



WC **CBU.org**
89.9 FM

A joint service of Bradley University
and Illinois State University

2022
Annual Report

n p r Network



WCBU Scholarship Winner Olivia Streeter (far right)

WCBU Year in Review

from General Manager R.C. McBride

Like many of you, time still seems to me to be more elastic since March 2020, and 2022 seemed to fly by. While we continue to grapple with what the “new normal” is, or when it’s coming, or if it’s already here, I’m proud of another successful year of outstanding community service provided by the WCBU team. Among the highlights:

- In January, we began an informal but significant content-sharing arrangement with another non-commercial radio station in Peoria: Strictly Hip Hop (WAZU 90.7 FM/WAZUFM.org). The station airs two WCBU-produced newscasts every weekday morning and afternoon, allowing local news to reach an even larger audience.
- To show we can do print media too, the next month we started sharing content with local monthly newspaper *The Community Word* (TheCommunityWord.org). Again, the idea is to get local quality journalism in front of as many people as possible.
- Speaking of journalism, WCBU’s excellent work was again noticed by its peers. For the second year in a row, WCBU was won the Illinois News Broadcasters Association’s Crystal Microphone Award as Illinois’ Best Radio Station. INBA also honored Joe Deacon as the state’s Best Reporter. News Director Tim Shelley picked up a second place national honor from the Public Media Journalists Association for his coverage of public housing in Peoria, and he was honored as part of Peoria Magazine’s 2022 class of “40 Leaders under 40.” Finally, WCBU won a prestigious Edward R. Murrow Overall Excellence Award for a four-state area including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.
- In October, WCBU partnered with the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria and Bradley University to host a candidate forum featuring 17th Congressional District candidates Republican Esther Joy King and Democrat Eric Sorensen.
- We welcomed several new full-time staffers to the WCBU team in 2022. Jody Holtz is host of *All Things Peoria* and *On Deck*, while Collin Schopp is our newest full-time journalist. Bradley student-turned-graduate Holden Kellogg also joined as an audio producer.
- Speaking of students, the WCBU newsroom also mentored young journalists this year and awarded a scholarship to the outstanding Olivia Streeter. One of the most important things we can do is train and prepare the next generation of journalistic talent.
- Not everything we do is about news. During March, WCBU’s Highway 309 featured women artists exclusively to spotlight Women’s History month (and received a shoutout from NPR Music!)



R.C. McBride



Collin Schopp



Jody Holtz

- In August, in one of the more surprising and flattering moments of my professional life, I was elected by my colleagues throughout the country to serve on the NPR Board of Directors. I was formally seated in November.
- Finally, near the end of the year and after input from Bradley staff and faculty, the WCBU Community Advisory Board, WCBU staff, and at-large members of the community, WCBU unveiled a new mission and vision statements and strategic plan. This plan not only updates where we are and where we're going in our efforts to best serve Greater Peoria, but it aligns with Bradley University's strategic plan.

We have much to look forward to in 2023. We'll be installing new equipment this summer that will make WCBU's broadcast more reliable and sound better. NPR has some cool things ahead, including a streamlined yet more robust app that will make it easier to read and listen to WCBU and NPR content. You'll start hearing WCBU refer to itself as part of the "NPR Network," part of an ambitious, large-scale branding and awareness effort to double our (WCBU's and NPR's) number of users and contributors by 2030.



Holden Kellogg

As we wrap up the fourth year of the unique partnership between Bradley and Illinois State universities to grow our local coverage—a partnership that serves as a model for the public media elsewhere—I want to again thank YOU. Without your ongoing support, the continued investment we're able to make—whether in equipment, national programming, or local journalism talent in Peoria—simply can't happen.

R.C. McBride
General Manager



From the WCBU Newsroom

Most-read stories of 2022

1. Attorney believes DNA evidence will clear Chester Weger in 1960 'Starved Rock Murders' case
2. Peoria's proposed passenger rail route would connect the River City to Chicago
3. Residents object to a plan for affordable housing at a north Peoria apartment complex
4. A Woodford County dig site may change our understanding of how Mississippian Native American culture grew
5. Onetime downtown staple Richard's is reopening on University
6. 'Heartbreaking ... exhausting ... frustrating': ICU doctor describes nearly 2 years of fighting COVID in Peoria
7. Ameren customers are about to see a big energy bill increase. Here's why it's happening, and how you can offset it
8. Peoria passenger rail station sites narrowed down to 3 riverfront locations
9. Peoria first responders using new communication boards for patients facing verbal communication challenges
10. Meet the 23-year-old Pekin resident behind the 'Illinois Storm Community' Facebook group

Election coverage

In October, WCBU was the co-host of the only formal debate in the closely contested 17th Congressional District race between Democrat Eric Sorensen and Republican Esther Joy King. The forum took place at Bradley University, in collaboration with WGLT, WNIIJ, and the League of Women Voters of Greater Peoria.

WCBU also produced feature-length interviews with each of the congressional candidates for All Things Peoria.

Digging Deep

The newsroom produced several special episodes and series in 2022, including but not limited to:

- A Mother's Day roundtable discussion with the mothers and grandmothers of those who have lost their lives to gun violence in the city of Peoria
- A weeklong look at the state of mental health services in the Peoria area, including where the gaps in services lie and actions to address them
- The new "Welcome Home" initiative focusing on the Peoria area's newest residents

Awards

WCBU was awarded the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award for Small Market Radio Overall Excellence in Region 7, a four-state region including Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. The station also won the Illinois News Broadcasters Association Best Station Crystal Mic Award in the Small Market Radio category for the second year in a row. WCBU's staff also received recognition for their efforts. Joe Deacon won the statewide Best Reporter award in the INBA Small Market Radio category. News Director Tim Shelley picked up a second place national honor from the Public Media Journalists Association for his coverage of public housing in Peoria, and he was honored as part of Peoria Magazine's 2022 Class of "40 Leaders under 40."

2022 WCBU donor roll

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*Deceased

Thank you to the nearly 100 contributors who supported WCBU at the Day Sponsor level, giving at least \$365 this year. Celebrate the 2022 Day Sponsors and see their messages at WCBU.org.

Please contact us with additions or corrections at WCBUPeoria@IllinoisState.edu or (309) 438-3581.



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“WCBU provides a critical resource to our community, fact-based news that helps listeners filter out the noise. Our team believes that public radio cultivates an audience of lifelong learners. As Benjamin Franklin said, ‘An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.’”

Kelly Holloway, ChFC®
 Advisor | Director of Client Engagement at PalomarWealth

Community Advisory Board Members

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- Becky Doubleday, Vice Chair
- Sara Netzley, Recording Secretary

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- R.C. McBride
- Melissa Libert
- Jennifer Armstrong
- Anna Chumbley



Community Advisory Board Update

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about how your local public radio Advisory Board is supporting WCBU, one of Greater Peoria’s most important community resources. On behalf of the board, you should know it’s truly an honor to represent WCBU. The role of the Community Advisory Board is to provide advice, recommendations, and support to the station to help ensure WCBU programming and service, reflecting the diverse needs and interests of the communities it serves.

You may or may not know that as part of its oversight of affiliated stations, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting requires annual input from its representative Community Advisory Boards on three topics related to their station: programming, service (beyond broadcasting), and significant policy decisions.

Programming: In 2021, the board encouraged WCBU to continue its “robust local news coverage” in the upcoming year. Goal achieved—and more! We are happy to report that WCBU not only maintained superior local news coverage but also expanded it on many fronts, as noted in R.C. McBride’s Year In Review. And it’s not just our Advisory Board recognizing these accomplishments. For the first time in station history, WCBU won a regional Edward R. Murrow Award from the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTNDA). Plus, for the second-straight year, WCBU was awarded Best Station honors from the Illinois News Broadcasters Association (INBA). And there’s more you can read about at WCBU.org.

Service: WCBU is a joint service of Bradley University and Illinois State University. Last year, the Community Advisory Board advised WCBU management to continue to leverage alignment to Bradley University’s 2021 strategic plan—especially Bradley’s strategic imperative to be welcoming, caring, diverse and inclusive. From the Community Calendar to local event sponsorship such as Peoria’s annual Juneteenth celebration and Peoria Art Guild Fine Art Fair, WCBU continues to support the Greater Peoria community in so many ways beyond programming. In 2023, we will be working with WCBU management to explore more ways we can effectively support station efforts to expand community engagement.

Policy: On significant policy decisions, we continue to support Bradley University as WCBU’s home base. We highly value having a robust, Peoria-based newsroom covering the stories essential to the health of our community. That said, we also believe that strategic partnerships, like the one between Bradley and Illinois State in support of the station, are essential to the current success and future growth of WCBU. In our view, WCBU has never been more successful in its long, rich history than it is right now. We are confident that is a trend that will continue.

If you are interested in what we are doing in support of WCBU, we invite you to attend one of our quarterly public meetings—or even apply to join the board if you are looking to expand your enthusiasm for WCBU and all it has to offer. We look forward to hearing from you.

Jennifer Essig, Chair
Community Advisory Board



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