

2024 *annual report*



Network



Bloomington-Normal's Public Media



WGLT Year in Review

from Executive Director R.C. McBride

WGLT's year featured a bit of everything, beginning on a tremendous high and ending with some uncertainty regarding the future of federal funding for public media, but there's no question 2024 was one of the more eventful years in WGLT's nearly 60-year history.

On January 16, WGLT relocated to a new location in the former Vidette building on the Northwest side of the Illinois State University campus at Locust and University. The move culminated a



WGLT's new location in the former Vidette building.

five-year capital campaign and probably 20+ years of dreaming of relocating into a more publicly accessible space. Our new digs feature five studios and a technology server room, all outfitted with new equipment funded by generous WGLT donors, while ISU paid for the building's retrofit and furniture.



R.C. McBride

And while we're only a year in, I'd say the convenience alone has contributed to WGLT expanding its service - it's much easier to bring guests in for interviews and the same is true for WGLT's journalism staff headed out to cover news and events. You've probably heard us say it before, but we LOVE having friends over and we celebrated all year with open houses and a ribbon cutting ceremony with ISU President Aondover Tarhule. If you haven't been over to visit yet, please do!

Our new location wasn't the end of our improvements for the year. Thanks to a surprise donor gift, WGLT's aging studio/transmitter link (STL) was replaced and RDS (Radio Data System) Technology was implemented in September, allowing for much improved audio quality and adding the capability for station-related text information to display on equipped car dashboards. And in the Fall, WGLT started making use of its new drone, and while it's usually implemented for news coverage, it made a big splash with a cool fund drive video featuring aerial footage from all over the Bloomington-Normal community before "landing" in our new Studio A.



The renovated building features five studios and a technology server room, all outfitted with new equipment funded by generous WGLT donors.



WGLT's ribbon cutting ceremony and open house.

The station's service expanded in other ways. March featured our "21 Women Who Shaped Bloomington-Normal" on-air and online series complemented by an all-women line-up for Highway 309 Live. Over the summer, WGLT staff launched WGLT Shorts, a new ongoing short-form video program to establish a presence for our journalism on YouTube, Instagram, and Tik Tok. In the Fall we reintroduced hourly on-air local newscasts from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., so that local newscasts can be heard every hour from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

We entered into an agreement with The Normalite community newspaper allowing the paper to print our local news. Culminating a multi-year project led by Illinois State's Rayfield archives and Milner Library, WGLT released a new digital archive, featuring more than 500 pieces of audio, some dating back more than 40 years. And near the end of the year, WGLT was awarded a \$20,000 grant for the Google News Initiative to expand its coverage of K-12 education. We continued to put an emphasis on civic engagement events. In May,

WGLT hosted and led a Housing Solutions Forum, featuring state and local officials for a discussion around affordable housing and homelessness. And in October, we hosted a candidate open house for everyone on the fall ballot and candidate forum for the 46th State Senate race between Senator Dave Koehler and Republican challenger Sally Owens.

Looking ahead to 2025, we anticipate a challenging year. Challenges around a free press, public media funding and FCC licensing. In hyper-political and polarized times, we know the public service mission to educate and inform providing news and programming accessible to all is critical. WGLT has weathered a lot of tough times in its history, and we plan to be around for the next 60 years and beyond thanks to strong community support.



Crys Matthews during Highway 309 LIVE.

R.C. McBride
General Manager

From the WGLT newsroom

Most read stories of 2024

- Bloomington-Normal left wondering: So where are all those cicadas?
- Bloomington makes overtures on Eastland Mall redevelopment
- Bloomington pawn shops raided by Illinois Attorney General's Office
- Central Illinois nursing home company faces foreclosure on 17 properties
- State Farm removing EV charging stations from parking decks
- Bloomington tells homeless people sleeping along Constitution Trail to relocate
- Bloomington tenants being pushed out of housing to make room for homeless veterans
- Historic Lexington 'castle' hits the auction block
- Koehler-Chung battery recycling bill becomes Illinois law
- Joy — and defiance — surround a couple's Bloomington wedding

The awards just keep coming

- Overall Excellence [Regional, Edward R. Murrow/RTNDA] Best Digital Presence [1st place, Crystal Mic Awards/INBA] Best Reporter [2nd place, Lyndsay Jones, Crystal Mic Awards/INBA]
- Sports Reporting [1st place, Charlie Schlenker, Crystal Mic Awards/INBA] Writing [2nd place, Lauren Warnecke, Crystal Mic Awards/INBA] Best newscast [2nd place, Charlie Schlenker, PMJA] Visual storytelling [1st place, Emily Bollinger, PMJA]
- LifeCIL's "Shining Star" Award, "given to someone who goes above and beyond in their commitment to shine light on disability issues or barriers that people with disabilities face to bring about more awareness."

Noteworthy features and digital products

- WGLT Shorts: This new-audience initiative brings WGLT's trademark storytelling to Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. Led by visual journalist Emily Bollinger.
- 21 Women Who Shaped Bloomington-Normal: This multimedia project marked Women's History Month, including a landing page where you can read or listen to all 21 stories.
- New limited-run podcasts: Thousands of listeners tuned in to Democracy's Future (produced in partnership with the student-run Vidette) and the Twelve Thousand Bombs.
- Public Meetings Calendar: A new online resource makes it easier to be civically engaged, including quick links to meeting agendas and locations.



Welcome home!

Thanks to everyone who celebrated our new location with us.



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