

WGLT ISSUES AND PROGRAMS Third Quarter 2023

July 2023- September 2023

The following issues were addressed during WGLT Newscasts during MORNING EDITION from 5 to 9 am M-F and during ALL THINGS CONSIDERED from 3-6PM, M-F, during Sound Ideas, 5-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on our website www.wglt.org . The story lengths range from about one minute to 20 minutes.

Politics and Government

Democrats blast House Republicans for planned forum on Chicago crime instead of working to avert a government shutdown

[Tina Sfondeles](#) September 26, 2023

Republican members of the House Judiciary Committee plan to blame violent crime in Chicago on Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx at a Tuesday forum at the city's Fraternal Order of Police office.

Bloomington council OKs long-term plan to purchase advanced equipment for BFD

[Michele Steinbacher](#), September 25, 2023

Bloomington fire officials say first responders and the public they serve will benefit from an emergency equipment upgrades plan, approved at Monday's Bloomington City Council meeting.

State housing authority grants Bloomington \$103,000 for community project

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 25, 2023

The Illinois Housing Development Authority awarded \$103,000 to Bloomington for community revitalization work. The grant is part of the Strong Communities Program that awarded funding to 68 local government units in its second round of funding.

Climate change impacts noticeable in Bloomington-Normal

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 22, 2023

Last month was the planet's warmest August in the 174-year record of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Like other communities, Bloomington-Normal really noticed the impact of that heat. The August heat wave didn't just cause people to droop. City Manager Pam Reece said the town's shade cover wilted too.

ISU Student Government Association asks for renter rights ordinance in Normal

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 20, 2023

The Student Government Association at Illinois State University has passed a resolution asking the Town of Normal to require landlords to give a 24-hour notice before entering rental units. It's not the first time such a resolution has passed without any noticeable effect. This time might be different.

[Q&A: Strong Towns founder on Rivian, the housing shortage, and why he hates the term 'road diet'](#)

[Ryan Denham](#), September 20, 2023

One of the most influential thought-leaders in urban development — Chuck Marohn from Strong Towns — is offering some words of wisdom to his acolytes in Bloomington-Normal.

[Normal's financial outlook remains on positive path after pandemic recovery](#)

[Michele Steinbacher](#), September 19, 2023

Normal leaders say the town continues to experience strong economic growth on the heels of the previous year's pandemic recovery.

[Bloomington reorganizes Public Works and names director](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 18, 2023

The city of Bloomington is reorganizing its public works area and naming a new Public Works Director. City Manager Tim Gleason said Mose Rickey will oversee restructuring into three distinct departments: public works, water, and operations and engineering services. Rickey had been the Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation.

[Annual report shows Town of Normal in strong financial position](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 15, 2023

A new report on the financial condition of the Town of Normal shows higher fund balances than at this time last year. The increase of close to \$3.5 million across all funds comes from increased consumer spending related to growth in the community workforce.

[Advocates plan to use bail reform to protect victims of domestic, sexual violence](#)

[Sophie Sherry](#), September 15, 2023

“Everyone has to be focused on day one, recommending decisions to the judge and making sure that the law is implemented as intended,” said Amanda Pyron, leader of a coalition of advocacy groups.

McLean County Board chair remains in Republican hands

Lyndsay Jones, September 14, 2023

District 1 representative Catherine Metsker was elected as board chair on Thursday after a series of votes that determined who would fill the position vacated by longtime member John McIntyre.

State Rep. Sharon Chung to run again in 91st House District

Charlie Schlenker, September 14, 2023

First-term state Rep. Sharon Chung has announced she will run again in the 91st District that stretches from Bartonville to Bloomington-Normal. Chung said she is pleased with the first bill she sponsored and was able to pass, requiring insurance companies to cover the cost of hearing aids.

Cash bail's end next week could spark an electronic monitoring surge, backers fear

Chip Mitchell, September 14, 2023

The law, effective Monday, makes Illinois the first state to ban money bonds. Some supporters of the change worry that judges will turn to EM.

‘Where Do We Go From Here?’: Illinois Counties Prep For Massive Changes To Courts And Jails

Patrick Smith, September 14, 2023

Counties officials from around Chicago are concerned about lack of resources for when the new bail system begins Sept. 18

Downstate leaders say they will need help handling the historic end to cash bail

Mawa Iqbal, September 14, 2023

Judges will be limited in who they can hold in jail pretrial. Rural leaders say they don't have the staffing to handle the change.

Grundy County Board chair to run for Illinois Senate in district that includes Bloomington-Normal

[Erik Dedo](#), September 13, 2023

Republican Grundy County Board chair Chris Balkema announced his candidacy Wednesday for the 53rd Senate District that includes northeast Bloomington-Normal, Towanda and Lexington.

[Illinois' election board is fielding questions about knocking Donald Trump off the ballot](#)

[Dave McKinney](#), September 13, 2023

A top board official says the courts, not the election board, would determine if Trump's ties to the insurrection disqualify him from being on the ballot.

[PPP fraud found among Illinois state workers leaves investigator 'disappointed but not surprised'](#)

[Frank Main](#), September 13, 2023

Illinois Executive Inspector General Susan Haling says 177 state employees appear to have defrauded the federal Paycheck Protection Program designed to help struggling businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Bloomington City Council approves 5% pay raise for city manager](#)

[Jack Podlesnik](#), September 11, 2023

The council has approved a 5% pay increase for City Manager Tim Gleason, which is about a \$10,400 raise, bringing his annual salary to just under \$210,000.

[Museum of History volunteer director seeks McLean County Board seat](#)

[Eric Stock](#), September 8, 2023

Eric Hansen, the director of volunteers at the McLean County Museum of History, was the only candidate to file for the county board District 8 seat ahead of Thursday's deadline.

[Normal unlikely to follow Bloomington on armored police vehicle](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 6, 2023

The City of Bloomington recently approved the purchase of an armored security vehicle for use by police and the department's SWAT team. The Town of Normal has a tactical response team too, but the town is not likely to keep up with the Joneses.

['Great relief': Hope Church finds new home in Bloomington](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 6, 2023

Earlier this year, Hope Church leaders learned they would have to move, or make expensive adaptations to their leased building after Bloomington city code inspectors determined the building did not meet new fire code standards.

[State issues guidance on co-pays for undocumented residents as advocates criticize health care cuts](#)

[Tina Sfondeles](#), September 6, 2023

Advocates argued the rules changes were too costly for low-income patients. The governor's office said co-pays should not have been charged yet anyway, though they are expected to resume eventually.

[Normal council approves contract for new northeast side fire station](#)

[Colin Hardman](#), September 5, 2023

Once the new station at Shepard and Hershey roads is ready for use, the town will decommission the station at College Avenue and Blair Drive.

[McLean County Board committee advances amendment regulating CO2 well placement](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 5, 2023

The McLean County Board's Land Use and Development Committee has approved a zoning ordinance amendment that would regulate the placement of CO2 sequestration wells 1,500 feet away from occupied homes, livestock shelters, school or community buildings and commercial/manufacturing buildings.

[McLean County Board chair John McIntyre resigns](#)

[Eric Stock](#), September 5, 2023

John McIntyre, a retired educator and football coach, who was re-elected in District 5 (Normal) last year, leaves the McLean County Board with just over three years remaining on his term.

[Republican Desi Anderson announces run against Democratic state Rep. Sharon Chung](#)

[Ryan Denham](#), September 5, 2023

Republican Desi Anderson on Tuesday announced a 2024 run against first-term Democratic state Rep. Sharon Chung in an Illinois House district that includes parts of Greater Peoria and Bloomington-Normal.

Q&A: Bloomington mayor wants to include White Place property in larger zoning discussion

[Eric Stock](#), September 1, 2023

Residents of White Place northeast of downtown say a proposed nine-unit rental home would be a safety hazard and should be subject to a zoning hearing since it was vacant for over a year.

ISU trustees to hire search firm in effort to find a permanent president

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 1, 2023

Illinois State University's governing body approved a resolution Friday authorizing its board of trustees to hire a search firm to find candidates for the university's top job.

Normal considers contract to build new eastside fire station

[Eric Stock](#), September 1, 2023

The town council will consider the \$4.75 million agreement with Core Construction of Peoria when the board meets Tuesday.

Town of Normal hosts open house to display Vernon Avenue 'road diet'

[Jack Podlesnik](#), September 1, 2023

The stretch of road, from Beaufort Street to Towanda Avenue, would feature one lane in both directions, with a center turn lane. There also would be bike lanes on both sides of the road.

Normal schedules open house for planned Constitution Trail expansion

[Erik Dedo](#), August 30, 2023

Ryan Otto, the town's director of engineering, says the planned extension runs along Gregory Street in northwest Normal, between Adelaide Street and Parkside Road. It will connect a park, three schools, Illinois State University and several neighborhoods to the trail.

Dying and disabled prisoners kept behind bars, despite new medical release law

[Shannon Heffernan](#), August 30, 2023

Lawmakers said hundreds would be released thanks to the Joe Coleman Medical Release Act. But so far, just 52 have gotten out.

Stoller says he won't seek a third term in state Senate

[Tim Shelley](#), August 29, 2023

The Germantown Hills Republican says his district shifted much further north after the recent remap, and he doesn't want to be a career politician.

[White Place neighbors ask Bloomington council to address zoning issues](#)

[Jack Podlesnik](#), August 28, 2023

The issue pertains to 1 White Place, a property in the neighborhood that has been vacant for more than 20 months. The property owner, in the process of preparing the home for new residents, initially told White Place residents it would house four units. He later told them it would be nine.

[A year since the first buses of migrants arrived in Chicago, the journey to asylum is just beginning](#)

[Elvia Malagón](#), August 28, 2023

More than 13,000 immigrants have arrived since Texas Gov. Greg Abbott started sending them away on buses — so far 197 of them coming to the Chicago area.

['A dynamic force': Former Bloomington mayor Jesse Smart dies at age 84](#)

[Eric Stock](#), August 26, 2023

Jesse Smart served as Bloomington mayor from 1985 to 1997, after serving eight years on the city council.

[Efforts to bolster public health workforce are underway in McLean County](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 25, 2023

Illinois Wesleyan University is offering a new degree program in public health, and a nearly \$280,000 grant is coming to the McLean County Health Department.

[Illinois lands \\$1.3M federal grant to promote more women in construction industry](#)

[Mitchell Armentrout](#), August 23, 2023

The grant money comes as part of President Joe Biden's signature \$1.2 trillion infrastructure package signed into law almost two years ago, and aims to promote gender equity and inclusion in the male-dominated field.

[Normal council OKs location restrictions on cannabis businesses](#)

[Colin Hardman](#), August 21, 2023

The cannabis ordinance amends the town's zoning code to require a 1,500-foot separation between cannabis businesses, and mandates a 200-foot separation from schools and churches, doubling the previous 100-foot requirement.

[McLean County Board back in old meeting place as Government Center renovations continue](#)

[Eric Stock](#), August 17, 2023

The board held its regular monthly meeting in the courtroom of the McLean County Museum of History on Thursday due to renovations at the McLean County Government Center that also have temporarily displaced the Bloomington City Council.

[Two McLean County murder cases illustrate changes and challenges of no-cash bail](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 17, 2023

The releases of Michael Bakana and Joshua Livingston illustrate the challenges of releasing a person accused of domestic violence, and the uncertainties of opening the cell door of an accused murderer with the ability to post his bond.

[A planned Illinois bill would require lawyers for kids in police interrogations](#)

[Chip Mitchell](#), August 15, 2023

Lawmakers are devising the measure after WBEZ obtained footage of a Waukegan cop leading a 15-year-old to falsely confess to a shooting.

[Bloomington council OKs purchase of armored security vehicle for BPD](#)

[Jim Stahly Jr.](#), August 14, 2023

The BearCat, manufactured by Lenco Armored Vehicles of Pittsfield, Mass., will cost \$249,229, and take about a year to manufacture.

[Nuclear plant moratorium bill heads to veto session fight in Illinois](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 14, 2023

The veto of a law to end a moratorium on new nuclear power plant construction in Illinois sets up a battle in the fall veto session. In his veto message, Gov. JB Pritzker appears to be saying the bill isn't ready for prime time.

Pritzker signs child influencer protections into law

[Eric Stock](#), August 14, 2023

A high school student from Normal helped pass an Illinois law to protect the money young vloggers and so-called "kidfluencers" can make online.

Chuck Erickson touts experience as he launches bid for Illinois 88th House District seat

[Ryan Denham](#), August 13, 2023

At the Bittner family farm east of Bloomington, Erickson said he is the first generation in his family to get a college degree and schools would be a focus for him if he is elected in November 2024.

Durbin calls Justice Thomas' luxury trips 'embarrassing,' calls again for court ethics reform

[Eric Stock](#), August 11, 2023

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin says Americans are sickened by new reports of lavish trips donors have paid for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Durbin says it is more than just an ethical lapse and demands ethics reforms.

Normal council approves Uptown South master plan, housing development in north Normal

[Colin Hardman](#), August 8, 2023

The Uptown South plan will help shape space for business, housing, parks and public space in the area. Mayor Chris Koos hopes the plan's sustainability goals will have a positive environmental impact.

Jeannie Biles steps down from McLean County Board

[Eric Stock](#), August 7, 2023

According to a news release from the McLean County administrator's office, Jeannie Biles has resigned effective immediately to relocate out of state "for professional opportunities."

Pritzker signs bills expanding protections for Native Americans

[Peter Hancock](#), August 7, 2023

Gov. JB Pritzker signed a package of bills Friday extending cultural protections to Native Americans in Illinois and requiring the teaching of Native American history in public schools.

[Watchdog overseeing abuse, neglect cases at state-run facilities resigns for Chicago post](#)

[Beth Hundsdorfer](#), August 7, 2023

After serving nearly four years as the watchdog for the Illinois Department of Human Services, Peter Neumer will step down from his role overseeing investigations into the abuse and neglect of some of the state's most vulnerable people.

[Pritzker signs Central Illinois Regional Airport and District 87 waiver bills](#)

[Eric Stock](#), August 7, 2023

A measure that will add a new property tax for McLean County residents outside of Bloomington-Normal is now law. Gov. JB Pritzker has signed a bill to create the Central Illinois Regional Airport Authority.

[In perjury trial, Madigan's ex-chief of staff will test limits of loyalty](#)

[Hannah Meisel](#), August 7, 2023

In the summer of 2018, Tim Mapes' name had only recently faded from unflattering headlines after he was forced to resign from three top jobs he held under powerful Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan.

[Rep. LaHood says bipartisan legislative commission should develop a deficit-reduction plan](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 2, 2023

Members of both parties have increased the budget deficit in the last decade, U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood said Tuesday. And both major parties will have to participate in any successful effort to reduce it.

[Koos: Smart cities can also mean smart surfaces](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 2, 2023

A lot of attention has gone to state and federal policy initiatives to address climate change, but some measures need to happen at the local level, including so-called "smart surfaces" that could become a larger part of the look of the Town of Normal.

[Funding for B-N infrastructure advances Senate Appropriations Committee](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 1, 2023

Around \$4 million for a long-planned Locust Street sewer separation project, improvements at the Bloomington-Normal Reclamation District and flood prevention within Uptown Normal has been proposed, but still need full Senate approval.

[Some Illinois lawmakers want to see U.S. call a constitutional amendments convention](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), July 31, 2023

A political action group founded by former Tea Party members extended invitations to Illinois state Reps. Dan Caulkins, Brad Halbrook and Tom Weber for an upcoming simulation of what's called an Article 5 convention.

[Bloomington council OKs next steps for 790-unit housing development near Rivian](#)

[Michele Steinbacher](#), July 24, 2023

A plan to build nearly 800 apartments and townhomes near Rivian Motors is moving forward, after the Bloomington City Council on Monday approved an annexation agreement for the project.

[Sen. Koehler backs estate tax law change](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 24, 2023

You don't usually find Democrats picking up the gauntlet to weaken provisions of a law originally intended to prevent the concentration of capital into hereditary wealthy elites. But State Sen. Dave Koehler of Peoria said there's a sound economic development reason to do so.

[Zoning for solar installations likely to evolve as use increases](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 21, 2023

Most solar panel projects in Normal have been roof mounted so far but there is potential for more ground mounted units like the one the council approved this week for Grace Church on Hovey Avenue.

[Sen. Duckworth opposes cuts to 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria](#)

[Eric Stock](#), July 21, 2023

Illinois U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth says she will oppose cuts to any of the specialized positions at the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria.

London calling? Pritzker gives UK trip update — hints Illinois is nearing electric vehicle deals

[Tina Sfondeles](#), July 20, 2023

In a call with reporters Wednesday, the governor said he is actively pursuing Illinois partnerships with electric vehicle companies and original equipment manufacturers.

B-N project grants advance in U.S. House

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 19, 2023

Bloomington-Normal has nearly \$2.7 million in potential projects included in an appropriations bill that has advanced from a subcommittee to the full appropriations committee in the U.S. House.

Normal council OKs repairs to historic Broadview Mansion bell tower

[Michele Steinbacher](#), July 17, 2023

The Normal Town Council has awarded Bloomington-based Garneau Construction a nearly \$145,000 contract to handle specialized masonry and other repair tasks at the Broadview Mansion bell tower.

Federal judge dismisses Madigan-related bribery charge against ComEd

[Jon Seidel](#), July 17, 2023

The dismissal means ComEd no longer faces criminal charges and avoids conviction, while others have faced prison time as a result of the investigation that targeted former state House Speaker Michael Madigan.

'Fighter for freedom': Kamala Harris praises Rev. Jesse Jackson's legacy

[Jacquelyne Germain](#), July 17, 2023

Vice President Harris said that when she was in law school in the 1980s, she had a 'Jesse Jackson for President' bumper sticker on her car.

Senate appropriations committee approves money for Museum of History

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 14, 2023

The Senate Appropriations Committee has advanced spending bills that include money for the McLean County Historical Society. The measure includes \$550,000 to help the Museum of

History continue making online copies of photo negatives from The Pantagraph newspaper archives.

McLean County Board OKs license plate cameras near LeRoy

[Eric Stock](#), July 13, 2023

The McLean County Board unanimously approved the agreement after the city of LeRoy assured members the cameras would not be used for general traffic enforcement.

London bridges? Pritzker to lead United Kingdom trade mission with state business and education leaders

[Tina Sfondeles](#), July 12, 2023

Gov. J.B. Pritzker in January traveled to Davos, Switzerland, to speak at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting and promote the state's achievements. And more international trips are in the works, according to his office.

Bloomington council relocating meetings to BCPA through August

[Michele Steinbacher](#), July 10, 2023

A boardroom renovation in the downtown Government Center will temporarily displace the Bloomington City Council meetings, with the council relocating to the Center for Performing Arts.

IDOT: McLean and surrounding counties to receive \$750M-plus in roadwork by 2029

[Lyndsay Jones](#), July 10, 2023

Of the more than \$41 billion in infrastructure repairs announced by the Illinois Department of Transportation, the district that includes McLean County will receive around \$756 million in upgrades to highways and bridges.

U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen says Supreme Court is 'legislating from the bench'

[Collin Schopp](#), July 10, 2023

U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen is concerned about the impact of several recent Supreme Court decisions.

Dan Brady decides not to run for office in 2024

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 7, 2023

Former state Rep. Dan Brady had been looking at either the 17th Congressional District race, or the 88th Illinois House District seat in 2024. The Bloomington-Normal Republican said Friday he won't run for either of those offices.

Durbin wants a vote on Supreme Court ethics legislation this month

[Eric Stock](#), July 7, 2023

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin wants the Senate Judiciary Committee to consider ethical standards such as mandated financial disclosure reports for justices. Congress passed those rules for all other federal judges last year.

Bloomington Planning Commission supports large housing project on far west side

[Colin Hardman](#), July 6, 2023

The Bloomington Planning Commission on Wednesday voted unanimously to advance a plan for a new housing development near Rivian on the community's far west edge.

Normal council advances proposal to adjust buffer zones for marijuana dispensaries

[Michele Steinbacher](#), July 5, 2023

Wednesday's unanimous vote formally initiated a motion to consider amending the zoning rules for the special permits that allow dispensaries.

LaHood takes wait-and-see view in Trump case, believes Hunter Biden plea deserves scrutiny

[Joe Deacon](#), July 5, 2023

During an appearance in western Peoria County last week, U.S. Rep. Darin LaHood addressed two high-profile federal cases, and the state of the country's economy under President Joe Biden's leadership.

Highland Park comes together one year after tragedy

[Emmanuel Camarillo](#), July 5, 2023

Memorial ceremony and community walk show suburb is "Highland Park Strong" following last year's July 4 mass shooting.

Immigrant advocates slam Pritzker for cutting health care program for noncitizens

[Michael Loria](#), July 3, 2023

As of Saturday, people ages 42 to 64 no longer are eligible to join a Medicaid-like program for noncitizens. Those already enrolled will now have co-pays.

Arts and Culture

History comes alive again at 29th Evergreen Cemetery Walk

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 29, 2023

Civil War veteran and political activist Richard Blue and music educator Frances Kessler are two of Bloomington's famous faces at this year's cemetery walk, a popular event attracting more than 3,000 visitors.

Downtown or Uptown, the Twin Cities have art everywhere

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 29, 2023

A vibrant gallery scene in downtown Bloomington is just the tip of the iceberg for Twin City art lovers.

Bloomington group that supports formerly incarcerated women offers gratitude in new candle scent

[Megan Spoerlein](#), September 28, 2023

Labyrinth Made Goods is celebrating its three-year anniversary with a new candle for sale.

At 70, Robert Cray still loves playing music. 'It's built in.'

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 26, 2023

Approaching its 50th anniversary, Robert Cray Band stops at the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts for one night as part of a U.S. and U.K. tour promoting the 2020 album, "That's What I Heard."

McHistory: Life, literature and children

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 26, 2023

It's cliché but children are the future. Bloomington resident Clara Louise Kessler passionately lived that.

From metal to mashups, a 'rebirth' for Sweet Diesel Jenkins' mix master Greg Fulton

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 22, 2023

Thrash metal pioneer Greg Fulton has had a career of ups and downs. At first he didn't love the idea of a cover band — until he saw how fans and club owners reacted to his live band remixes and mashups.

3 things to do this weekend: Cornhole, Carlos and Uptown's Day of Play

Lauren Warnecke, September 22, 2023

Uptown will be teeming with kid-friendly fun this weekend. Head to the Corn Crib for a grown-up "day of play"

Is a cup just a cup? 'Contemporary Ceramics' at the McLean County Arts Center has a range of answers

Lauren Warnecke, September 21, 2023

Harris Deller retired a decade ago after 45 years of teaching at Southern Illinois University. He's part of a wide-ranging group show at the McLean County Arts Center highlighting contemporary ceramicists.

Photos and video: Mississippi Heat cooks at Delta Frank Highway 309 LIVE tribute

Emily Bollinger, September 21, 2023

WGLT fans — including many blues lovers — turned out Wednesday night for a Highway 309 LIVE concert presented by CEFCU, featuring blues band Mississippi Heat.

From horror, hope: Normal Theater screens EthnoGothic Film Series

Lauren Warnecke, September 19, 2023

Scholars Stanford Carpenter and Eric Wesselmann co-teach a course on horror films with Black protagonists, villains and anti-heroes. Carpenter helped coin the term EthnoGothic to capture how different people respond to horror based on race, culture and social identity.

Climate-conscious documentaries highlight the importance of individual acts of sustainability

Lauren Warnecke, September 18, 2023

The Green Screen Film Series continues at the Normal Theater on Tuesday with "The Human Scale," a documentary about how developing mega-cities change human behavior.

Life in the Ewing home is revealed through carefully crafted tours

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 14, 2023

The final two tours of the season are coming up at Ewing Cultural Center.

Mississippi Heat bring the blues to Normal in Highway 309 LIVE tribute to Delta Frank Black

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 13, 2023

Next in WGLT's Highway 309 LIVE concert series is a blues tribute to former host Delta Frank Black, featuring the music of Mississippi Heat.

The Smithsonian comes to Chatsworth

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 12, 2023

A traveling exhibit highlighting rural innovation features seven Illinois communities. Fairbury and Chatsworth partnered to bring "Spark! Places of Innovation" to Livingston County.

3 things to do this weekend: A comedic play (or two), jazz at Connie Link and Sesame Street's Abby Cadabby

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 8, 2023

The second annual Further Jazz Festival includes an 8-piece band playing Oliver Nelson's 1961 landmark album, "Blues and the Abstract Truth," led by Oliver Nelson, Jr.

Retrospective exhibition looks back at University Galleries' 50 years at the forefront of contemporary art

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 6, 2023

"All Hearts Beneath the Sun" is not a chronological retrospective. Rather, pieces from University Galleries' permanent collection are grouped thematically based on aesthetic connections, plus influences visiting artists had on Illinois State students who went on to careers of their own.

Native American foods showcased at this weekend's ISU Horticulture Center Autumnal Festival

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 5, 2023

The Illinois State University Horticulture Center is literally going back to "native roots" for this year's Autumnal Festival. The center is honoring the connection to indigenous plants as part of the annual fundraiser for the center on Saturday and Sunday.

Misunderstandings and miscommunications run rampant as Community Players spreads Neil Simon's 'Rumors'

Emily Bollinger, September 2, 2023

Community Players Theatre in Bloomington is staging a new production of Neil Simon's "Rumors." WGLT talks to actors Sean Henderson and Alyssa Fabry about their roles and the show.

Heartland Theatre season opens with Wohl's Tony-nominated comedy 'Grand Horizons'

Lauren Warnecke, August 31, 2023

The 2023-24 season at Heartland Theatre Company begins with a modern comedy compared to those by American playwright Neil Simon. After a break, retired Illinois State theater professor Cyndee Brown couldn't say no to directing "Grand Horizons."

Illinois Shakes' 2024 season: 'Twelfth Night,' the Scottish play and Austen's 'Sense and Sensibility'

Lauren Warnecke, August 30, 2023

"Macbeth" was last produced at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival in 2013. The so-called Scottish play was originally scheduled for 2020 and is only now finding its way back into rotation.

IWU music professor Logan Campbell is Bloomington-Normal Youth Symphony's next director

Lauren Warnecke, August 29, 2023

Deanne Bryant steps down after nearly 30 years leading McLean County's youth orchestra.

Central Illinois rockers Hotter Than June is back, planning a new album that's 15 years in the making

Lauren Warnecke, August 29, 2023

As a rock band of 20-somethings on the rise, Hotter Than June fell apart after just three years together. Fifteen years later, they're back and gearing up for a new album. Frontman Josh Humphries will play a few acoustic sets in Bloomington this fall — but you won't see the full band live any time soon.

Photos from the 2023 Sweet Corn Circus in Uptown Normal

Emily Bollinger, August 29, 2023

Here are some highlights from the Sweet Corn Circus in Uptown Normal on Aug. 26-27, 2023. It included performances by Gamma Phi Circus at Illinois State, Cirquemania, Maestro Jones and the Front Street Collective, and Iron Spirit Pro wrestling.

‘We knew we were coming back’: Ringling-Barnum circus had to close to evolve for generations to come

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 25, 2023

Feld Entertainment CEO Kenneth Feld addressed the Circus Historical Society on Thursday in Normal about the return of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. The circus kicks off a 50-city tour next month with an all-new production.

3 things to do this weekend: Open skate, Latin jazz and 6.6 on Route 66

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 25, 2023

This weekend's offerings include two ways to beat the heat and a 10k run on the Mother Road.

The Sweet Corn Circus is coming to town!

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 24, 2023

The Sweet Corn Circus celebrates Bloomington-Normal's agricultural and circus roots. The weekend festival includes performances from Gamma Phi Circus, Cirquemania and Iron Spirit Pro Wrestling — and corn!

Survey says public is into public art as Normal sculpture garden and Uptown underpass mural move ahead

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 23, 2023

An overwhelming majority of Normalites say they're all in for public art. Results of a survey distributed in May indicated 85% of people who live, work or play in Normal support public dollars going toward public art.

Before TV and radio, there was circus — and there was a lot of it in Bloomington-Normal

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 22, 2023

Bloomington-Normal was dubbed the "trapeze capital of the world," with many of the best flyers hailing from and training in the area. The places they trained are gone, but evidence of the Twin Cities' circus past is hidden around every corner.

3 things to do this weekend: A block party, a block party and a block party

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 18, 2023

Street fairs come in many forms and you've got three options this weekend.

[Prairie Aviation Museum hosts final 2 Open Cockpit Days of the year](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 17, 2023

Saturday the Prairie Aviation Museum opens the hatches to more than a dozen planes and helicopters. Guests have commented that the airpark rivals some of the country's best aviation museums.

[Next to Normal Story Slam will focus on the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington](#)

[Ryan Denham](#), August 17, 2023

The newest installment of the Next to Normal Story Slam is scheduled for Friday, centered on the theme of the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington.

[Illinois Wesleyan biologist names newly discovered snake species for Harrison Ford](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 15, 2023

In an ironic twist, an Illinois Wesleyan University biologist has named a new species of snake after the actor Harrison Ford. In the iconic movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark," Ford's character Indiana Jones doesn't like snakes.

[All the world's a stage, but there's only one the Illinois Shakespeare Festival calls home](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 14, 2023

For 46 years, the Illinois Shakespeare Festival has brought the works of the Bard to Bloomington-Normal residents — and beyond.

[Bloomington-Normal provides haven for art therapy](#)

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 14, 2023

Bloomington-Normal community members are providing outlets for self-expression through art, helping intentionally and unintentionally to relieve mental health concerns for others in the area.

['Annie,' Second City and blues legend Robert Cray among the BCPA's season highlights](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 11, 2023

After years of turmoil, the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts announces a mix of magic, music and comedy for its upcoming season.

3 things to do this weekend: Culture Fest, country at the Castle and a closing exhibition at University Galleries

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 11, 2023

Looking for something to do this weekend? Look no further.

Coalescence Theatre Project 'tells the story' with 'Once on This Island' at Connie Link

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 10, 2023

After last summer's production of "Crowns," director Elaine McCoy Hill and Deonte' Mosely couldn't wait to work together again. The result is on view through Aug. 20 with a musical loosely based on "The Little Mermaid."

Roger Schmidgall named Normal Citizen of the Year

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 9, 2023

Roger Schmidgall, the Citizen of the Year in the Town of Normal, has a long record of involvement in service organizations in town and internationally.

Decatur band Harlem Hayfield introduces Rustbelt Soul in Jazz UpFront debut

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 8, 2023

WGLT sits down with Mikey Schoneman and Hugh Sullivan from Harlem Hayfield. After successful shows at Nightshop and Make Music Normal, the Decatur band pioneering the "Rustbelt Soul" genre makes its Jazz UpFront debut with songs from their forthcoming studio album.

Yes, B-N's Pride Fest is a celebration, but it's also an affirmation of self

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 3, 2023

The LGBTQ+ community in Bloomington-Normal was loud, proud, and happy during Pride Fest on July 29 in downtown Bloomington. Attendees said the annual cornerstone event that draws thousands is important both to the LGBTQ community and to all of central Illinois.

Prairie Fire Theatre's bluegrass musical 'Bright Star' finds hopeful story in a lost child

[Ryan Denham](#), August 3, 2023

The musical “Bright Star” centers on a haunting moment: someone putting an unwanted newborn baby into a small suitcase and tossing it into a river. Prairie Fire Theatre stages a production next week at Illinois Wesleyan’s Westbrook Auditorium in Bloomington.

[Stars of 'Sesame Street' to visit central Illinois with puppets, music and comedy for all ages](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 3, 2023

Leslie Carrara-Rudolph is best known as Sesame Street's Abby Cadabby. She takes a break from fairy training to bring comedy cabaret, puppet-making and a sock called Lolly Lardpop to Bloomington-Normal and Peoria. Carrara-Rudolph and Normal native Paul Rudolph will sit down to talk about their journeys to Sesame Street at the end of the four-day residency next month.

[Cadillac Theatre to open Sept. 29 in Paxton with a mix of country and rock music](#)

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 1, 2023

The primary music promoters serving Ford and Champaign counties were looking for office space and an indoor venue to extend their concerts into the colder months.

[McHistory: Richard Blue was the first Black person to run for Bloomington council](#)

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 31, 2023

WGLT's McHistory series features Richard Blue, the first Black person to run for council in Bloomington. He was also a Civil War veteran, activist, member of a literary society, doorman at the state capital, and barber.

[Guy Lombardo band leader Al Pierson reflects on a lifetime in music in a visit to his hometown Heyworth](#)

[Megan Spoerlein](#), July 31, 2023

Heyworth native Al Pierson, who brought his Big Band sound all over the globe, returned to his hometown to share memories from a 77-year career in music.

[McLean County Fair-goers endure blazing temperatures for sake of annual get-together](#)

[Michele Steinbacher](#), July 28, 2023

The annual McLean County Fair is a real come-together event — attracting urban and country residents, young and old, thrill seekers and leisure hounds.

[The clowns of this year’s Shakespeare Fest talk seriously about why the Bard matters](#)

Lauren Warnecke, July 27, 2023

Illinois Shakes newcomer Geoffrey Warren Barnes II and Adonis Perez-Escobar play some of the silliest characters this season. Getting the comic relief right is not as easy as it looks.

Great Value Jesus' new single riffs on child's play and the normalization of school shootings

Lauren Warnecke, July 26, 2023

Adding to his eclectic array of musical influences, front man and songwriter Noah Renken-Kapatos gives an ironic nod to '90s ska in his new single.

First post-COVID reunion celebrates 60 years of goodwill, friendship through B-N Japanese Sister Cities program

Colleen Reynolds, July 26, 2023

The Bloomington-Normal Asahikawa, Japan Sister Cities program is marking 60 years since its founding. A delegation that includes Asahikawa's mayor is on a whirlwind three-day visit this week to the Twin Cities to celebrate the program that creates citizen ambassadors to promote goodwill and friendship.

McCauley Gallery's 'Falling in Between' is a fiber arts exploration of what gets passed down

Lauren Warnecke, July 20, 2023

Peoria artist Peyton Fitzgerald's "Falling in Between" is on view at Joe McCauley Gallery at Heartland Community College. Fitzgerald is a printmaker and self-taught textile artist who learned how to sew as a grad student during COVID. The show explores what is passed down intentionally — and inevitably — through generations.

Hello and goodbye to Bloomington's Lease Agreement — a pop-up gallery that'll be gone in a few days

Lauren Warnecke, July 19, 2023

Adam Farcus' nomadic curatorial project called Lease Agreement is leaving at the end of the month. The DIY pop-up gallery in downtown Bloomington hosts Whitney Johnson's "Three Handfuls of Pennies" for a few more days.

Flavor-forward beer comes first for craft brewers

Charlie Schlenker, July 17, 2023

Craft beer is all about the flavor. Even after small brewers have found a niche, they keep experimenting, running test batches, and sometimes finding the next big thing their customers like. It's not so easy, though, to predict the next big thing.

‘Newsies’ at Community Players is a fun show with a serious message about kids changing the world

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 13, 2023

The Disney musical "Newsies," based on the 1899 newsboys' strike, concludes Community Players Theatre's 100th season. We talked to two young cast members about how their views on "papes" have changed by participating in the show.

Good Morning Bedlam's Isaak Elker credits gratefulness as a grounding force

[Jon Norton](#), July 12, 2023

Good Morning Bedlam has come a long way since its first EP in 2015. You can hear it in the evolution of the recorded music, the increasingly engaging live show, and the willingness to take musical and personnel chances. It's one thing to be young and excited to hit the road. It's another to sustain that energy.

Upcoming season brings 4 candidates vying for Illinois Symphony's top job

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 12, 2023

The 2023-24 season will be a mix of classical, contemporary and popular works, with each candidate for music director leading the orchestra twice. And a new monthly Sips & Sounds series pairs cold brews and music at Keg Grove Brewing Company.

Imagine the world without Hamlet. Gunderson's 'Book of Will' illustrates why we don't have to.

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 6, 2023

As per tradition, the Illinois Shakespeare Festival puts on two Shakespeare plays, reserving a third slot for someone else. Now playing at Ewing Cultural Center, Lauren Gunderson's "Book of Will" is the true story of how Shakespeare's friends banded together to posthumously publish the Bard's works.

Business and Economy

Durbin tells Rivian CEO that employees 'deserve the benefits and security offered by a union if they so choose'

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 27, 2023

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin is mixing into the unionization effort at the Rivian electric vehicle plant in Normal. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace workers is trying to organize the plant. Durbin says he has met with Rivian CEO R-J Scaringe and told him the company should support unionizing efforts.

Tax receipts show Bloomington-Normal restaurants doing better than national average

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 22, 2023

Bloomington and Normal collected more than \$9.1 million in food and beverage taxes last budget year. That's up 29% from 2019.

Judge dismisses retaliation lawsuit against State Farm

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 16, 2023

A judge dismissed Carla Campbell-Jackson's claim that State Farm fired her in 2016 after 27 years of employment because she reported an anonymous letter that contained racist and offensive statements that was sent to several workers at a Michigan office of the company.

Nuclear plant moratorium bill heads to veto session fight in Illinois

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 14, 2023

The veto of a law to end a moratorium on new nuclear power plant construction in Illinois sets up a battle in the fall veto session. In his veto message, Gov. JB Pritzker appears to be saying the bill isn't ready for prime time.

Moody's downgrades credit rating of Commerce Bank

[Charlie Schlenker](#), August 9, 2023

Moody's Investor's Service has downgraded the credit rating of a regional bank with a strong central Illinois presence. The one notch reduction of Commerce Bank from a1 to a2 is among downgrades of 10 small to mid-sized banks.

Small town pride: Restoration group bringing Good Ole Days back to Colfax

[Emily Bollinger](#), July 28, 2023

The Aug. 4-5 event in the northeastern McLean County village celebrates the town's history and looks to its future.

ISU trustees to vote on financing for Mennonite School nursing lab

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 26, 2023

Illinois State University staff is asking trustees to approve up to \$14 million in borrowing to help finance the new Mennonite School of Nursing Simulation Lab Building. Trustees meet Friday to take up that issue and a number of other proposals.

Sen. Koehler backs estate tax law change

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 24, 2023

You don't usually find Democrats picking up the gauntlet to weaken provisions of a law originally intended to prevent the concentration of capital into hereditary wealthy elites. But State Sen. Dave Koehler of Peoria said there's a sound economic development reason to do so.

B-N area businesses project strong employment growth in next 3 years

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 21, 2023

McLean County businesses expect to add more than 2,500 jobs in the next three years. That's according to a survey of more than 100 employers conducted for the Chamber of Commerce.

Zoning for solar installations likely to evolve as use increases

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 21, 2023

Most solar panel projects in Normal have been roof mounted so far but there is potential for more ground mounted units like the one the council approved this week for Grace Church on Hovey Avenue.

Home sales decline in B-N, but prices are still climbing

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 21, 2023

The pace of home sales in Bloomington-Normal is down 15.6% so far in 2023. But prices are up, on average, 6.5%.

Flavor-forward beer comes first for craft brewers

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 17, 2023

Craft beer is all about the flavor. Even after small brewers have found a niche, they keep experimenting, running test batches, and sometimes finding the next big thing their customers like. It's not so easy, though, to predict the next big thing.

Craft beer in Bloomington-Normal keeps growing, but is a saturation point near?

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 14, 2023

In the last 15 years, McLean County has gone from one craft brewery to eight, and another just over the county line in Fairbury. There are six in Bloomington-Normal alone. At some point, craft brewers will start competing and there won't be room for more — but not yet.

Normal studying homeless issues in Uptown

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 6, 2023

The Town of Normal is looking into the issue of unhoused people in Uptown — an issue in bad weather at Uptown Station that could emerge as a significant issue in the future.

Environment and Nature

Families convene with nature at annual Nature Trails Day — this year at Comlara Park

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 7, 2023

After years at the Sugar Grove Nature Center, Nature Trails Day moves to the northwest McLean County recreation area near Evergreen Lake for a family-friendly day of nature walks and educational activities.

Bloomington-Normal hospitals see patients for heat-related illnesses and aggravated health problems

[Eric Stock](#), August 25, 2023

Bloomington-Normal hospitals are treating patients for sign of heat illness and heat stroke during this week's stretch of intense heat.

Research shows as temperature rises, mental health risk increases

[Melissa Ellin](#), July 27, 2023

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) says 2023 could be the hottest year to date. Meanwhile, researchers are finding that as the temperature rises, people's mental health might be worsening.

State regulators work to avoid federal Clean Air Act sanctions

[Peter Hancock](#), July 14, 2023

Continued noncompliance could result in loss of federal highway funding

Recycling rate rises in McLean County, but misses target

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 7, 2023

McLean County improved its recycling rate significantly last year, but lost ground on its goals. The Ecology Action Center in Normal reports the county recycling rate rose to nearly 47% of all solid waste produced last year, up from about 44% in 2021.

Education and Schools and Higher Education

A top IWU administrator is stepping down, will return to the classroom next year

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 26, 2023

Mark Brodl will remain at Illinois Wesleyan to teach in the biology department.

IWU enrollment rises, with 16% increase in first-year students

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 22, 2023

New digital peer-to-peer counseling service for ISU

September 22, 2023

ISU president says this is an exciting and challenging time in higher ed

September 21, 2023

Solving a puzzle: IWU adds mental health escape rooms to nursing curriculum

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 21, 2023

Illinois Wesleyan University students were forced to put their skills to the test in the form of an escape room, the classic puzzle game with a twist.

Unit 5 board OKs annual budget; asks community to join strategic planning sessions

[Michele Steinbacher](#), September 20, 2023

The tentative FY23-24 budget is about 10% higher than last year, and includes a \$173 million operating plan.

Former U-High teacher, football coach arrested on battery charge

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 20, 2023

Michael Troll, 64, was arrested Sept. 19 and charged with a count of simple battery in an incident that involved a minor.

Challenger Learning Center's upgrades are ready for takeoff

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 20, 2023

The modernized, more flexible command center at Heartland Community College allows students to make real-time decisions during space simulations.

Heartland Community College enrollment is stable

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 15, 2023

Heartland Community College enrollment grew incrementally to start the new term. Enrollment vice president Sarah Diel-Hunt said student headcount at Heartland is up 1.3%, while credit hours taken dropped by 0.9%.

Much at stake in ISU president search, and many ways to err

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 13, 2023

Illinois State University trustees have chosen to use Parker Executive Search as the hiring and consulting firm to help find the next president. The firm will be paid \$110,000 plus expenses. There's a lot to be done to identify a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates and make sure the new person will be a quality hire.

Freshman, overall enrollment up at ISU in new academic year

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 7, 2023

Total enrollment at Illinois State University increased by 1.5% for the 2023-24 academic year. An incoming freshman class of 4,147 students marks the largest batch of new students since 1986.

Baby Fold offers emotional support training at Fairview Elementary School

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 6, 2023

The Baby Fold — a nonprofit and community partner to Fairview Elementary School — is using a McLean County Health Department grant for regulating student behavior.

ISU trustees to hire search firm in effort to find a permanent president

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 1, 2023

Illinois State University's governing body approved a resolution Friday authorizing its board of trustees to hire a search firm to find candidates for the university's top job.

[ISU-OSF partnership brings 24/7 behavioral health care to student-athletes and other health benefits](#)

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 1, 2023

Illinois State University athletes are getting access to round-the-clock health care services through the school's recent partnership with OSF Healthcare.

[Efforts to bolster public health workforce are underway in McLean County](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 25, 2023

Illinois Wesleyan University is offering a new degree program in public health, and a nearly \$280,000 grant is coming to the McLean County Health Department.

[Colene Hoose natural playground is nearing completion, but there are some rules you should know](#)

[Ryan Denham](#), August 24, 2023

The new natural playground surrounding Colene Hoose Elementary School in Normal is nearing completion and is now open for use. A public grand opening event is set for October.

[Bloomington-Normal junior highs use 'restorative' model to combat rising discipline issues](#)

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 24, 2023

Suspensions at Unit 5 and District 87 junior highs have been rising for years, with three of the five schools hitting a high last school year.

[Regional Office of Education schedules substitute teacher fairs to address shortage](#)

[Megan Spoerlein](#), August 24, 2023

The fairs are a one-stop event for those interested in becoming a sub to complete the substitute teacher licensing process.

[Bloomington teacher hopes trip to Israel adds to his students' learning experience](#)

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 23, 2023

Greg Kocourek has received national recognition for his commitment to incorporating lessons from the Holocaust into his social studies classes. After a summer trip to Israel's Holocaust memorial, Kocourek hopes to add another dimension to his teaching.

ISU faculty members rally to support unionization

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 22, 2023

Dozens of people gathered on Illinois State University's campus on the second day of classes to signal support for unionizing tenure and tenure-track faculty.

Picket spotlights dispute between stagehand union, ISU

[Lyndsay Jones](#), August 18, 2023

Members and supporters of International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 193 staged a picket Friday on College Avenue. The union, representing 100-plus stagehands at Illinois State University, says it staged the demonstration after contract negotiations with the university did not include certain safety provisions.

Unit 5 plans \$16 million in fund transfers to balance its budget

[Colin Hardman](#), August 17, 2023

The Unit 5 school board will vote on the \$232.9 million budget next month, followed by the district setting an annual tax levy in December.

ISU adds dismount zones after fatal bicycle-pedestrian crash

[Megan Spoerlein](#), August 17, 2023

Illinois State University is taking a step to improve pedestrian safety by implementing dismount zones in high foot traffic areas.

District 87 projects a deficit after getting a \$9 million surplus

[Eric Stock](#), August 16, 2023

The District 87 school board will get its first look at its \$89.9 million spending plan Wednesday night.

State Farm donates \$1M to new EV lab at Heartland Community College

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 15, 2023

Construction continues on Heartland Community College's new electric vehicle lab, now named for the local insurance giant State Farm.

ISU interim president says university is at an 'inflection point'

Lyndsay Jones, August 14, 2023

Illinois State University interim president Aondover Tarhule spoke to WGLT about the potential for new student housing developments, how the university has increased diverse student enrollment without affirmative action, and more.

Thousands of B-N borrowers in limbo after Supreme Court's ruling on student debt forgiveness

Braden Fogerson, August 14, 2023

Last year, the Biden administration opened up applications to those who wanted to have some or all of their federal student loan debt erased. Nearly 13,000 people in Bloomington-Normal applied. That's about 1 in 10 people living in the Twin Cities.

Alliance gets District 87 and Unit 5 children ready for school with backpack giveaway

Megan Spoerlein, August 8, 2023

The Back to School Alliance's annual free distribution had more than 4,000 backpacks available for Unit 5 and District 87 students this year. The distribution put backpacks and supplies into the hands of students so they're ready to learn on day one of the new school year.

Olympia school district will ask voters for a tax increase to save aging swimming pool

Jack Podlesnik, August 8, 2023

A referendum next March will determine whether the Olympia school district will have enough money to renovate the high school swimming pool.

Bridge Academy prepares for year two, opens enrollment to grade 6

Melissa Ellin, August 5, 2023

Central Illinois Bridge Academy — a first-of-its-kind school for the area, serving middle school and high school students with mental health concerns — is preparing for its second year of classes.

ISU trustees approve new physics degree offering

[Lyndsay Jones](#), July 28, 2023

The board of trustees' approval on Friday means a plan for the forthcoming master's degree in physics will be sent to the Illinois Board of Higher Education for review.

Reaching out: DEI efforts increase at ISU lab schools

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 26, 2023

Lab Schools director Anthony Jones says said one way to boost diversity is better communication with potential students during the application period early in the year.

ISU trustees to vote on financing for Mennonite School nursing lab

[Charlie Schlenker](#), July 26, 2023

Illinois State University staff is asking trustees to approve up to \$14 million in borrowing to help finance the new Mennonite School of Nursing Simulation Lab Building. Trustees meet Friday to take up that issue and a number of other proposals.

Heartland Community College opens new job training site in west Bloomington

[Megan Spoerlein](#), July 25, 2023

Heartland Community College renovated space leased from Mid Central Community Action to set up an instructional site that will open this fall.

Feeling welcome: Piña joins IWU as chief strategist leading DEI initiatives

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 25, 2023

Dakesa Piña becomes the inaugural vice president of diversity, equity and inclusion at the private, liberal arts university that enrolls 1,600 students. The breadth of her role includes embedding DEI in academic units, workplace culture and facilities, plus supervising the existing Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Does your school have a racial harassment policy? A new law requires one on the books by 2024

[Lyndsay Jones](#), July 21, 2023

After multiple tries, Senate Bill 90 — or the Racism Free Schools Act — was passed by the state legislature in the spring, signaling a policy victory for Teach Plus Illinois, a group of educators working for legislative solutions in the education field.

Unit 5 board OKs new contracts, staff returns with better pay

[Michele Steinbacher](#), July 20, 2023

Unit 5 leaders say newly-approved boosts to educators' pay will give the district a competitive edge in attracting employees.

Parents of ISU grad and aspiring veterinarian Kristian 'KP' Philpotts give 300 people a free day at the zoo

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 18, 2023

Five central Illinois cities declared July 17 as Kristian "KP" Philpotts Day, honoring an aspiring veterinarian and community servant who made an impact at Illinois State University, Eastern Illinois University and the University of Illinois. Philpotts was shot and killed in 2022 when three teenagers attempted to rob him while he was driving for Lyft.

Epiphany Catholic School is adding classrooms and modern amenities in \$3 million renovation

[Megan Spoerlein](#), July 14, 2023

Epiphany Catholic School in Normal is working on a major renovation. Epiphany's current \$3 million project focuses on adding and improving classrooms for the junior high school, said pastor Eric Powell.

Latinos are a growing segment of the college applicant pool. Is ISU ready to serve them?

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 7, 2023

Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of a declining pool of college applicants, but are less likely than white students to graduate. A workshop organized by Illinois State University's Latin American and Latino Studies program aimed to address the needs of Latino families during the recruitment process and after arriving on campus.

Unit 5 board OKs annual budget; asks community to join strategic planning sessions

[Michele Steinbacher](#), September 20, 2023

The tentative FY23-24 budget is about 10% higher than last year, and includes a \$173 million operating plan.

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LISTEN

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Pritzker signs Central Illinois Regional Airport and District 87 waiver bills

[Eric Stock](#), August 7, 2023

A measure that will add a new property tax for McLean County residents outside of Bloomington-Normal is now law. Gov. JB Pritzker has signed a bill to create the Central Illinois Regional Airport Authority.

Does your school have a racial harassment policy? A new law requires one on the books by 2024

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Unit 5 to pay out \$28,500 to settle lawsuit from former employee

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Unit 5 is likely to pay \$28,500 to a former employee to settle a lawsuit alleging the school district failed to protect her from sexual harassment and then retaliated against her when she raised concerns.

A top IWU administrator is stepping down, will return to the classroom next year

[Lauren Warnecke](#), September 26, 2023

Mark Brodl will remain at Illinois Wesleyan to teach in the biology department.

IWU enrollment rises, with 16% increase in first-year students

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 22, 2023

Illinois Wesleyan University had a 16% increase in first-year students to start the school year. Kasey Evans, the associate vice president for enrollment, also says total enrollment rose 3%. That's after a sharp drop last year.

ISU president says this is an exciting and challenging time in higher ed

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 21, 2023

Aondover Tarhule said in the annual State of the University speech that the institution stands at an inflection point, telling the campus community ISU has a bright future despite looming challenges in higher education.

Heartland Community College enrollment is stable

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 15, 2023

Heartland Community College enrollment grew incrementally to start the new term. Enrollment vice president Sarah Diel-Hunt said student headcount at Heartland is up 1.3%, while credit hours taken dropped by 0.9%.

First Reggie Redbird shares spirited memories

[Charlie Schlenker](#), September 8, 2023

As the fall sports season takes off at Illinois State University, mascot Reggie Redbird is everywhere, making community appearances, sharing the cheering duties at games in multiple sports. It's a lot. There are, in fact, multiple Reggies. It wasn't always that way.

Freshman, overall enrollment up at ISU in new academic year

[Lyndsay Jones](#), September 7, 2023

Total enrollment at Illinois State University increased by 1.5% for the 2023-24 academic year. An incoming freshman class of 4,147 students marks the largest batch of new students since 1986.

Bradley University looks to finalize cost-cutting decisions by end of the year

[Tim Shelley](#), August 29, 2023

Bradley University will move relatively quickly to cut costs by 10% amid declining undergraduate enrollment and a bleakening outlook for higher education at large.

Eureka College works to attract students in an unstable time for higher education

[Collin Schopp](#), August 24, 2023

Across the country, higher education institutions are reevaluating what they can offer students in a changing and competitive workforce.

State Farm donates \$1M to new EV lab at Heartland Community College

[Lauren Warnecke](#), August 15, 2023

Construction continues on Heartland Community College's new electric vehicle lab, now named for the local insurance giant State Farm.

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Bradley University looks to slash costs by 10% as institution runs a \$13 million budget shortfall

[Tim Shelley](#), July 31, 2023

The university ran a \$13 million budget shortfall in fiscal year 2023. Standifird said that's about 10% of the university's total operating budget.

ISU trustees to vote on financing for Mennonite School nursing lab

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Latinos are a growing segment of the college applicant pool. Is ISU ready to serve them?

[Lauren Warnecke](#), July 7, 2023

Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of a declining pool of college applicants, but are less likely than white students to graduate. A workshop organized by Illinois State University's Latin American and Latino Studies program aimed to address the needs of Latino families during the recruitment process and after arriving on campus.

Health and Medicine

McLean County offers free attendance for sixth behavioral health forum

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 29, 2023

Registration is officially open for McLean County's sixth annual Behavioral Health Forum, and this year, it's free.

Stress runs high in agriculture, especially for women

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 26, 2023

Studies spanning the past several years have shown mental health conditions are common among agriculture professionals and their families, but women aren't always a focus of the conversation.

New digital peer-to-peer counseling service for ISU

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 22, 2023

Illinois State University staff, faculty and students can now use the digital peer-to-peer counseling service free-of-charge and 24/7.

Solving a puzzle: IWU adds mental health escape rooms to nursing curriculum

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 21, 2023

Illinois Wesleyan University students were forced to put their skills to the test in the form of an escape room, the classic puzzle game with a twist.

Women to Women Giving Circle goers want affordable housing but obstacles loom

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 20, 2023

At the Women to Women Giving Circle affordable housing forum, the consensus was that the community wants and needs affordable housing. But getting it isn't simple.

Bloomington-Normal community members discuss identity, Latin and Hispanic heritage

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 13, 2023

First, second and third-generation immigrants of Latin and Hispanic heritage discussed their identities and how they fit into the Bloomington-Normal community Tuesday night.

Where McLean County stands during the ongoing behavioral health workforce shortage

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 11, 2023

More than five years into a worsening behavioral health workforce shortage, the county, community partners and local colleges are still trying to recruit new workers and bounce back.

Several Bloomington-Normal events mark National Suicide Prevention and National Recovery Month

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 7, 2023

Three local organizations are hosting National Recovery and National Suicide Prevention Month events in Bloomington-Normal toward the end of September.

Baby Fold offers emotional support training at Fairview Elementary School

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 6, 2023

The Baby Fold — a nonprofit and community partner to Fairview Elementary School — is using a McLean County Health Department grant for regulating student behavior.

Local Boys & Girls Club CEO talks behavioral health, progress on move to larger space

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 5, 2023

CEO Tony Morstatter shares that the local club is 40% of the way toward raising funds for the new facility, which will be on the west side and will offer increased behavioral health spaces.

ISU-OSF partnership brings 24/7 behavioral health care to student-athletes and other health benefits

[Melissa Ellin](#), September 1, 2023

Illinois State University athletes are getting access to round-the-clock health care services through the school's recent partnership with OSF Healthcare.

Bloomington-Normal junior highs use 'restorative' model to combat rising discipline issues

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 24, 2023

Suspensions at Unit 5 and District 87 junior highs have been rising for years, with three of the five schools hitting a high last school year.

The U.S. is 'failing mothers' with mental health concerns. Here's what Bloomington-Normal is doing about it.

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 15, 2023

Mothers nationally are not provided adequate resources to deal with their mental health concerns, but Bloomington-Normal community members think they have more options than most.

Bloomington-Normal provides haven for art therapy

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 14, 2023

Bloomington-Normal community members are providing outlets for self-expression through art, helping intentionally and unintentionally to relieve mental health concerns for others in the area.

What is needed to get more special needs housing at the county jail

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 7, 2023

Staffing shortages have been plaguing the McLean County Jail for months, but once it's up to full staff another special needs unit could open for inmates with mental health concerns.

Bridge Academy prepares for year two, opens enrollment to grade 6

[Melissa Ellin](#), August 5, 2023

Central Illinois Bridge Academy — a first-of-its-kind school for the area, serving middle school and high school students with mental health concerns — is preparing for its second year of classes.

What it's like as a 988 crisis counselor at PATH

[Melissa Ellin](#), July 31, 2023

Susan Rush, a crisis counselor at PATH, looks back on her job a year after the national suicide and crisis lifeline became operational nationally.

Research shows as temperature rises, mental health risk increases

[Melissa Ellin](#), July 27, 2023

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) says 2023 could be the hottest year to date. Meanwhile, researchers are finding that as the temperature rises, people's mental health might be worsening.

Mental health professionals will join Illinois State University police on 911 calls

[Melissa Ellin](#), July 25, 2023

Illinois State University police are implementing a co-responder policing program where mental health professionals and law enforcement make joint responses to 911 calls.

Q&A: Project Oz executive director previews new Youth Education and Support Center

[Melissa Ellin](#), July 19, 2023

More education and support services for youth and adolescents are on the way to Bloomington-Normal by way of Project Oz.

Carle Mobile Health Clinic hitting the road in McLean County

[Melissa Ellin](#), July 13, 2023

Carle Health is bringing a 40-foot mobile health care clinic to McLean County to help close care gaps in the community.