



**2021**  
Annual Report

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



## Vision Statement

WGLT aspires to be McLean County's first and most trusted destination for local news. We aim to earn and maintain the trust of our community with consistent, high-quality and timely content and coverage. WGLT will serve as a training ground for the journalists of tomorrow in every facet of our news operation, leading with the understanding that independent journalism is the foundation of a thriving democracy. We will innovate in all areas of our business to remain financially sustainable so that we may serve a dynamic, thriving, and diverse community.

## Mission Statement

WGLT is McLean County's leader in local news. We provide the highest quality local, national, and international news coverage and also shine a light on local music, arts, and culture programming. WGLT champions independent nonprofit journalism as our public service duty with on-air and digital content freely available to all who want it. We operate at the center of our community, and we are committed to facilitating an ongoing dialogue that educates and challenges our audience.

# WGLT Year in Review

from General Manager R.C. McBride



R.C. McBride

The past year has been tumultuous. No doubt 2021 comes close to rivalling 2020 in that regard, but I'm happy to report it was another successful year for your public radio station. Among the year's highlights:

- In January, WGLT became the first public radio station in Illinois to work with the University of Illinois-Springfield's Public Affairs Reporting Program to establish an internship at the capital, allowing us to have coverage in Springfield of Bloomington-Normal issues every spring semester.
- The pandemic bumped our annual Radio Faces fundraiser out of its usual fall time slot and prohibited us from doing it in person. Nevertheless, in February we hosted a successful virtual version featuring NPR's Ayesha Rascoe and returning veteran favorite Don Gonyea. He was kind to step in for Scott Detrow at the last minute while Scott covered the impeachment. Two things that are never dull: live news coverage and events!
- In the spring, we launched a fully revamped WGLT.org. We also made some changes to our local hosting lineup, with Arielle Jones taking over duties as Morning Edition host and Jon Norton moving to All Things Considered. This past summer, we added two NPR shows to our weekend lineup: Throughline and Code Switch. Following feedback from our listener survey, we added an hour of Weekend Edition on both Saturdays and Sundays and a second airing of Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me.
- For the second straight year, the pandemic also kept us from hosting our annual Summer Concert. Thanks to CEFCU and numerous community partners, we pivoted to the Summer Concert Satellite Series—a set of smaller outdoor concerts that supported live and local music.
- As the COVID vaccine became more widely available, we were finally able to return staff to in-person work at the WGLT studios by late summer. This ended a period of roughly 15 months where the entire WGLT staff worked mostly from home.
- The newsroom was busy adapting to the times, adopting new or updated policies on corrections, unnamed sources, crime coverage, and more. More information on these is available on the transparency page at WGLT.org.
- We welcomed several new members to the WGLT team. Madeline Jean-Charles became corporate support director in July after serving in a similar role at the University's student newspaper. Sarah Nardi joined the newsroom full-time in September, and Lyndsay Jones transitioned from The Pantagraph in November. Despite the pandemic—and in fact enhancing our ability to cover it, no matter where home base was—we continued to feature a large group of talented, part-time correspondents and more than a dozen paid student interns each semester.
- WGLT continues to experiment and innovate. The station was accepted for membership to the Institute for Nonprofit News (INN), and was selected to participate in three pilot projects: NPR/Apple News, which will allow WGLT's news to be more easily discoverable in the Apple News app; the NPR Member Station Streamlined Donation Initiative designed to make it easier for visitors to NPR.org to financially support the local station of their choice; and the CPB/Poynter Institute Digital Transformation project, which is an extended professional development opportunity designed to help stations better serve their local communities on digital platforms.



*WGLT staff*

- Other programming and community outreach initiatives included running a series of public service announcements featuring healthcare workers from OSF and Carle, another on the importance of voting prior to the spring municipal elections, and airing a series of “Black Facts” produced by the Normal West high school Black Student Union.
- We wrapped up our strategic planning process in September, polishing off revised mission and vision statements. The entire staff participated via Zoom, as did university and community stakeholders. Beyond being required by the Corporate for Public Broadcasting, a new strategic plan helps re-focus our day-to-day work and keeps us focused on being the first and most trusted destination for local news.

The pandemic has taken a tragic toll in many areas, and it’s also made things more difficult from a business perspective. Fortunately, WGLT’s individual giving has been strong throughout. We hit our spring and fall fund drive goals. THANK YOU! It’s only as of this writing in early 2022 that we’re beginning to see signs of corporate support returning to pre-pandemic levels. Thanks to both aggressive fiscal management and the procurement of emergency federal funding, WGLT was able to finish both FY20 and FY21 with only modest cash flow losses. Our complete audits are available on the Transparency page at [WGLT.org](http://WGLT.org).

This promises to be another busy year. As of July 2021, WGLT assumed management oversight of The Vidette, the University’s student newspaper. While no WGLT funds will be used for the newspaper, it does require some time from a business, operations, and management perspective. In exchange, however, WGLT will be able to expand our training ground for tomorrow’s journalists. WGLT will be moving into new studios in a newly remodeled Vidette building on Locust Street sometime this year. In addition to nice new and more modern digs, we’ll be able to work in closer proximity to students, some of whom work for both The Vidette and WGLT already, and have accessible surface parking. This makes it easier for us to welcome newsroom guests and others into the building. Much more to come on this exciting news.

Since I used the words “much more,” I’ll say that’s what WGLT hopes to provide in 2022 and beyond: more local journalism, more storytelling, more investigative reporting, and more voices on the air. But of course, that will require your support. We ask a lot, but we also know you and the community at large recognize the value WGLT provides in return for that investment: consistent and quality coverage of our community and beyond. I’m so very proud of what our team coupled with NPR has done covering the elections, the pandemic, the insurrection, ongoing demands for racial justice, and so much more. Thanks to your contributions, we can do that and make it available—for free—for anyone who wishes to access it.

Here’s to a new normal in 2022!

R.C. McBride  
General Manager



Lyndsay Jones



Sarah Nardi



## From the Newsroom

### Most-read stories of 2021

WGLT.org's most-read stories of 2021 reflect a community still grappling with COVID-19 and the mysterious death of an Illinois State University graduate student, and excitement surrounding growth at electric automaker Rivian.

1. Coroner: Body Found In LaSalle County Is Jelani Day
2. Judy Markowitz, Bloomington's Groundbreaking Mayor, Dies
3. State Farm Moving To Hybrid Workplace Model
4. How to Get A COVID Vaccine In McLean County
5. 1 Killed, 1 Injured In Downtown Bloomington Shooting
6. Rivian Fuels Home Buying, Building Surge In B-N
7. Central Illinois Can Resume Indoor Dining With Move To Tier 1 Mitigations
8. Bloomington Tent Dwellers Face 'Eviction' As Restaurant Prepares To Open
9. Inside The Rivian Plant: 'It's Like Google And Toyota Had a Baby'
10. IWU Alum Dave Kindred Pens Memoir After Losing A Grandson To Addiction

### Election coverage

The WGLT Newsroom mobilized to cover local elections in Bloomington-Normal in April, when voters selected their mayors, council members, school board representatives, and more. Hundreds of people reviewed WGLT's online Voter Guide before casting ballots.

WGLT hosted live forums for the candidates running for Bloomington and Normal mayor and Heartland Community College trustee. Our list of partners for these events grew to include the McLean County League of Women Voters, the Bloomington-Normal chapter of the NAACP, and Illinois State University's Center for Civic Engagement.

### New series

Several ongoing series debuted on WGLT's Sound Ideas throughout 2021.

- Food Trek, covering new frontiers in food and farming in central Illinois twice per month. Made possible with support from the Illinois Farm Bureau and GROWMARK.
- Sound Health, offering practical healthcare insight twice per month. Made possible with support from Carle Health.
- Beyond Sports, an occasional series introducing you to the Bloomington-Normal athletes who do incredible things, even after the game is over.

### Awards

The news team continued to be recognized for excellence by our peers.

- Two first-place awards from the Public Media Journalists Association, in the Audience Engagement category for the series Living Black in Bloomington-Normal and in Use of Sound for the story "911 Calls Show COVID Outbreak Unfolding In Real Time."
- First place Illinois News Broadcasters Association Crystal Mic award for Best Newscast—Charlie Schlenker's daily 5 p.m. newscast.

# 2021 Community Events

This year started to look a little more normal with the return of Radio Faces, albeit virtually, and a series of smaller summer concerts.



*Photo courtesy of Nightshop*

**Thanks to our 2021 partners and hosts**  
Cultural Fest Presents Music in the Park  
Front Street Music Festival  
Mackinaw Valley Vineyard & Winery  
McLean County Museum of History  
Make Music Normal  
Nightshop  
Saturdays on the Square



**Save the date for our 20th anniversary celebration**  
June 18 in historic Downtown Bloomington on the museum square

# 2021 WGLT Donor Roll

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Thank you to the more than 100 contributors who supported WGLT at the Day Sponsor level, giving at least \$365 this year. Celebrate the 2021 Day Sponsors and see their messages at [WGLT.org](http://WGLT.org).

Please contact WGLT Contributor Services with additions or corrections at (309) 438-3581 or [contributorservices@wgl.org](mailto:contributorservices@wgl.org).



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## 2021 WGLT Event Sponsors and Underwriters

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 Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts  
 Bloomington Normal Audiology



“We chose WGLT because its listeners are both loyal and interested in public health topics. Public radio audiences listen attentively to WGLT for extended periods of time, and that means they’re more likely to both hear and care about messages.”

*Dr. Natalie McKee, owner of Bloomington Normal Audiology*

Bloomington Normal Jaycees  
 Bloomington Public Library  
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 CEFCU  
 Central Illinois Regional Airport  
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 Children’s Discovery Museum  
 City of Bloomington  
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