

2024-2025 IMPACT REPORT



THANK YOU FOR MAKING LOCAL NEWS A PRIORITY

Growth has been a consistent theme over the past year at Bay City News Foundation, and we are proud to report how much positive impact that has meant for our readers and the communities we serve.

Each of the four pillars of our mission have advanced significantly:

Filling the gaps. We expanded into a 13th county by merging with The Mendocino Voice, bolstering a small digital outlet and providing more critical information about local government, emergency preparation and cultural touchstones to readers. We now run both LocalNewsMatters.org and MendoVoice.com.

Partnering with others. As a partner newsroom of the California Local News Fellowship program, we brought on three emerging journalists who have helped amplify rural, environmental and criminal reform issues.

Creating pathways. Over the past year, we've provided paid summer internships to 18 college students, who gained fundamental journalism skills and published articles on important topics like lead abatement and immigrant farmworker communities. Since our launch in 2018, more than 50 aspiring journalists have completed our program. We also became the official fiscal sponsor of the Contra Costa Youth Journalism program, which trains high school students from underserved school districts.

Embracing technology. We received national recognition from the Local Media Association for our ambitious use of AI during the 2024 election, which was one of four AI experiments completed during the year.

Our hybrid model works. Combining a legacy newswire that serves dozens of media outlets in the region with a public-service nonprofit has built our sustainability and resulted in more reporting, more readers and more community impact.

Thank you for your continued support,



Katherine Ann Rowlands
Founder and Executive Director,
Bay City News Foundation

COMMUNITY IMPACTS



ELECTION PROJECTS

With support from Reynolds Journalism Institute and American Press Institute, our small-but-mighty team launched two significant voter-connection projects. The first used AI to scrape election results data across all 13 counties — a project we are continuing to iterate on in 2025. The other started a TikTok account from scratch, providing voter information and political conversations in an effort to engage younger voters.

“News organizations can take this playbook and build something that serves the needs of their own audiences,” said Randy Picht, RJJ executive director. “This is a real, tested strategy that has already made positive impacts in the Bay Area, and I look forward to seeing its influence spread.”



CONTRA COSTA YOUTH JOURNALISM

BCNF is now the official fiscal sponsor of the Contra Costa Youth Journalism program, which began in January 2024 as a collaboration among news industry veterans to offer journalism training to students from underserved school districts in Contra Costa County. Initially a collaborator, BCNF has played a key role in the program’s growth into a full-fledged program. Heading into this school year, CCYJ will run as a yearlong program, serving at least 12 students.

“CCYJ reminds me that my voice has power, and I can use that power to share the lesser-known, but equally important, stories about people in my community.” — Loujain Habibi, high school journalist.



RADIO PARTNERSHIPS

BCNF brought our local reporting to the airwaves with two new radio partnerships. Through a first-of-its-kind collaboration with Radio Sausalito, reporters Ruth Dusseault and Leslie Katz debuted two weekly shows: Local News Matters, a roundup of key Bay Area stories, and Bay City Beat, a curated guide to arts and cultural events. Meanwhile, The Mendocino Voice teamed up with NPR-affiliate KZYX Radio to expand local news in Mendocino County.

These radio partnerships have allowed us to engage new audiences in Mendocino and Marin counties. In 2025, we are working to deepen those relationships and build our impact through these programs.

PUBLIC SERVICE JOURNALISM

A BATTLE FOR TRUTH



Bay City News/Local News Matters reporter Joe Dworetzky doggedly pursued public records in his series on homelessness in San Francisco and was thwarted by city bureaucrats at nearly every turn. He pursued the case with the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force and received a unanimous ruling in favor of Bay City News. The underlying public information kept by public agencies is critical to in-depth and investigative reporting.

REPORTING FROM THE INSIDE



Since joining as a California Local News fellow in January 2024, incarcerated journalist Steve Brooks has provided powerful firsthand reporting on prison life for BCNF's Inside/Out section on Local News Matters, our free public-facing news site. His coverage explores rehabilitation, education and policy impacts within California's prison system, offering rare insights into the experiences of those behind bars.

JOURNALISM AWARDS



BCNF earned top recognition for outstanding journalism, community engagement and our experiments with technology. The SF Press Club honored us with top journalism awards, including three 1st place wins for investigative reporting, profile writing and editorial cartooning. Local Media Association recognized our community engagement work in Stockton and our use of AI in the 2024 election.

CAPTURING OUR IMPACT: RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

We track our reporting impacts daily, and we are proud to report that over the last year, our work sparked policy discussions, shaped local debates and received recognition from key stakeholders, including government agencies, media outlets and advocacy groups.

Our journalism has prompted responses from policymakers. The mayor of Antioch initiated talks to save an Amtrak station after our coverage of a protest. A San Jose official tracked a bill's progress after it was highlighted in our reporting. Community voices were amplified, with opponents of San Francisco's West Portal traffic plan crediting our coverage for slowing the process and organizers of an ICE strike praising our portrayal of detention's impact on families.

Education and media institutions have also taken note—teachers, school districts and symposium speakers have cited our work, and major outlets like ABC7, KTVU and KPIX have used our reporting in their coverage. Our stories have gained extended reach by being featured or reshared by Wikipedia, the ACLU and BallotReady.



INTERNSHIPS & MENTORING



SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Each year, we offer paid college-level internships, hands-on newsroom experience and one-on-one mentorship to up to 12 aspiring journalists. Our interns take on daily assignments, sharpen their reporting skills and build strong portfolios to launch their careers.

As a capstone to their summer, each intern produces an in-depth project or story tackling critical issues in the 13 counties we cover from Mendocino to Monterey. Our 2025 summer interns are still hard at work on their capstones, but the work from our 2024 cohort helped uncover disparities in voter turnout, gaps in food security, unspent environmental cleanup funds and more.

CHECK OUT
THEIR WORK



“My internship at BCNF was truly life-changing. This is a newsroom that genuinely values young journalists, not just with words, but with trust, mentorship and hands-on experience. I was treated as an equal, encouraged to bring creative ideas forward and supported in turning them into real contributions. This internship was unlike any I have been a part of. BCNF isn’t afraid to experiment or evolve, and being part of such a forward-thinking team deepened my commitment to the field and opened my eyes to what journalism can be when it embraces change.”

Ciara Zavala, 2024 Intern
Current Impact & Digital Product Manager

WHAT'S NEXT

GRANT-FUNDED INITIATIVES

TRUSTING NEWS COHORT

BCNF was selected to be part of a cohort focusing on building trust with audiences. Our project features an AI podcast and transcript experiment that repurposes our journalism into engaging formats. During the cohort, we focused on transparency through disclosures and community engagement surveys.

LMA LAB FOR JOURNALISM FUNDING

Through the "Sustaining Rural Voices: A Fundraising-Driven Journalism Initiative," BCNF is working on strengthening its fundraising strategies to support a dedicated reporter to cover underserved rural Mendocino County.

GOOGLE NEWS INITIATIVE AI LAB

In partnership with Blue Engine, this six-month AI lab will extend our podcast project with a focus on business sustainability and increasing memberships.

RURAL NEWS NETWORK PARTNERSHIP

As part of a national reporting series team, we reported on Mendocino County's workforce development programs and how they are adapting to the clean energy transition.

OUR LATEST FEATURES

Bay City Books



Local News Matters' new monthly newsletter covering the literary world, including local authors, events and publishing trends.

SIGN UP FOR THE
NEWSLETTER



A dedicated wine and agritourism section on The Mendocino Voice, featuring industry insights, event coverage, and local storytelling.

CHECK OUT THE
NEW SECTION



TRAILBLAZERS



A spotlight on women making a difference in their communities, featuring in-depth profiles and inspiring stories.

READ ABOUT THE
TRAILBLAZERS



OUR SUPPORTERS

SUPPORTERS OF OUR WORK

Bay City News Foundation is grateful to our partners and institutional funders who have helped us grow and do impactful work since we began in 2018. They include:

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Bay City News Foundation
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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Providing on-the-ground local news reporting and filling geographic and topical gaps.



Connecting newsrooms and building regional partnerships with other journalists.



Testing new technology to gather and distribute news in the ways consumers want to get it.



Supporting the next generation of journalists with internships and training.



BAY CITY NEWS FOUNDATION