



WCBU.org
89.9 FM

Peoria Public Radio

2020 Annual Report

WCBU Year in Review

from General Manager R.C. McBride

The following sentence is a huge understatement: A lot has happened since WCBU last released an annual report, both in the world and at the station.

Just in the last year, we've lived through a tumultuous election, massive protests in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, and a deadly pandemic that has upended life as we know it. Each made an enormous impact on our community. WCBU and NPR have been there to cover it all 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, WCBU, and public media have proven its value. All of us—including you, our supporters—should be very proud of that.

And to think Peoria came close to having no public radio station of its own. I won't re-litigate that here, but since Illinois State University and WGLT assumed day-to-day management of WCBU in 2019, we have increased service and stabilized financially. And we're on the cusp of making it through the pandemic.

There was not a WCBU annual report issued in 2019. It was one of the things that fell to the wayside as we scrambled to adapt to working remotely and covering everything mentioned above. This report will attempt to cover the highlights of what's happened in the past two years,



WCBU work-from-home mode.

WCBU in 2019 and 2020

- On June 1, 2019, the management agreement mentioned above went into effect. WCBU immediately grew the local Peoria-based journalism staff from 1.5 to 3.5 with News Director Tim Shelley, Executive Producer Daniel Musisi, and journalists Joe Deacon and Kristin McHugh. Anna Chumbley is corporate support director. Combining WCBU's and WGLT's business, management, individual giving, and operations areas have allowed both stations to operate more effectively and efficiently. As a side note, no one could have seen the pandemic coming, but this in particular made it easier for both stations to weather the financial fallout.

- Several well-known Peoria journalists have been added on a part-time basis and increased opportunities for contributions from students at Bradley and Illinois State. More on this in the newsroom section.
- In November 2019, WCBU studios relocated from the now-razed Jobst Hall to the top floor of Morgan Hall on the Bradley University campus. We were just about ready to schedule tours and an open house when the pandemic hit. Doing so is still on our agenda when it's safe to gather.
- WCBU's Community Advisory Board has grown in size and is more active and engaged. A huge amount of credit for this goes to former President Ambra Haake and current President John Lamb, as well as their past and present colleagues. The board is actively looking for volunteers. More on this in John's update.
- WCBU launched a new daily local news podcast and in October, started a series of Friday night specials called "WCBU Presents." This has featured works from Bradley University Theatre, Peoria Symphony Orchestra and many more, all of whom were unable to perform in front of live audiences because of COVID-19. You're hearing more locally produced features during *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, a local newscast that been added during the noon hour.
- The station's finances stabilized, though we're still operating at pretty much money-in, money-out. WCBU had six weeks of operating cash on hand on June 1, 2019. As of this writing, we now have approximately funds for four months. That's nowhere where we need to be but it's an improvement, especially considering all that has happened since.

None of this progress could have occurred without your help. Individual giving is more important now than ever, especially in light of the large and understandable drop-off in corporate support this year. Please keep it up, and tell your friends. If you're interested in other ways to contribute, there is plenty of information at WCBU.org. We're always happy to answer an email or a phone call.

What's Next for WCBU?

In the short term, I'm hopeful we will create another full-time journalist position in the summer of 2021. This is something we were in the process of doing in March 2020 before the world had other ideas. That will pave the way for a WCBU-produced local daily news magazine to air from 5-5:30 p.m. weekdays beginning this fall. We will be modernizing WCBU.org soon. Most importantly, the quality daily service you depend on from NPR and WCBU will be available to all who wish to consume it.

And so we go onward, and together, with your support!



R.C. McBride
General Manager



From the WCBU Newsroom...

It was quite a year in 2020 with nonstop major news stories that demanded strong local coverage. Three main stories kept WCBU's newsroom busy.

Coronavirus

WCBU was a leader in COVID-19 coverage in the Peoria area, pairing data-driven analysis with personal stories of loss and adaptation. Coverage tapped into Peoria's medical expertise to help users make informed decisions about their own health.

Social justice

WCBU was there when the killing of George Floyd sparked social justice demonstrations across the tri-county area. We then followed up by introducing you to young Black leaders in the local Black Lives Matter movement.

Election coverage

Even during a pandemic, voters needed to be informed about who and what was on the ballot in the November election. WCBU provided extensive interviews with local candidates, culminating in an election special program on Oct. 28.



First COVID case announced



Black Lives Matter rally in Pekin

New Podcast

In July, the WCBU newsroom launched On Deck, Peoria's first and only daily news podcast. New episodes are available by 5 a.m. every weekday, featuring the biggest story of the day, a run-down of important headlines, and a special feature or interview. Subscribe on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or NPR One. Learn more at WCBU.org/OnDeck.



Mayoral Race

In 2021, Peoria voters will elect their first new mayor in 16 years. Throughout the year, WCBU covered a huge field of candidates who emerged to succeed Jim Ardis.

New Faces

You heard several new voices on WCBU this year, including full-time reporter Joe Deacon, a veteran reporter and longtime central Illinois resident. We also introduced correspondent Mike Rundle along with student interns Jody Holtz, Michael Jameson, Jordan Mead, and Chloe Calcote.

WCBU.org's Most-Read Stories

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

1. Galesburg Man Charged with Inciting Riots in Chicago, Minneapolis
2. In Pekin, Violating the Stay-At-Home Order May Mean a \$750 Fine
3. This Pekin Doctor Survived COVID-19. Here's What He Wants You to Know.
4. Drive-in Movie Ritual Returns in Peoria
5. Peoria Weighs Curfew After Chaotic Night of Violence, Looting
6. Something to Carp About: New Efforts to Remove Invasive Fish From Illinois River Underway
7. Jukebox Comedy Club Asking for Help As Temporary Closure Could Become Permanent
8. COVID-19 Outbreak Confirmed at Bradley University
9. Hoos: Alleged Peoria Looters Could Face Up to 30 Years In Prison
10. Here's Where You Can Buy Legal Pot on New Year's Day

Meet the entire WCBU team at [WCBU.org/staff](https://www.wcbu.org/staff)



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

WGLT.org
89.1FM

No 1

Disorganizer • Emily Hope
Hot Sauce Universe
Stone & Snow • V8 Vast Change

APRIL 5, 2020

No 2

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

APRIL 18, 2020

No 3

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

MAY 3, 2020

No 4

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

MAY 16, 2020

THE FINALE

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

MAY 30, 2020



hosted by **ARIELE**



produced by **JON NORTON**



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Community Advisory Board Update

Despite the many changes we've been through as Peoria Public Radio listeners the past two years, the role, existence, persistence of the station's Community Advisory Board has not changed. Our job is to advise and make recommendations to the governing body of WCBU 89.9 FM in three areas: the station's programming, its service, and its significant policy decisions. We advise in such a way that is reasonably representative of the diverse needs and interests of the communities served by the station.

What stands out to me as the current board chair is this reference to the communities of the station, as in plural. We may be one listening audience, but we hear with different perspectives that reflect our geographic, generational, political, economic, and religious worlds. Not only that, but we are not just an anonymous city living in a random year. This is Peoria, Illinois—the symbol of middle America—looking to compose and embrace our “Big Picture” in the 21st century.

We're making our way through the pains of the pandemic, losing and gaining small businesses and flights out of PIA. We're navigating Black Lives Matter, three years after re-naming a primary school for the city's first Black female physician and looking at six more, with either a Black or Hispanic council member about to sit in the mayor's chair.

How can WCBU serve all our communities? As a Community Advisory Board, we are having that conversation with the station's general manager and staff in meetings every other month that are open to the public. You can attend, contact us directly, and even apply to join the board at peoriapublicradio.org/cab. Whether you've been with WCBU since the beginning in 1970 or you're just now joining this collaborative central Illinois experience, we welcome your voice.

John Lamb
Chair, Community Advisory Board

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