

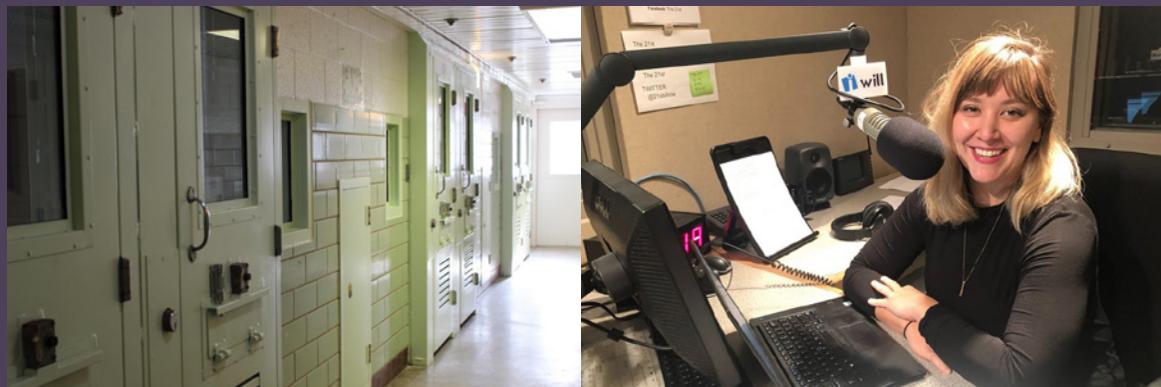


A Look Inside Illinois Public Media

Your gifts have supported independent, local, and regional journalism you've come to expect from WILL.

Illinois Newsroom reporters Christine Herman and Lee V. Gaines have been featured nationally for their health care and education reporting, respectively. Through her Rosalynn Carter Mental Health Journalism Fellowship, Christine has reported on access to health care, especially the mental health of young people in our community. In 2019, Christine was the only Fellow asked to speak to the former President and First Lady, as well as The Carter Center Board of Councilors, on her mental health reporting. With her Education Writers Association Reporting Fellowship, Lee broke multiple reports on flaws in the local prison education system, including the removal of over 200 books

from a prison library. You've heard both Christine and Lee on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*, and both have received various awards on their reporting that has sparked discussion, policy change, and even new legislation.



Our dedicated, insightful news reporters regularly provide information pertinent to our community.

In 2019, our newsroom engagement team continued its successful News & Brews events to bring reporters, policy makers, and leaders together with the community to have thoughtful conversation in a social setting. This work was supported with

a grant from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation's Democracy Project. Its goal and ours is to develop educated, informed, and engaged citizens.

Incarcerated people are seldom heard on air, and the issues that affect them often don't get much traction in the media. It was important to me to draw attention to what was happening to this college-in-prison program, but also how that affected the men enrolled in the program.

— Lee V. Gaines

AWARDS

Telly Awards

Classical: *BTS*

- Bronze in music webseries
- Silver in videography/cinematography: episodes "Julia Kay Jamieson" & "Stephen Schmidt"
- Bronze in videography/cinematography: "Stephen Taylor" episode
- Bronze in editing: episodes "Stephen Taylor", "Charles Joseph Smith", & "Julia Kay Jamieson"

From Prison to College: How a Formerly Incarcerated Student Overcame the Odds to Graduate

- Winner of Silver in general: individual documentary and Bronze in general: news/news feature

Public Radio News Directors Inc. Awards

The 21st

- First place in best call-in show: "Best Midwest Foods and Student Mental Health Groups"

Christine Herman, reporter

- Second place in best news feature: "Out of Options, Parents Trade Custody for Treatment"

Associate Press Broadcast Awards

Lee V. Gaines, reporter

- Second place in best spot news: "Obama Visits U of I Campus, Urges Students to Get Out and Vote"
- Second place in best investigative report: "Illinois Prison System Spent Less Than \$300 on Books Last Year"

Christine Herman, reporter

- First place in best series or documentary: "Continuing Mental Health Coverage"
- First place in best hard news feature: "Out of Options, Parents Trade Custody for Treatment"

Brian Moline, host of *Morning Edition*

- First place in best newscast

If the public is not informed, there's no pressure to make change. As a journalist, my goal is to shine a light on issues like these, to make real change possible.

— Christine Herman



“

Because of generous Friends like you, our community knows Illinois Public Media, through its various platforms, is bringing controversial issues to light. It is that high level of trust that allows us to bring you these thought provoking investigations.



Maurice "Moss" Bresnahan
CEO Illinois Public Media

ILLINOIS COUNTRY



Director Sarah Edwards and Cinematographer DJ Roach



Alison Krauss being interviewed; Mo Pitney sings the original song "Backroads" from the documentary

Illinois Country highlights our state's contributions to local arts

Sarah Edwards, DJ Roach, and our video production team traveled the state to speak with musicians, historians, and supporters of country music. They found a plethora of performances, stories, and groundbreakers that are showcased in the multi-platform experience *Illinois Country*. The 2020 premiere of the documentary film on WILL-TV was made possible by many generous community sponsors: Illini Pella, The Rose Bowl Tavern, Techline, and Thomas Mamer, as well as Friends of WILL Gary and Marlena Bordson of Monticello, and another couple from central Illinois who have chosen to remain anonymous.

Voices of Illinois Country is a web series to highlight behind-the-scene moments and bring even more Illinois country music history to audiences. In November, Illinois natives and country musicians Suzy Bogguss and Andrea Zonn joined a special audience in the WILL-TV studio for *Illinois Country Live*. Hosted by Edwards, the concert focused on how their Illinois roots influenced Bogguss and Zonn's careers in country music. The live recording of this event aired in December on WILL-TV.



Tom Hampton, Suzy Bogguss, and Andrea Zonn

“When national public media presents a documentary like *Ken Burns' Country Music*, it gives us an opportunity to dive deeper into those experiences on a local scale. We greatly value our partnerships with local businesses and donors to bring this multi-media experience to life.



Reel Midwest highlights local documentaries

Illinois Public Media premiered *Reel Midwest* in January 2019. Inspired by the national documentary series *Independent Lens* and *POV*, we wanted to use our unique position in the community to bring the best of the Midwestern focused and produced documentaries to our broadcast, while focusing on Midwestern documentaries. 10 impactful films featuring regional stories and issues aired through early 2019 on WILL-TV. Reel Midwest returned in November 2019 with *All the Queen's Horses*, and will continue to showcase Midwestern films throughout 2020.



A new set blooms

When *Mid-American Gardener* returned for its 27th season in August, viewers got their first look at a brand-new set. Designed by Director and Producer DJ Roach and Art Director Kurt Bielema, the modular set allows for flexibility as the show continues to meet gardeners' needs.

The 21st hits the road

Throughout 2019, The 21st continued its goal to be engaged with the community. In February, The 21st traveled to Washington, DC, and broadcast live from the NPR headquarters. Then Host and Executive Producer Niala Boodhoo interviewed several Illinois Representatives and Senators, such as Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin. Then in September, The 21st recorded a show in front of a live audience at Ellnora: The Guitar Festival interviewing musicians, festival organizers, and promoters. This event—held at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts every two years—brings together guitar artists from around the world and our own backyard.



Talking to Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza in Washington DC



10 years of *Classic Mornings* with Vic Di Geronimo

Weekday mornings on WILL-FM have been enhanced by Vic's stories of his musical selections and musicians for an entire decade, enhanced by Di Geronimo's stories! Thank you Vic for providing a soothing soundtrack to our mornings; we look forward to many more decades.



EARLY CHILDHOOD CHAMPIONS



Moss Bresnahan, keynote speaker Bethany Patten, Kimberlie Kranich, and Niala Boodhoo

A salute to champions of early childhood education

WILL Education spearheaded the station's inaugural Early Childhood Champions dinner in May to celebrate the many educators in our community. The event marked the beginning of WILL's multi-year commitment to early learning, the goals of which include to recognize early childhood professionals in central Illinois, raise public awareness of the critical work they do, and highlight what research shows are critical steps to advance the field.

“Our challenge and our pleasure at WILL Education is to serve teachers, parents, and children in rural and urban communities by listening to their needs and matching those needs with our resources. Our satisfaction comes from knowing we have made a positive difference in the lives of people in central Illinois.”
— Kimberlie Kranich

“Many of our fondest childhood memories are from public media. It's this nostalgia that inspires support today, so that the next generation will continue to have daily interactions with public media throughout their lifetimes.”



Year-long projects that just keep growing



Design Squad continues to bring STEM activities to middle school students through after-school and summer programs, promoting outside-the-box thinking and collaboration among peers. Through our continued efforts, Hoopeston Library staff are now trained to implement the Design Squad activities independently.

The Book Mentor Project continues to provide free high-quality books in English and Spanish to more than 500 children ages 3-5 in Head Start classrooms throughout Champaign County with more than 75 volunteer readers and funded by PNC Bank's Grow Up Great Program.



Access to the multi-platform **PBS KIDS** engages children through hands-on, interactive programming, apps, games, and more than 11,000 hours of high-quality educational broadcasts.



PBS Learning Media provides teachers free access to thousands of lesson plans for grades PreK-12 on many different subjects that incorporate a variety of public media programming.

University students gain hands-on documentary experience

In the Fall Semester of 2019, Illinois Public Media and the Media and Cinema Studies department collaborated on an inaugural practicum class at Illinois creating a documentary series that would eventually be called "Illinois Student Lens". The class, working in groups

under the tutelage of Assistant Professor Derek Long and Producer DJ Roach, was tasked with producing three short documentaries (called "Op-Docs", or opinion documentaries) throughout the semester.



College of Media students work in the WILL-TV studio.

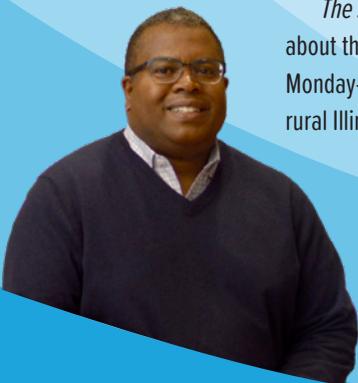
The students learned all aspects of documentary filmmaking, from topic research, to cinematography and lighting, to storytelling and editing. This first semester was a huge success, and the project will continue this spring and into the future as a collaboration between WILL-TV and the College of Media and Cinema Studies.

We look forward to seeing what the next wave of students create this spring!

“ In 2020, WILL is bolstering its commitment to trusted, quality journalism in Illinois. Please visit IllinoisNewsroom.org, powered by WILL and Illinois Public Media. It is a revamped, robust news site packed with daily coverage as well as award-winning, in-depth features about agriculture, education, and health that you can't get anywhere else.

The 21st, with new host Brian Mackey, is a place to have calm conversations about the topics of the day, including the ongoing COVID-19 health crisis. *The 21st* airs Monday-Thursday at 11am on WILL-AM 580. We also have plans to elevate voices of rural Illinois communities during election coverage leading up to Election Day.”

— Reginald Hardwick, WILL News and Public Affairs Director



Preparing the next generation of voters

WILL Education and Illinois Newsroom brought high schools students from Decatur, Hoopston, and Springfield to our studios in March for Yes! Civics, an interactive field trip that connected them to city councilors, school board officials, and journalists from their region. The students worked with journalists to prepare questions for candidates on the ballot in multiple municipal elections. Candidates' answers were posted online for the community. Students reported they enjoyed learning with their peers from around the state and interacting with professionals. The event was supported with funding from the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.



“It made me prepared to go out and vote,” said Jose from Decatur.

Election 2020

- Election coverage will be a top priority in 2020. We will remain as your most credible, unbiased source of information.
- We will continue to distribute factual journalism, including that from our PBS and NPR partners, regarding candidates, campaigns, and finances.
- WILL Education will extend its work with teens to combine real-life government with civics education to create informed new voters.
- Illinois Public Media is prepared to provide campaign information as well as up to the minute results for local, state, and federal elections.

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Election years are always a challenge for journalism, particularly presidential elections. Headlines can change in the blink of an eye, leaving many feeling overwhelmed by constant election coverage. But Illinois Public Media is committed to providing you election journalism with ease, when you want it and where you want it.





45 years of friendship

2019 was a year-long celebration of the Friends of WILL. 45 years ago, local volunteers helped organize our first over-the-air pledge drive to support public broadcasting. Since, thousands of Friends of WILL have volunteered their time, energy, creativity, and money to make sure public media is accessible for all. They made special gifts to complete the funding of Campbell Hall (home of Illinois Public Media) and have remembered the WILL stations through endowments. In November, we gathered for Friendsgiving, an opportunity for WILL to say thank you. We also celebrated former Director of Broadcasting Don Mullally, who sponsored the Friends idea, and longtime Director of Development Debbie Day, who led fundraising at the station from our days as a very small operation to an era when her team of artists, marketers, and fundraisers made WILL—and the Friends of WILL—a household name in central Illinois.



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These celebrations of the past have provided a wonderful opportunity to learn about our roots. Even as we made changes to the studio and sets, many memories of days gone by were shared by our staff and Friends. I've enjoyed hearing all the ways we were led to this moment.



Other highlights in 2020



Statewide distribution of *Illinois Country*



A new environmental reporter to focus on water, weather, and sustainability in Illinois



A permanent host for *The 21st*



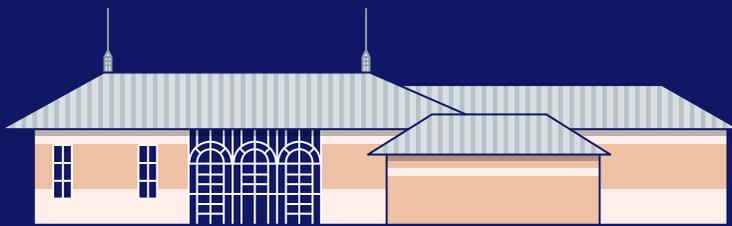
The relaunch of IllinoisNewsroom.org with more daily coverage and in-depth stories throughout the state

As you can see, there are a myriad of ways we have cultivated a symbiotic relationship with our community. When we listen to people, we learn what's important to investigate, explore, and highlight. That relationship is why local journalism is so incredibly powerful.

And now, Friends, it's a brand-new decade. We march together into the 20s with a strong commitment to provide completely inclusive public media. We will continually meet all the needs of our community while maintaining our journalistic integrity. We will accomplish this through award-winning reporters and a talented staff. But most of all, we will do it with you.

Thank you.





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