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WYES CELEBRATES 60 YEARS!

New Orleans, LA - Wednesday, March 29, 2017 – On April 1, 1957 WYES signed on the air as Channel 8 and as the twelfth educational television station in the nation. As a local PBS member station, WYES has worked to educate, enlighten, and entertain for 60 years by offering adults and children first-rate national programs, award-winning local and cultural documentaries, and community outreach activities. WYES is proud to continue its mission and celebrate 60 years of service to the Greater New Orleans area and Mississippi Gulf Coast on Saturday, April 1, 2017.

At 5:00 p.m. on April 1st, 1957 from the Hibernia Bank building, Bob Rowen, then a 19 year old Loyola University freshman, made WYES' first announcement: "Good evening. This is WYES-TV, Channel 8, New Orleans. WYES-TV is owned and operated by The Greater New Orleans Educational Television Foundation. Our transmitter is located atop the Hibernia Bank Building in downtown New Orleans. Our studios are under construction at 916 Navarre Avenue on land made available by the Delgado Trades and Technical Institute."

Months later WYES moved to Navarre Avenue where volunteers eventually began the first bid-by-phone auction in 1967. In 1970, *The Naked Jungle* starring Charlton Heston was playing on WVUE and WYES when the switch from Channel 8 to Channel 12 was made. Local historian and broadcast journalist Mel Leavitt hosted "Prep Quiz Bowl" beginning in 1972. One of WYES' most popular and longest running events, the WYES International Beer Tasting made its debut in 1980. "Informed Sources" premiered with host Marcia Kavanaugh in 1984 — who currently hosts the weekly news program. In 1988, Peggy Scott Laborde began hosting WYES' weekly arts and entertainment program "Steppin' Out" with theatre critic Al Shea, movie critic Rick Barton and food critic Tom Fitzmorris. In 1991, WYES Season of Good Tastes educational wine dinners kicked off — this month, Compère Lapin hosted the last dinner of the successful 25th season. "New Orleans That Was" produced by Peggy Scott Laborde broke membership support records in 1994, leading to what now WYES is known for — local documentaries. Terri Landry produced "Irish New Orleans" in 1999, leading to another WYES favorite — cultural documentaries. In honor of WYES' 60th Anniversary, WYES Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer Beth Arroyo Utterback has scheduled 25 of the most popular local documentaries to air on WYES-TV throughout the month of April.

For 48 years WYES remained at the Navarre location until post-Hurricane Katrina flooding destroyed much of the station and equipment in August 2005. WYES persevered following Katrina, partnering with local cable providers to air Louisiana Public Broadcasting's signal starting in November 2005. WYES restored its broadcast signal on December 30, 2005. Though staff was split up, some

working from the Navarre offices that remained and others from an old dance studio located on Phosphor Avenue in Metairie, WYES jumped right into production on the series “Chef Paul Prudhomme’s Always Cooking.” For some staff there would be another move to Heritage Plaza on Veterans Memorial Boulevard in Metairie.

It would take almost seven years for all staff to return to WYES’ historic location in Lakeview in the new WYES Digital Complex. Unfortunately, one week later, Hurricane Isaac hit New Orleans, which delayed the technical transition due to flood damage.

Over the past 10 years, the station has faced many obstacles, but continues to produce Emmy award-winning television programs; national cooking series with chefs John Besh and Kevin Belton; collaborating with “American Experience,” *The Louisiana Weekly*, and Ashé Cultural Arts Center for a very special event welcoming the original Freedom Riders to New Orleans — as originally intended in 1961; producing award-winning Electronic Field Trips with partners such as The National WWII Museum that have reached over 120,000 middle school students; production of the on-going series “Reshaping Greater New Orleans” about post-hurricane Katrina recovery in the Greater New Orleans region with support from Baptist Community Ministries; and partnering with The Historic New Orleans Collection and The Meraux Foundation for the New Orleans Tricentennial Project which includes on-air features, book, and documentary on the city’s upcoming 300th anniversary.

Thanks to the determination of WYES President and General Manager Allan Pizzato and generous donors, in January 2016, WYES broke ground on Phase 2 of the Digital Complex, now named the WYES Paulette and Frank Stewart Innovation Center for Educational Media. The new \$17.5 million, 47,000 square foot complex will feature the highest quality technical equipment, catering and preparatory kitchen, and a studio space that includes retractable theater seating, which will be used for WYES events and will be open to the public to utilize.

WYES thanks its entire viewing area, generous sponsors, dedicated volunteers and tireless staff who have supported the station — making it what it is today — a true asset to education and public enlightenment.

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