

## **WCC Radio Station WSIF 90.9 FM Is on the Air**

*Submitted by: Sandy Sheets*

The Wilkes Community College radio station has undergone the largest change in its 25 years of operation. Formerly 94.7 on the FM dial, the station operated at 10 watts with a range of 5 to 10 miles. The station now operates on the 90.9 FM frequency with a 1,000 watt signal that reaches all of the counties surrounding Wilkes, with a radius of approximately 30 miles. Station 90.9 FM is licensed by the FCC.

The improvement has been a long-time coming to the WCC station. The original application to upgrade the power was filed with the FCC in 1995. Because of a conflict in signals with another station, the application did not go through and the application remained dormant for five years. When WSIF became involved with transmitting MerleFest in 2002, the possibility of upgrading the station was again examined. An amendment to the original application was filed and approved, changing the station from a Class D commercial station to a Class A educational and non-commercial station.

Station 90.9 FM began broadcasting this spring semester and operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 9:00 PM. The station serves as a live laboratory in which students have full responsibility for the programming of songs and producing of promotional announcements and station identifications, as well as serving as the station's disc jockeys. The format for music broadcast on the station is diverse, with the students playing music of their choice from jazz to oldies to alternative rock. Because of the wide range of music, the students have dubbed their station The Spectrum. Wilkes is one of only five community colleges in the state to have a broadcasting and production technology program and one of two to have a student-operated radio station as part of their curriculum.

Working in smaller, local radio stations gives students and graduates experience before moving up to the larger market. Local radio stations work well with the Wilkes Community College program and students. They call the col-

lege when they need employees and are eager to hire students to work part-time while they are still in school. Several current or former WCC students can be heard on the air locally. The station has its own student news team consisting of a producer, sports announcer and news reporters. The students write, produce and present all newscasts as part of the curriculum news writing course, "Broadcast Journalism." The students cover news stories on the local and national level with stories about what is happening on the WCC campus and around the world. Much credit for the success of Wilkes Community College's broadcasting and production technology program belongs to the program's lead instructor, Al de Lachica. De Lachica, who began work at WCC in 1997, received his bachelor of journalism degree in broadcast news from the University of Texas at Austin. De Lachica stated that he is proud of the upgrade and the other technological improvements to the station. The broader range gives the broadcasting program a larger presence in the community and will help listeners in the area stay tuned to their favorite music and sports coverage of the WCC teams. The station also upgraded with a new audio board, new transmitter and a new antenna located on top of the John A. Walker Community Center. The radio studio has been completely revamped, with the broadcast now being completely operated by computer. "Going to computer operation in place of CDs is an important improvement for our students," stated DeLachica. "It was a necessary update to keep current with the pace of operation in radio stations today. Even the smaller stations have now gone completely to computer operation. It is important that our students learn and have experience on the type of equipment they will be working on in commercial radio stations."

Anyone interested in enrolling or for more information about the broadcasting and production technology program at Wilkes Community College should contact Al de Lachica at 336-838-6222 or visit the college web site at [www.wilkes.cc.nc.us](http://www.wilkes.cc.nc.us)