

Greece History

History of Jazz90.1 WGMC-FM

by Rob Linton, M.Ed.

Did you know that one of the nation's last 24/7/365 public jazz radio stations resides in Greece, New York? Jazz90.1 WGMC-FM has been an important part of the town's history since 1971, providing jazz, blues and big band music, community events, concerts, public service programming, and instructional opportunities for students.

In 1971, The Greece Central School District sought out community involvement in the establishment of a community FM radio station. On August 31, 1971, the Greece Central School District Board of Education approved the concept of launching a community radio station and the process to apply for a FCC license began.

On November 1, 1973, 90.1 WGMC went on the air for the first time. Broadcast hours for the first ten weeks of operation were 2:30 p.m. – 7 p.m., and on Monday December 17, 1973, WGMC expanded its hours to run from 12 – 7 p.m. During the early years, the station was run mainly by students, under the direction of faculty advisors at Greece Athena High School. Community members were also able to host programs on the station during school breaks, evenings, and weekends. At just 10 watts of broadcast power, WGMC was heard only within the immediate Greece area. The station broadcasted Greece Town Board meetings, Board of Education meetings, and more.

Over the years, WGMC-FM – now called Jazz90.1 – has seen significant growth moving to 2,050 watts, then eventually to 15,000 watts of power after an extensive multi-year fundraising effort in the early 2000s. The station does not receive any funding from the Greece Central School District, however the license for WGMC-FM remains under the school district and is housed at Greece Olympia.

Jazz90.1 is one of the last full-time community jazz radio stations left in the United States; it relies solely on donations from listeners and area businesses. The station will celebrate 47 years on the air in November and continues providing its listeners unique local programming such as the Live Studio Concert Series, Greece Olympia Jazz Radio Hour, and more. Jazz90.1 prides itself on also providing great learning opportunities for Greece students who wish to pursue careers in media and broadcasting. Staff of Jazz90.1 work hand in hand with district teachers and leaders, giving Greece students a one of a kind learning opportunity, both behind the scenes and on the air.

At Jazz90.1, they believe that jazz is a living music. Half of their broadcast hours are focused on current artists who are committed to moving the music forward. Jazz90.1 plays more new music than any radio station in the U.S., but also offers a heaping portion of the classics, like Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Wayne Shorter, and many more.

Jazz90.1 is also an important outlet for music and voices that don't make it onto commercial radio. Their longest-running show is The Polka Bandstand Show heard every Saturday from 10 a.m. – noon. The station also features the Lithuanian-language Dainos Aidai and the German Radio Program.

More information can be found at www.jazz901.org.



Students work on the air on WGMC in the early 1970's at Greece Athena High School

