’ story,** [“Brunswick daycare closes permanently after state investigation finds 11 rule violations,”](#) uncovered a litany



of violations for which the daycare was responsible, including staff disorganization and a lack of training in CPR appropriate for children. Unfortunately, these violations and other incidents led to a toddler’s tragic death.

**Impact:** As a result of Jabari’s reporting, Georgia State Rep. Rick Townsend sponsored a bill to mandate all early learning centers to have personnel trained in CPR for children.

“

*Strong, independent, nonpartisan journalism has never been more important than it is today, especially in reporting about environmental issues and other Coastal Georgia concerns. Kudos to The Current’s dedication to transparency, excellence and hard work.”*

**Emily Ellison**

Executive Director at St. Simons Land Trust



## DATA REPORTING



**Data Reporter Maggie Lee’s story,**

[“Georgia voter cancellation portal requires second round of security fixes,”](#) uncovered how a quick fix of a security flaw in Georgia’s new voter cancellation web portal was inadequate; the fix was flawed as well. Maggie’s story — made possible because *The Current* has a data reporter — highlighted the technical details of the problem, including technical interviews with Georgia state staff.



“

*“[Fast-tracking Injustice]” was truly one of the best pieces of investigative and data journalism, archival work and writing I have read in a very, very long time. This is a master class.”*

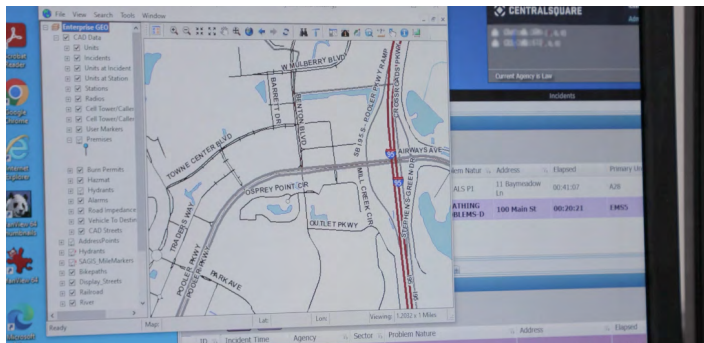
**Justin Seitz**

Advisor, Permanent Record Research Inc.

**Impact:** As a result of Maggie’s reporting, it was revealed the state is ill equipped to test the technical work of its contractors. Common Cause, a watchdog group in Washington, D.C., cited Maggie’s reporting in a letter to the state demanding the portal be removed.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Public Safety Reporter Jake Shore's story, "Software problem sends Chatham ambulances to Google Maps for emergency calls,"** highlighted how over 2,000 addresses were improperly mapped on Chatham County's ambulance system after a \$6 million upgrade to the county's emergency system software. The glitch caused ambulances to get lost on emergency calls and endangered the public.



**Impact:** As a result of Jake's reporting, a series was sparked which examined Chatham County's emergency preparedness. Soon after, Chatham County officials announced they had fixed the issue of improper addresses in the county's emergency system software.

“

*In a media landscape filled with sensationalism, The Current provides unbiased, investigative journalism that our community desperately needs. Traditional media can't do this anymore. I proudly support The Current because it keeps Savannah informed, accountable and strong.”*

**Kevin Dewalt**

Reader and supporter of *The Current*



**FELLOWSHIP**

**Journalism Fellow Amira McKee's story, "Worker injuries mount as giant Hyundai project nears completion,"** shed light on the cost to workers of the rapid construction of the Hyundai EV plant outside of Savannah. Amira's exposé revealed the extent of worker injuries at Georgia's largest economic development project and how Hyundai affiliates were not following federal safety laws about reporting these tragedies.

“

*We have been reading The Current for a couple of years. It is so refreshing to have fair, detailed and informative news.”*

**Elizabeth & Matt Sundstrom**

Readers and supporters of *The Current*

**Impact:** As a result of Amira's reporting, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) began investigating an additional Hyundai affiliate, Glovis EV Logistics America, along with two subcontractors at the Hyundai Metaplant.

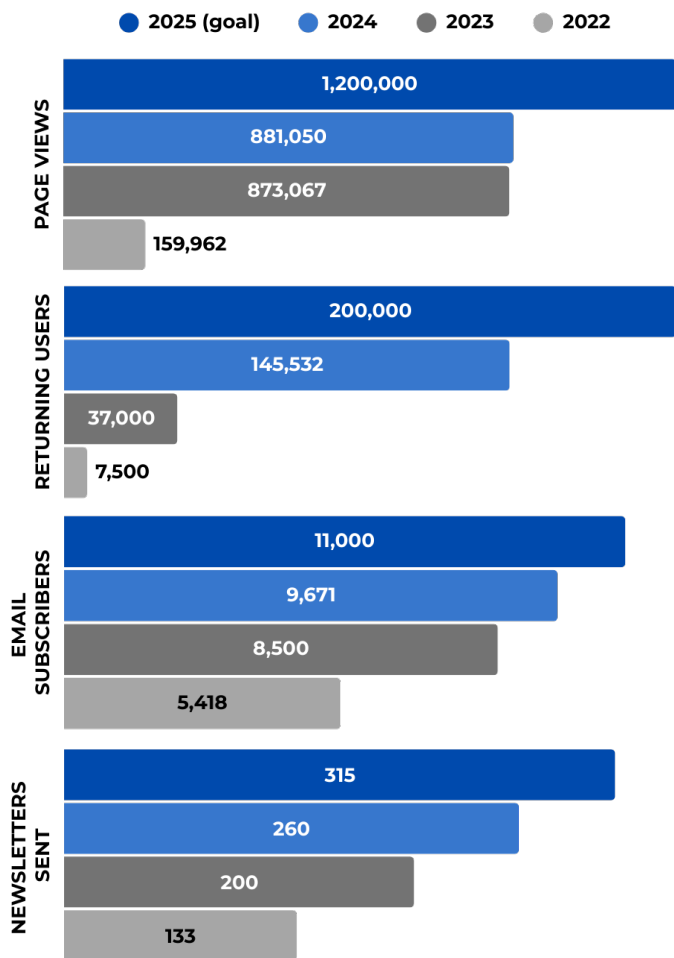
# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## AWARDS

### Society of Professional Journalists: Best Digital Reporting

In July 2024, *The Current* won the prestigious Green Eyeshade Award from SPJ for the best story published by a digital newsroom in the Southeast. The award cited [“The Title Pawn Trap,”](#) an investigative reporting series by Margaret Coker, in partnership with Joel Jacobs and Mollie Simon of *ProPublica*.

“This is quite an accomplishment,” said Coker. “It shows that the quality of *The Current’s* in-depth public service journalism rivals the reporting of any larger or better-funded news brand in the region.”



## AUDIENCE GROWTH

Since our launch in 2020, *The Current* has grown to become among the most read online news sources in the 15 counties that comprise Georgia’s First Congressional District.

*The Current* publishes its data-driven journalism on multiple platforms:

- Our website
- Social media
- Five weekly newsletters
- Text-based publishing

*The Current* has an engaged readership across Coastal Georgia that mirrors our diverse communities. **Just over 30%** are people of color, **a quarter** are ages 18-34 and **80%** are under age 55, illustrating how we are building a new generation of news consumers.



## PUBLISHING PARTNERS

*The Current* works with local and national newsroom partners to increase the reach of our reporting and share their quality stories with our audience.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

*The Current's* brand as a trusted news site delivering in-depth, independent news is reflected by our strong community partnerships and quarterly event series.



## NEW NATIONAL PARTNER

In November 2024, *The Current* received a transformational grant from the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#). The funding — \$400,000 over three years — will help strengthen *The Current's* mission of publishing in-depth, independent journalism that empowers Georgia's diverse communities to become more civically engaged.

MacArthur  
Foundation



## NEW TEAM MEMBERS



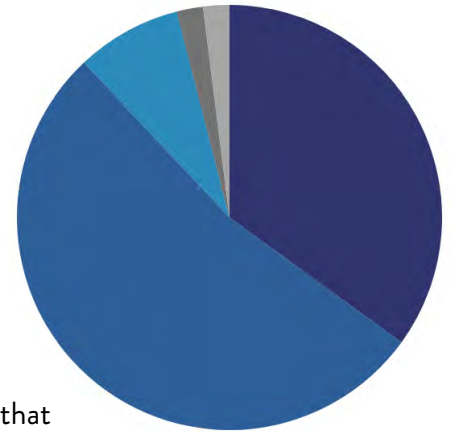
In 2024, *The Current* hired **Jabari Gibbs** as an accountability reporter for Glynn County. Originally from Atlanta, Jabari is a graduate of Georgia Southern University. At Georgia Southern, he majored in communications and served as the editor-in-chief for *The George-Anne Inkwell*. His investigative pieces have led to change at the university. Jabari was a 2023 summer fellow at *The Current*, sponsored by the Emma Bowen Foundation.



Also in 2024, *The Current* hired **Jeffrey Woolverton** as chief revenue officer. Previously, Jeffrey held senior roles at Atlanta-based Boys & Girls Clubs of America, where he led a team that doubled major gifts over two years by raising more than \$200 million. In 2020, Jeffrey worked at the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN) as Philanthropy Director, where he increased fundraising capacity across a network of over 300 news organizations.

# 2024 FINANCIAL PROFILE

The Current’s donors reflect the diversity of our readers and the trust our community places in our journalism. In 2024, our revenue breakdown included: 35% from **foundations**; 53% from **individual donors**; 8% from **organizations**; 2% from **corporations**; and 2% from **earned revenue**



In 2024, *The Current* received gifts from 732 individual donors. This is a 10% increase from 2023 (665 donors) and a 316% increase from our launch year in 2020 (176 donors). In addition, 416 donors from 2023 repeated their gifts in 2024 – a retention rate of 63%. [The Fundraising Effectiveness Project](#) reports that the average donor retention rate across the nonprofit sector is around 40-45%.

REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Foundation grants	\$290,000	Labor and benefits	\$825,039
Major gifts (\$5,000 and above)	\$277,785	Marketing	\$24,148
Annual gifts (less than \$5,000)	\$159,081	Contractors	\$16,123
Organizations	\$68,152	IT/publishing	\$15,870
Corporations	\$20,000	Lease	\$12,342
Other income	\$16,257	Office/business	\$12,083
Total revenue *	\$831,275 (vs. \$763,023 in 2023)	Events	\$7,491
		Insurance	\$6,418
		Travel	\$5,474
		Total expenses	\$924,988 (vs. \$770,926 in 2023)

\* At the end of 2024, *The Current* had more than 6 months of operating funds on hand as cash reserves.

## DONORS

The following list contains all donors who gave \$5,000 or more in 2024 (in alphabetical order).

- |                            |                                       |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Atticus Fund               | Fund for Investigative Journalism     | Pamela Rhoads Allen             |
| Bobolink Foundation        | Griffiths Family Fund                 | ProPublica                      |
| Chatham Foundation         | Jacqueline & Stephen Rabinowitz       | R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation |
| D.L. Webster Fund          | James Butler                          | Report for America              |
| David & Jeanne Paddison    | Jennifer Shearer                      | Sapelo Foundation               |
| Deborah & Daniel Luginbuhl | MacArthur Foundation                  | Scott & Meredith Belford        |
| Drs. Robert & Sandra Hodge | McDowell-Levin Charitable Giving Fund | SNF Holding Company             |
| Emerson Collective         | Miami Foundation                      | Solomons Fund                   |

Special thanks to these donors who made our new Glynn County reporter possible in 2024:

- |                                |                          |                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Annette Wheeler & Daniel Kelly | Leslie & Philip Graitcer | Susan & Don Myers    |
| Janine & Jonathan Weller       | Robin & Hyde Post        | Susan & Woody Hunter |

When it comes to our donors, *The Current* is committed to full transparency. For a full list of our donors and sponsors visit [thecurrentga.org/our-supporters](https://thecurrentga.org/our-supporters)

# 2025 STRATEGIC GOALS

## OUR GROWTH PLAN

In November 2024, *The Current's* leadership engaged in planning sessions to assess our progress and analyze opportunities for strategic growth. These sessions included reviews of organizational historical data and a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.

As a result of our planning sessions — to celebrate our 5th anniversary of in-depth, independent journalism for Coastal Georgia — *The Current's* 2025 strategic goals include:



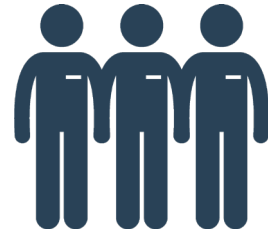
### READERS

Build a new generation of news consumers



### REPORTERS

Enhance our reputation for accountability reporting



### EARLY CAREERS

Become a destination for diverse early-career journalists



### REVENUE

Demonstrate sustainability in diverse revenue streams



### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Become an essential news source for civically engaged Coastal Georgians

## OUR SUCCESS

Aligned with our strategic growth, *The Current* will hire more reporters to expand our storytelling, hire a copy editor to handle the growing work and double our revenue while sustainably growing a new generation of civically engaged readers.



*At The Current, we are committed to focusing on the news and information needs of Coastal Georgians. We are grateful to have attracted an engaged and growing audience since our launch five years ago. As we progress, we will remain dedicated to publishing accountability journalism rooted in fact and intended to provide citizens with the information they need to make informed decisions about their lives and communities.”*

**Hyde Post**, Board Chair for *The Current*

## THE CURRENT'S 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Hyde Post, Chair

Hyde worked for 35 years in journalism, including as vice president, internet for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, where projects he edited and/or directed included the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting (1988) and the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting (1993). He lives on St. Simons Island.

### Dusty Church, Vice Chair

Dusty received a BA degree in Political Science from UCLA. He also serves on the board of First City Pride Center and Visit Savannah. He lives in Savannah.

### Pamela Rhoads Allen, Secretary

Pam has a JD degree from Walter F. George School of Law, Mercer University. She retired as a partner in the law firm Oliver Maner LLP, where she specialized in public finance. She lives in Savannah.

### Cathy Hill, Treasurer

Cathy worked for 33 years as an executive with Georgia Power, a Southern Company. She holds an MBA and a Doctor of Business Administration from Georgia State University. She lives in McDonough.

### Rodney Gibbs

Rodney is a journalism innovator dedicated to strengthening local news. As Head of Product and Audience at The National Trust for Local News, he helps newsrooms in rural and suburban communities enhance their digital reach and develop new revenue. He lives in Atlanta.



### Elijah 'Bobby' Henderson

Bobby, an electrical maintenance and reliability engineer with GP Cellulose, is a co-founder of A Better Glynn (ABG), a nonprofit focused on justice policy leadership development and civic engagement. He lives in Brunswick.

### Alfred D. McGuire, Jr.

A lifelong educator, Alfred serves as principal of Woodville-Tompkins Technical and Career High School. He was named the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System's 2024-25 Principal of the Year. He lives in Savannah.

### Johno Morisano

Johno is the co-founder of *The Current* and co-owner of The Grey, a community-minded restaurant in Savannah. A graduate of Pace University in New York City, Johno spent 25 years working across the entertainment, media, technology and art landscapes. He lives in Savannah.

### David Paddison

David is president of Sterling Seacrest Pritchard, a privately held insurance brokerage and employee benefits consulting firm. He lives in Savannah.

### Jennifer Shearer

Jennifer is a partner with Ernst & Young who has devoted significant volunteer efforts to her adopted home of Savannah. She also sits on the board of Forsyth Farmers' Market.



# INVEST IN THE CURRENT

## JOIN US

You can help create more stories that impact our communities in Coastal Georgia.

### DONATE

Make a secure donation online.  
[thecurrentga.org/support-our-publication](https://thecurrentga.org/support-our-publication)

Mail a check to our offices.  
The Current GA  
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Savannah GA 31412

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