

Jacksonville Rides ‘Fully Local’

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WJXT Jacksonville (Fla.) chief Bob Ellis doesn't like the word independent. "It's kind of my pet peeve," says the GM, who has been with the station five years. "I don't use the word independent. I call us fully local."

The "fully local" concept permeates the station's TV and multiplatform offerings. With more than nine hours of news daily and 57 hours per week, WJXT, which separated from CBS more than 10 years ago, has ample airtime to cover the community in depth.

The station last February launched the "Positively Jax" campaign, celebrating a monthly theme in the community that is branded across all WJXT properties.

In April, they held a shredder day, where locals could bring unwanted documents in to dispose of. More than 4,000 cars came through the WJXT parking lot that day, says Ellis, shredding more than 184,000 tons of paper.

"It's a giant community service," Emily Barr, president and CEO of WJXT owner Post-Newsweek, says of Positively Jax. "They get thousands of people showing up. It's amazing and driven very much by what the needs of the community are."

WJXT held a canned food drive in conjunction with the shredder event that elicited a similar response in Jacksonville, which Barr describes as a "big small town." The station hands out an award to a community member, business or organization each month as part of the Positively Jax campaign.

At WJXT, multiplatform means more than just second and third screens. "We're the preeminent news source in Jacksonville, and the folks consume it the way they want to consume it. And we approach it from that way," says Ellis, likening multiplatform news consumption to drinking different-sized containers of a soft drink.

One of the ways they do that is by inviting community members in to experience the station's day-to-day operations first-hand. "We'll recruit them and ask them to join us because the best way to understand what the community wants and needs from local news is to ask them," says Ellis.

For Ellis, success doesn't come from one event or person. "The people who work here collectively think of this as Jacksonville's TV station," he says.

