

2020 showed what we're made of: information, education, and entertainment for central Illinois. In the best of times. In the worst of times. That's the power of public media.

From WILL News to Illinois Newsroom

We reimagined a more statewide approach to news gathering and reporting under a newly-named Illinois Newsroom — expanding our coverage of health, education, agriculture, politics, and the environment. We also added collaborations, including WFYI's Side Effects to bring more stories on public health and Harvest Public Media to expand the agricultural stories we tell.



Trusted COVID information

166,848

TOTAL PAGE VIEWS
Coronavirus Information Center

When the shared experience is a global pandemic, fear of the unknown and isolation from familiar comforts and camaraderie enveloped all of us. Stepping in to inform and unite was the Coronavirus Information Center, spearheaded by Illinois Newsroom. This trusted online source provided not only multiple updates of local and state news each day, but also specialized reports from Illinois Newsroom reporters about the impacts of the coronavirus on education, agriculture, health

care, and more. Adding another dimension were the personal experience stories and conversations with experts offered daily on our statewide talkshow *The 21st*.

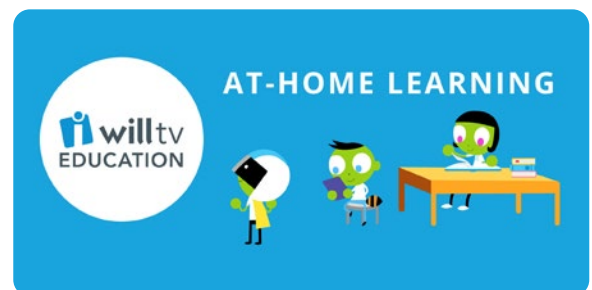
In addition to making live video from Gov. Pritzker's daily briefings readily available, we created one-minute local coronavirus updates that aired weekdays following the *PBS NewsHour* on WILL-TV.

Powering at-home learning

Illinois Public Media elevated its commitment to helping students learn at home by providing additional educational offerings for students of all ages, free of charge. One of the first actions was an updated WILL-TV daytime lineup of learning programs for students from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade, plus other TV resources for students in 6th through 12th grade.

Students eagerly accessed new digital resources — including apps, games, and printables, endorsed by local school districts, to support a range of academic subjects — through a dedicated at-home learning website. Parents and caregivers could also find learning materials contained in popular PBS KIDS programs, arranged by topic, on our website.

As always, materials related to those programs were also available for download on the Illinois Edition of PBS Learning Media, an online library of thousands of curated free, standards-aligned videos, interactives, and lesson plans specifically designed for teachers and students.



Illinois' influence on country music

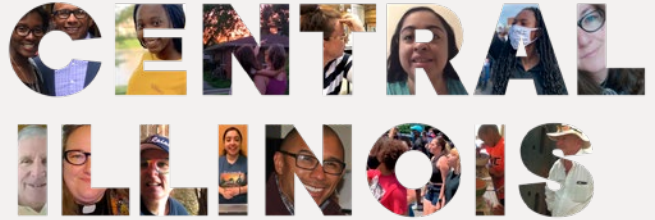


Serving as a companion documentary to Ken Burns' *Country Music*, Illinois Public Media's *Illinois Country* shared the personal stories of the musicians who have taken their talent from hometowns across the state to stages around the world. It also uncovered the venues and events—including the WLS Barn Dance in Chicago and FarmAid in Champaign—that contributed to the growth of this uniquely American art form.

Additional footage allowed our *Illinois Country* production team to create a six-part web series, *Voices of Illinois Country*, that offered further vignettes and performances from the artists.

Later, *Illinois Country* was honored with two Mid-America EMMY® Awards for outstanding work in the "Documentary - Cultural" category for the film as a whole and "Musical Composition/Arrangement" for its original song, "Backroads."

AMERICAN PORTRAIT:



Local storytelling captures pandemic experiences

Illinois Public Media also made the most of partnering with PBS *American Portrait*—a national storytelling project that opened a coast-to-coast conversation about what it truly means to be an American today and aligned with PBS's 50th anniversary.

We produced two 30-minute episodes of *American Portrait: Central Illinois* that aired on WILL-TV and were also available for streaming on the PBS Video app. In the June debut program—"Living Through the Pandemic"—we heard from a pastor, a high school senior, a grocery store operator, a nurse and father, a small business owner, and an oil producer on how they were adjusting to the economic, social, and psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The December episode—"Lift Every Voice"—followed the Windy City Performing Arts choirs in Chicago, the Danville High School Madrigals, and the University of Illinois Black Chorus on the Urbana campus as they navigated new challenges to singing together and keeping people safe.



Sharing the university's notable discoveries

The University of Illinois System's new *Rising to the Challenge* podcast shared some of the breakthrough discoveries from the Illinois campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield to help meet our world's most pressing challenges.

Debuting in September, this series of six episodes detailed how the university came together to battle the coronavirus — from creating a rapid, saliva-based detection test to addressing the educational, economic, and social challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

