

WTTW
FY2021

Local Content and Service Report to the Community



FIRSTHAND: Living in Poverty subjects and experts



WHO WE ARE

WTTW is the PBS member station in Chicago. WTTW is committed to producing and presenting trusted, best-in-class content fueled by a distinctly Chicago sensibility. We engage our audiences by entertaining, inspiring, educating, and reflecting a diversity of perspectives. Our purpose is to enrich lives, engage communities, and inspire exploration. We produce audience-driven content that is essential to Chicago and beyond. We are engaged in the community. We foster a culture of innovation and creativity, and we strive for first-rate capabilities and sustainability.

LOCAL VALUE

WTTW serves a vital role in our region, serving approximately 1.2 million monthly households (or approximately 2.1 million viewers) in Chicago and its suburbs, southern Wisconsin, northwest Indiana, and southwest Michigan, and far beyond with our streaming content services. We provide relevant quality content and trusted news coverage to our diverse community across four distinct television channels – our primary channel, WTTW; our secondary channel, WTTW Prime; WTTW PBS Kids 24/7; WTTW Create/World; on our website at wttw.com; and via the PBS video app.

WTTW is essential to Chicagoans, valued for high quality content and community engagement. 74% of people in Chicago are aware of WTTW, and in a competitive survey conducted in November 2018, WTTW was the most trusted media brand of local television affiliates in Chicago.

KEY SERVICES

WTTW provided local, audience-driven content and community engagement initiatives across Chicago's diverse regions and neighborhoods.

Audience-Driven Content

WTTW acquires, produces, and distributes best-in-class content that enriches lives, engages communities, and inspires exploration. We have identified the following principles to guide our decisions. Our content must:

- Create an emotional connection, entertain, and inspire exploration
- Be responsive to the needs of our audience and society
- Reflect diverse cultures, represent community voices, and offer unique perspectives
- Address relevant and contemporary interests

WTTW tells local stories, amplifying local voices and broadening horizons. WTTW prioritizes the creation and production of content that meets the needs, wants, and aspirations of our curious audience across traditional and digital platforms across three primary content verticals.

News & Information

LOCAL NEWS

Independent, unbiased, and trusted news is essential to a high-functioning democracy. Partisan news is

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

In FY2021, *Chicago Tonight* reached almost 272,000 monthly households (400,000 viewers) across the region on television, and served more than 1.6 million streams. 6.8 million users visited the WTTW News website, and viewed 10 million pages.

on the rise, local news sources are shrinking, the line between news and commentary continues to blur, and journalists are under attack. Trust in the media has been questioned and perhaps impacted in unknown ways, and local reporting is threatened by changing business models.

In the past year, WTTW expanded news coverage to serve the needs of our community. With a focus on our purpose and mission, we deepened our coverage with original reporting and increased our footprint with a commitment to both television and digital journalism and distribution. Our nightly news series *Chicago Tonight* continues to adapt to changing media habits and strives to reach a broad and diverse audience. We have increased digital-first, text, and day-of news content production.

We focus our reporting in key areas: local news, analysis, and enterprise reporting on our city, state,



Photo: WTTW/Ken Carl

CHICAGO TONIGHT: Co-anchors Paris Schutz and Brandis Friedman

education, and criminal justice systems; the environment; science and technology; business; and the arts.

WTTW News/*Chicago Tonight* is available live on WTTW, wttw.com/news, Facebook, YouTube, and on demand across all of our digital platforms.

FY2021 HIGHLIGHTS

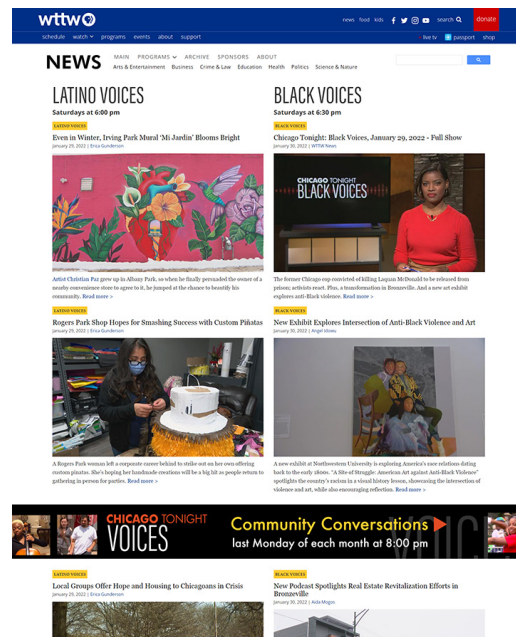
- Chicago Tonight: Black Voices* and *Chicago Tonight: Latino Voices*** – WTTW launched these two weekly series in September 2020 to provide thoughtful and accurate coverage of current events to inform and engage the public, and create opportunities for real conversation and a platform for different voices and perspectives. The two series offer a mix of analysis and features on a wide range of topics, including arts and life, entrepreneurship and innovation, and equity and justice across the sectors of our society and in the Black and Latino communities in Chicago. The producers work with a range of local grassroots organizations in story selection to ensure that coverage reflects the needs of the community.

wttw.com/voices

- WTTW News Community Conversations** – On the last Monday evening of each month and inspired by the *VOICES* weekend programs, WTTW brings together viewers and community and thought leaders for a dynamic conversation around the issues affecting the lives of Black and Latino Chicagoans, using topics in the shows as a springboard for discussion. Topics in FY2021 included the impact of the 2020 Presidential Election on the Black and Latino community, COVID-19 vaccinations, and the somber one-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. In addition, WTTW highlighted significant cultural topics such as the significance of Watch Night in the Black community and celebrating the significance of Latinas for Women's History Month.

wttw.com/events

- 2020 Elections** – In advance of the 2020 general election for federal, state, and local offices, WTTW reported on the races, hosted virtual



BLACK VOICES and LATINO VOICES homepage



GREAT CHICAGO QUIZ SHOW WITH GEOFFREY BAER

candidate forums, and launched a comprehensive digital Voter Guide that provided profiles of the candidates and key issues and a searchable map by congressional district.

wttw.com/votersguide

- **Coronavirus** – WTTW has consistently presented daily trusted and fact-based COVID-19 news and information to Chicago, across television, digital and social platforms. *Chicago Tonight* reporters and anchors visited Chicago neighborhoods to deliver on-the-ground reporting on how the coronavirus pandemic has affected local residents and businesses, highlighting their challenges and discussing solutions. Top stories included the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, the efficacy of masks, information about COVID variants and how communities are coping with them, and conflicts over in-home learning versus returning to classrooms.

news.wttw.com/tags/coronavirus

JOURNALISM TRAINING

WTTW News also continued to provide fellowships and internships for aspiring young journalists.

wttw.com/news

Entertainment

Collaborating with the Chicago filmmaking community, WTTW created local signature franchises that reflect our audience's ongoing interests across key genres – local history; lifestyle and food; society and culture; and science, nature, and natural history. We celebrate the vibrant life of Chicago and its many talented content creators to tell the stories of our city's fascinating history and cultural scene, its industry, and its ingenuity.

FY2021 HIGHLIGHTS

- *The Great Chicago Fire: A Chicago Stories Special* – This new documentary brought to life this seismic 1871 event using vivid animations, elaborate re-creations, and interviews with noted historians and the descendants of eyewitnesses. The companion [website](#) explored the causes, progression, and lasting repercussions of the fire, including how a terrible fire the previous day further depleted a woefully understaffed fire department. Animations, photos, illustrations, and interviews made the connections between the eyewitnesses and themes that emerged from



THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE: A CHICAGO STORIES SPECIAL



CHICAGO FROM THE AIR homepage

their stories. WTTW hosted a free virtual community screening event prior to the premiere.

wttw.com/fire

- *Chicago from the Air* – In this television special and website, host Geoffrey Baer narrated a sweeping bird's-eye tour of the city and beyond. Through the lens of a high-flying drone camera, viewers got a breathtaking view of the city that stretched as far as the eye can see, zoomed in to trace the remnants of long-lost roads and landmarks, and discovered what has replaced them. The companion website provided exclusive behind-the-scenes content and interviews, revealing how Chicago truly lives up to its motto, *urbs in horto* or “city in a garden.”

wttw.com/air

- *Making Sense of 2020* – As the COVID-19 pandemic upended the everyday lives of Chicago area residents seemingly overnight, this program explored how the WTTW News/*Chicago Tonight* team went into overdrive to cover the news from

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

Throughout the year, WTTW served its local community and beyond with content that entertained and enlightened audiences, with the goal of enriching their lives.

Chicago's neighborhoods, publish stories on wttw.com/news, and launch its two new weekend shows, *Latino Voices* and *Black Voices*. Their reporting revealed major disparities in community resources and impacts, how Chicago area residents stepped up to inspire and help each other, and how the city pushed through during a time that required extraordinary resolve and creativity.

wttw.com/makingsense

- *FIRSTHAND: Living in Poverty* – This Emmy Award-winning multiplatform initiative explored the personal, firsthand perspectives of people affected by poverty in Chicago. The project featured a 15-part digital series that follows



Andino, *FIRSTHAND: Living in Poverty*

Photo: WTTW / Liam Alexander



IDA B. WELLS website

a deeply humanizing portrait of a woman who was uncompromising in her quest for justice. The program tells the story of Ida B. Wells through interviews with her descendants and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, creator of the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting and the landmark 1619 Project. The website explored Wells' accomplishments and the causes she championed, her investigative reporting, and her life and family. WTTW hosted a behind-the-scenes preview and discussion with the filmmakers and some interview subjects, including Hannah-Jones.

wttw.com/idabwells

- Special Content - WTTW created immersive, original, and local digital content for Black History Month, Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, LGBTQ Pride Month, and Native American Heritage Month.

five Chicagoans coping with intergenerational poverty; six reported stories; five expert Talks proposing community solutions; a discussion guide; and a series of community screenings and conversations with experts that extended the reach of the project into Chicago neighborhoods.

wttw.com/poverty

- *The Great Chicago Quiz Show* - Geoffrey Baer hosted this fast-paced four-part series that put socially distanced contestants from across Chicago and the suburbs - and viewers at home - to the test as they contemplated all things Chicago across the categories of history and politics, architecture and geography, arts and culture, business, and sports. The companion website featured an interactive quiz that visitors could play anywhere, tracking in real time how their knowledge stacked up against others.

wttw.com/quiz

- *Ida B. Wells: A Chicago Stories Special* - this new documentary and companion website painted

KIDS AND FAMILIES

Research shows that parents and caregivers trust WTTW and PBS Kids content. Every day, children laugh and learn with the characters they've come to consider trusted guides and friends. This trust is at



DONKEY HODIE, filmed in WTTW's studios

Photo: The Fred Rogers Company

the center of everything we do and especially in what we share with the very youngest members in our communities and their families who depend upon us.

As we work to ensure that our content aligns to and leverages PBS initiatives and themes, WTTW presents the best children's media content from PBS Kids across our platforms – live and on-demand – to encourage and engage the curious explorer in all of us.

Our content encourages and engages the explorer in all of us, and we will continue to build a reputation as a leader in children's content and services. Notably, WTTW serves as co-producer of *Nature Cat*, the popular national STEM-based PBS Kids series that encourages children ages 3-8 to go outside and explore the outdoors, while learning about a variety of scientific topics along the way.

Community Engagement

As a trusted organization with purpose at the heart of all we do, WTTW has a unique opportunity to reach



THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG
virtual event

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

Through our children's television and digital content and services, WTTW reaches Chicago-area communities with educational, inspirational, and commercial-free media content every day.

beyond our television, radio, and digital platforms to build personal connections with people across Chicago's many communities. We do this by meeting people where they are and working in direct partnership with local organizations and residents to enrich lives, engage communities, and inspire exploration. Our focus is on three distinct but connected areas.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

We believe kids are innately curious, born explorers; our content can support them on their journey. Through our kids television and digital content services, WTTW reaches Chicago area communities with educational, inspirational, and commercial-free media content 24 hours a day, every day. In the next three years, we will extend this relationship by providing educational tools, materials, and support to positively impact children, families, and teachers.

African American and Latino students in Illinois enter kindergarten with lower rates of readiness than other students. According to the 2018 Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), just 13% of Latino and 19% of Black kindergartners demonstrated readiness in all three developmental areas (Social & Emotional Development, Language & Literacy, and Math). Focusing on these three developmental areas, WTTW created a new free online program, WTTW Kids Learn & Play, a series of biweekly collaborative, playful, and participatory learning experiences that took place on Facebook. WTTW also began distributing monthly activity calendars to 7,000 subscribers



Photo: Chelsea Hoy

WTTW News story on Trinity Irish Dance Company

consisting of daily activity options for young families to create new projects and memories together.

Children and families interacted with *Nature Cat* from the safety of their own homes throughout the fiscal year, taking ranger lead virtual National Park tours, or signing up for an online Explore the Outdoors Nature Cat summer Camp. Santa himself joined the *Nature Cat* fan club, hosting a virtual storytime, holiday sing-along and book giveaway of the new *Nature Cat* book, *A Nature Carol*. WTTW also offered at-home game kits for children and families in connection with *Molly of Denali*.

wttw.com/kids

WTTW also celebrated the value of early childhood education with the virtual award ceremony Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching, an annual celebration of local educators, this year honoring the best area teachers in the category of pre-kindergarten through third grade.

wttw.com/goldenapples

ACCESS TO THE ARTS

WTTW encourages everyone in our community to explore Chicago's rich, extensive, and diverse arts

scene by highlighting the work of the city's best performing and visual artists. WTTW's *Chicago Tonight* presented local theater and music performance reviews, and connected Chicagoans to the city's many cultural institutions with stories on exhibits at the Art Institute, Field Museum of Natural History, Museum of Science & Industry, and numerous smaller museums and neighborhood galleries; and dance companies including the Joffrey Ballet and Deeply Rooted Dance Theater. The program also curated a weekly feature, *10 Things to Do in Chicago This Weekend*.

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

In FY2021, WTTW's 36 virtual screenings and panel discussions attracted more than 46,000 attendees, with a total of almost 109,000 participating across all event categories, including kids and families.



Nature Cat and Buddy Bison

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Where conversations around civic and societal issues can dissolve into stereotypes and shorthand, we will work to surface and spotlight the people, ideas, and stories behind the headlines. And across our platforms and in the community, we strive to create a forum for discussion and encouragement of diverse opinions, authentic communication, and mutual understanding.

In FY2021, WTTW hosted numerous virtual screenings and panel discussions in connection with local and national content and programming, serving our local community with content that explored relevant topics including poverty, racial inequality, religion, Chicago and world history, and much more. These virtual events highlighted WTTW-produced series, films by local filmmakers and aspiring student producers, and PBS documentaries. Many of the screenings featured films focusing on Black, Latino, Asian, Jewish,

or Native American people and their stories, including *9to5: The Story of a Movement*, *The Black Church: This is our Story, This is our Song*, *Hemingway*, *Coded Bias*, *The Windermere Children*, *The Vote*, *What Will Become of Us*, and *100 Years From Home*. In addition, WTTW held behind-the-scenes previews and discussions of two original multiplatform productions, *The Great Chicago Fire* and *Ida B. Wells*. WTTW strengthened its partnership with PBS Books by co-hosting three live Facebook events that attracted more than 36,000 viewers – a conversation with the author and musician James McBride; “America’s Favorite Rapping Teacher” Dwayne Reed; and author and illustrator Cozbi Cabrera. Finally, WTTW held community discussions throughout the fiscal year for *FIRSTHAND: Living in Poverty*.

wttw.com/dei

SUMMARY

It is WTTW’s duty to advance and support our city by inviting people to explore new worlds, dive deeper into issues that matter most to them, and learn as we grow. We achieve this through world-class content, engagement in our community, and opportunities for adults and children alike to explore their world.

This means delivering trusted news and public affairs content; kids content that nurtures; and arts, music, and entertainment content that cultivates curiosity and opens doors and minds. It means going out into neighborhoods and building authentic connections with people of all ages to help them discover new possibilities, blaze new paths, and realize their dreams. It means focusing relentlessly on our audience and leveraging technology to meet them where they are. It means being valuable, valued, and essential.

WTTW will continue to evolve and innovate – producing and presenting unique, quality content that stands out in the media marketplace. The trust and equity WTTW has built over the years – and earnestly maintained – have made us a respected voice in the community. We are a media organization that tells true Chicago stories with the depth, clarity, and insight that the people in our region crave, and strives to make a meaningful, ongoing, and lasting impact on Chicago and on society at large.