



WGLT.org
89.1FM
Bloomington-Normal's Public Media



2020 Annual Report

WGLT Year in Review

from General Manager R.C. McBride

We will always look back on 2020 as the year we experienced a tumultuous election, massive protests in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, and a deadly pandemic that upended daily life. Each of these made an enormous impact on our community. WGLT and NPR have been there to cover all of it with in-depth analysis and context from multiple perspectives. If anything good has come from all of this in our little corner of the universe, it's that NPR, WGLT, and public media have proven their immeasurable value. All of us—including you, our supporters—should be very proud of that.

The Only Constant in Life is Change

Like many of you, COVID-19 led to major changes in how we work. WGLT shifted to primarily work-from-home mode in mid-March. The change was relatively straightforward, though disruptive, for the business and development sides of the house—at least



WGLT work-from-home mode.

until the “virtual” fund drives. Most of the content you heard and read, however, also had to be produced from the homes of our staff members. Operations Director Travis Meadors deserves a very special shout-out for figuring everything out quickly and without a tremendous impact on our budget.

The pandemic forced us to think creatively. No large gatherings meant no Summer Concert or Radio Faces. For the former, we partnered with long-time supporter CEFCU to produce a series of “Stay at Home” virtual concerts featuring local artists playing a variety of genres. Later in the year, we teamed up with arts and cultural partners, who couldn't perform shows in front of live audiences, for a special series of Friday night broadcasts called “WGLT Presents.” Partners included Heartland Theatre Company, Illinois State University's School of Theater and Dance and School of Music, and many others.

Our partnership with Bradley University for WGLT to manage day-to-day operations at WCBU in Peoria proved to be even more beneficial than we could have envisioned. By combining business, management, and operations staffs, both stations were able to weather the pandemic economic fallout better than they would have had the operations remained separate. WGLT's daily newsmagazine *Sound Ideas* took a spring/early summer hiatus to allow us to regroup for social distancing requirements but returned in July at a new late afternoon time slot of 5 p.m., and feedback has been positive.

The Best of the Best

In the fall, WGLT became the most listened-to local news radio station for the first time ever. Monthly traffic to WGLT.org frequently exceeding 200,000 unique visitors—more than 10 times what it when we first began to seriously focus on our non-radio products five years ago.

The pandemic didn't stop some staffing changes. Dana Vollmer joined WGLT in July. We also added to our impressive line-up of part-time journalists, with many joining the team during the year. Our students remained a vital part of our newsroom, juggling school and work from home demands like pros. Finally, longtime Program Director Mike McCurdy retired in October after nearly three decades of service. This paved the way for a reorganization of staff, with some well-deserved promotions including Ryan Denham to content director, Jon Norton to audio director, and Ariele Jones joining staff full-time as music director and All Things Considered host.



Mike McCurdy

None of this could have occurred without your help. Individual giving is more important now than ever. I'm happy to report an increase in this funding area during 2020 despite the large and understandable drop in corporate support we have experienced. Please keep it up, and tell your friends! If you're interested in other ways to contribute, there is plenty of information at WGLT.org, and we're always happy to answer and email or a phone call. We look forward to seeing you in-person when it's safe to do so.

What's next for WGLT?

We will be modernizing WGLT.org mid-2021 with improvements that will enhance our ability to offer a variety of local content. Our plan to add more full-time journalist positions is in a holding pattern until the economic situations in the country and the community stabilizes. Most importantly, however, the quality daily service you depend on from NPR and WGLT will remain available to all who wish to consume it.

And so we go onward together with your support!



R.C. McBride
General Manager



From the WGLT Newsroom...

It was quite a year, with nonstop major news stories in 2020 that demanded strong local coverage. The following is an overview of what kept WGLT's newsroom busy.

Coronavirus – WGLT was the leader in COVID-19 coverage in Bloomington-Normal, pairing data-driven analysis with personal stories of loss and adaptation. That coverage included a rigorous fact check of Gov. J.B. Pritzker's claims about a Bloomington testing site and deep-dive reporting into how the virus decimated local nursing homes.

Social justice – WGLT was there following the murder of George Floyd, which sparked near-daily social justice demonstrations in McLean County in the summer, then followed it up with data-driven reporting on how often police use force in Bloomington-Normal.

Summer unrest – We were there—literally—as stores were looted in separate violence, and we've tracked those cases through the criminal justice system.

Election coverage – Even during a pandemic, voters needed to be informed about who and what was on the ballot in the November election. WGLT adapted its traditional in-person candidate forums into a series of video interviews with candidates running for state and county office.



Events

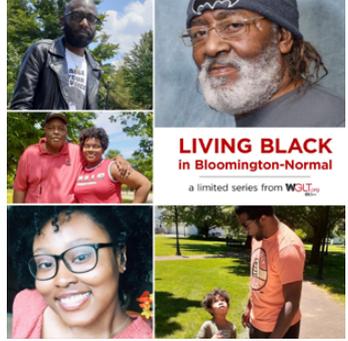
The pandemic made it impossible to host many in-person events this year, with one exception. WGLT's newsroom hosted a socially distanced debate (in an empty auditorium!) between U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis and his challenger Betsy Dirksen Londrigan before the November election.



Special Series

Living Black in Bloomington-Normal

The social justice movement that was rekindled in 2020 showed us all that it's time to listen. We turned on the microphone and did just that. WGLT's 23-part Living Black series featured 1-on-1 interviews with Black community members—young and old, rich and poor, professionals and students. They bravely shared their own experiences of what it's been like to live Black in this community. Listen to the series at WGLT.org/LivingBlack.



WGLT.org's Most-Read Stories

The Top 10 most-read stories of the year on WGLT.org include some of our most impactful, important reporting from across the community.

1. Remembering Dani Kater, COVID's Youngest McLean County Victim
2. With Less Driving, State Farm May 'Return Value' To Policyholders
3. Normal Couple Flush With Cash After Deal On 'Shark Tank'
4. Video: Looters Hit Target, Walmart In Normal As Unrest Grows
5. At ISU, 273 Students Have Tested Positive For COVID-19
6. State Farm To Return Up To \$2 Billion To Auto Customers
7. Police: Concealed Carry Masks Are OK During Pandemic
8. Illinois State University To Close Dorms, Shift To Online Classes Due To Coronavirus
9. First Confirmed COVID-19 Case Reported In McLean County
10. Surge In COVID Cases Lands McLean County On NYT 'Bad News Ahead' List

Meet the entire WGLT team at WGLT.org/staff



R.C. McBride



Melissa Libert



Travis Meadors



Ryan Denham



Nicole Welsh



Jon Norton



Eric Stock



Jennifer
Armstrong



Charlie
Schienker



Ariele Jones



Dana Vollmer



Jon Hall

Our 2020 “Stay at Home” virtual concerts featured local artists playing a variety of genres.

STAY AT HOME CONCERT

presented by **CEFCU**

WCBU.org
89.9FM

WGUT.org
89.1FM

No 1 Disorganizer • Emily Hope
Hot Sauce Universe
Stone & Snow • V8 Vast Change

APRIL 5, 2020

APRIL 18, 2020

No 2

3rd Street Down • Jeni B - That Folkin' Girl
Dan Hubbard • Tina Sparkle
Austin & Collin & The Way Down Wanderers

No 3

Chicago Farmer • Addi & Nick Evans
Hoosier Daddy • She Said So
Sherwood Forest

MAY 3, 2020

MAY 16, 2020

No 4

Matthew Curry • Cole Hollow
Kevin & Cassie Hart & Family
Harvest Sons • Turas

MAY 30, 2020

THE FINALE

Julius Adams • Edward David
Anderson • Leah Marlene
The Mary Jo Curry Band • Sara Quah



hosted by **ARIELE**



produced by **JON NORTON**



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