

A professional broadcast microphone is the central focus, mounted on a boom arm. A white identification tag is attached to the top of the microphone, featuring the WGLT logo and station information. The background is a blurred radio studio with various equipment and lights.

WGLT.org

89.1FM

A service of Illinois State University

2022

Annual Report

n p r Network



WGLT scholarship winners

WGLT Year in Review

from General Manager R.C. McBride

I'm proud of another successful year of outstanding public service provided by the WGLT team. Among the highlights:

- It was another big year for our journalists garnering recognition from their peers. WGLT earned a 2022 Regional Edward R. Murrow Award for Best Continuing Coverage in the Illinois/Indiana/Michigan/Ohio region from the Radio Television Digital News Association. (See the newsroom section for a complete list.)
- On the civic engagement front, our presence remained strong. In late September, WGLT partnered with Illinois State University and the McLean County League of Women Voters to host a 91st Illinois House District candidates forum featuring Democrat Sharon Chung and Republican Scott Preston. In October, WGLT partnered with Illinois State and a commercial television broadcaster to host a debate between Governor JB Pritzker and challenger Darren Bailey at the Bone Student Center's Braden Auditorium. WGLT provided the live audio feed via satellite to the rest of the state's NPR stations.
- In November, we were awarded a very competitive and prestigious Report for America grant, which will allow us to create a full-time position for a beat reporter to cover community mental health for at least two years. This person will be hired in the late spring and start this summer.
- We welcomed new full-time staff to the team, with Brady Johnson joining as our operations coordinator (replacing stalwart Travis Meadors who moved over to Illinois State Information Technology) while journalist Lauren Warnecke moved to full-time.
- Speaking of talent, our team also mentored young journalists this year and awarded scholarships to the outstanding group of Samantha Hill, Mary Kloser, and Jordan Mead. One of the most important things we can do is train and prepare the next generation of journalistic talent.
- Not everything we do is about news. During March, WGLT's *Highway 309* featured women artists exclusively to spotlight Women's History month (and received a shoutout from NPR Music!).
- In addition, WGLT's long-awaited 20th summer concert in June—twice delayed by COVID-19—featured an all-women lineup of performers for the first time ever.
- In August, in one of the more surprising (for me, at least) and flattering moments of my professional life, I was elected by my colleagues throughout the country to serve on the NPR Board of Directors. I was formally seated in November.



R.C. McBride



Brady Johnson



Lauren Warnecke

Next year promises to be a milestone year in WGLT's 55-plus-year history. This summer, we plan to leave the Old Union building on the Illinois State Quad that has served as the station's home since 1977. And we'll have new roommates! We'll be moving into to the corner of Locust and University, just northwest of the Bone Student Center. That building will serve as the home of both WGLT and *The Vidette*, Illinois State's student newspaper.

This is the culmination of more than two years of planning, and the new location will offer up a bunch of advantages. In addition to brand-new studios, a new transmitter, and other broadcast equipment—Illinois State is paying for the renovation, and the gear is the product of a quiet capital campaign begun by WGLT in 2019—we're excited to be co-located with Illinois State's student journalists.

So why undertake this? On top of the obvious things—new digs, more convenient parking for visitors, etc.—our new home will provide opportunity for even more mentorship and collaboration. Plans are underway for a joint *Vidette*/WGLT investigative unit to focus on one subject each semester. And as commercial media outlets once known for quality local news have been decimated by corporate overleveraging and changes in technology and consumer behavior, the responsibility for this vital task falls more and more on public radio stations. However, it's not enough for us to do that work; we need to do all we can to ensure today's students see journalism as a viable and admirable career, otherwise no one will be left to do the work a generation from now.

NPR has some cool things ahead too, including a streamlined yet more robust app that will make it easier to read and listen to WGLT and NPR content. You'll start hearing WGLT refer to itself as part of the "NPR Network," part of an ambitious, large-scale branding and awareness effort to double our (WGLT's and NPR's) number of users and contributors by 2030.

I was asked a while ago if anything about my job keeps me up at night, and the answer I gave seemed to surprise the questioner: my biggest fear is that people will stop being interested in what happens around them. Fortunately, we're supported by those who are invested in our community, some by simply using WGLT, some by financially supporting WGLT, and many by both. And for that, we sincerely thank you!



Student host Terrance Jones

R.C. McBride
General Manager



From the WGLT newsroom

Most-read stories of 2022

1. A Christmas miracle: The search for Bella the dog ends with a rescue
2. Rejecting teacher resignations, Unit 5 tests how Illinois might respond to a staffing shortage
3. What happens when cash bail ends in Illinois?
4. 'American Idol' finalist Leah Marlene dazzles a crowd of thousands in a free Uptown concert
5. Lincoln College to close permanently
6. School mask ruling sets off weekend scramble in school districts
7. Bloomington restaurant faces labor complaint over unpaid overtime pay
8. Lots of new restaurants are popping up around Bloomington-Normal
9. Rivian faces customer backlash over price increases
10. State Police say a 100-vehicle crash near El Paso is one of several interstate pileups during the winter storm

Election coverage

The WGLT Newsroom utilized its team of full-time reporters, correspondents, and students to cover county, state, and congressional elections during the June primary and November general election. We also participated in a voter engagement campaign to enable the public to share their questions and concerns of those seeking elected office.

WGLT hosted a live forum for candidates in the 91st Illinois House district and partnered with WCBU on a live forum for candidates in the U.S. House 17th district. WGLT was also a proud partner alongside Illinois State University on the gubernatorial debate.

News series

WGLT produced several news series during 2022, including: the impact rising inflation is having on McLean County residents; how the housing shortage in Bloomington-Normal is impacting the most vulnerable; and how Bloomington-Normal's significant and growing Indian population develops its own sense of community while blending cultures.

WGLT also relaunched an occasional series that highlights unsung heroes in our community, titled *More Of That, Please*.

As part of a digital transformation project with the Poynter Institute, we also launched a *Welcome Home* series for residents new to Bloomington-Normal.

Awards

The WGLT news team continues to be recognized for excellence by our peers:

- Regional Edward R. Murrow Award for Continuing Coverage for our reporting on the disappearance of Illinois State University student Jelani Day.
- Illinois News Broadcasters Association Crystal Mic awards: Charlie Schlenker won first place for Best Newscast for the second consecutive year; Lyndsay Jones won second place for Best Reporter.
- From the Public Media Journalists Association, the entire WGLT staff earned second place for News/Public Affairs program for WGLT's *Sound Ideas*. Illinois State student Emily Bollinger received second place for photojournalism for the "Jelani Day demonstration." Emily is not only the first WGLT staffer to ever win a photo award, she's also the first student journalist to win an award for WGLT.

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WGLT@IllinoisState.edu

Main office
(309) 438-2255