



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

# A World of Stories



WISCONSIN  
PUBLIC RADIO



npr



## STRENGTH IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

For more than 100 years, Wisconsin Public Radio has served the people of our state with information, education and entertainment. During that time WPR has gone through many changes and 2021 was no exception.

In summer, our organization experienced a great loss when Gene Purcell, the director of Wisconsin Public Media (which oversees public radio and television) died in a tragic accident. A short time later Mike Crane, longtime director of WPR, retired. But, despite the change in leadership, the tremendous team of WPR employees have carried on — producing the outstanding newscasts and programs you have come to rely on.

In this annual report you will see many examples of their work. There are stories of resilience in the face of COVID, reports from the front lines of our legislative and judicial systems, and celebrations of the creativity and joy found in daily life throughout our state.

During this year of transition we are committed to continuing our tradition of outstanding programming as we explore even more ways of meeting the changing needs of our state. But we

know we can't do any of this without you — our listeners and supporters. Thank you for helping us be Wisconsin's public radio service.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Luljak".

Tom Luljak  
Interim WPR Director



## A WORLD OF STORIES

When disinformation and politicization divided the country, WPR offered Wisconsin residents research-based reporting. We brought stories of the first COVID-19 vaccinations, changing public health guidelines, contested election results, and the continuing fight for racial justice.

2021 saw some Wisconsin stories become national and even international news. Our reporters covered the Kenosha trial of Kyle Rittenhouse for WPR and NPR. When the U.S. military's withdrawal from Afghanistan brought refugees to Wisconsin, WPR captured their journeys from Kabul, their experiences at Fort McCoy and the local community's response. When "Bucks in Six!" came true, WPR amplified the energy of that thrilling NBA title win for Milwaukee and the entire state.

WPR launched a new podcast, "WPR Reports," focused on long-form, investigative journalism. The first series in the project looked at Wisconsin's re-districting fight in 2011 to show the importance of

---

*Above* Anthony Huber's girlfriend, Hannah Gittings, hugs Bishop Tavis Grant with Rainbow PUSH coalition after speaking about the verdict in the Kyle Rittenhouse trial on Friday, Nov. 19, 2021, in Kenosha, Wis.  
©Angela Major/WPR

*Opposite* Tom Luljak  
©Tom Krueger  
Photography/WPR



this political process just as new maps were being drawn in 2021. WPR joined a coalition of news outlets in northeast Wisconsin, forming the NEW News Lab to strengthen local reporting.

WPR's fellowship program for early career journalists continued to offer hands-on training in the field with fellows based in Madison and Milwaukee this year.

## CONNECTING WISCONSIN

In 2021, WPR's newly appointed source librarian worked with reporters and producers to find new voices for stories and expand the list of potential guest experts from underrepresented groups. Their work, and our annual report on source demographics, helped us create more content that is welcoming and reflective of everyone in Wisconsin.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of "Wisconsin Life" on WPR. More than 1,000 features have aired since its debut, giving a voice to Wisconsin's authors, musicians, blue-collar workers, activists,

students, and more. This year we ran a special series of stories from Wisconsin veterans and their families, collected through a partnership with StoryCorps' Military Voices Initiative.

Wisconsinites submitted 1,116 questions through WPR's citizen journalism initiative, WHYsconsin. Our journalists and producers responded with more than 400 related stories on air or online. The project has given people across the state a crucial way to engage our newsroom and get answers to questions they have about concerns in their communities.

To help more Wisconsinites access crucial highspeed internet service for school and work, WPR partnered with the Public Service Commission, PBS Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association to promote the Emergency Broadband Benefit initiative. Thanks, in part, to our partnership, more than 144,000 Wisconsinites were able to take advantage of the federal program.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

WPR's talk shows provided daily companionship and insightful conversations with people across the state in 2021. Our hosts invited listeners to engage on a wide range of topics, from current affairs to spring planting to college affordability. Our music hosts brought listeners the joy of classical music throughout the week. Weekend



Opposite Demonstrators gather at the state Capitol for the Rally for Fair Maps on Monday, May 17, 2021, in Madison, Wis. ©Angela Major/WPR

Above top UW-Whitewater wheelchair basketball players Jeromie Meyer, left, and Talen Jourdan, right, practice on Friday, Nov. 12, 2021, in Whitewater, Wis. ©Angela Major/WPR

Above WPR offers three fellowships to early career journalists each year. Diane Bezucha is our 2021 Lee Ester News Fellow. Jeffrey Potter/WPR

“[‘Mapped Out’] should be required listening in every civics and social studies class in Wisconsin. It’s an excellent summary of the history and status of a complicated and wonky, yet vitally important topic.”

- Michael, Hudson



“Your thoughtful programs and factual news reporting helped me to understand the thoughts and opinions of people other than myself. Thank you. Keep doing what do.”

- Blair, Marshfield

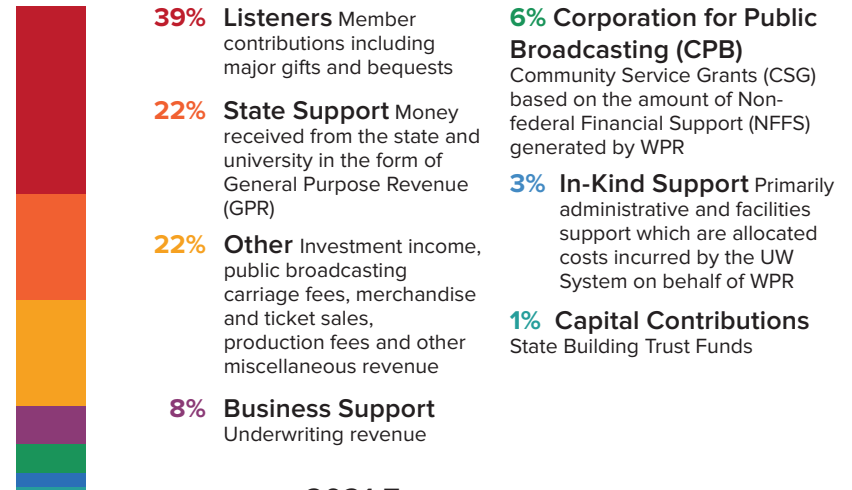
Above PBS Wisconsin's Katie Dreps poses with WPR's bike share promotion of our Alexa smart speaker skill in Madison. Jeffrey Potter/WPR

listeners enjoyed music with African roots and more on “The Road to Higher Ground with Jonathan Øverby” and folk favorites on “Simply Folk.”

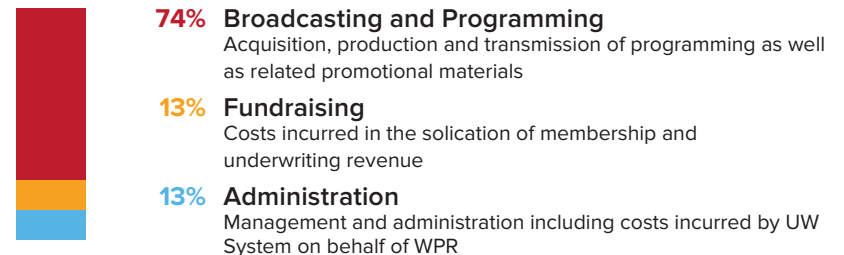
With many in-person gatherings in Wisconsin still on pause in 2021, WPR invited our audience to enjoy live music and events online. “Morning Classics” Host Stephanie Elkins shared the life and music of the historically marginalized Black composer, Florence Price. “BETA” Host Doug Gordon welcomed author Mateo Askaripour for a conversation about his new book. Fiddler Becky Buller brought delight to folk music fans with a free virtual Simply Folk Shindig. In all, more than 5,000 people participated in these and other virtual events in 2021.

## 2021 Financial Report

### 2021 Revenue



### 2021 Expenses



Revenues	FY21 Total	FY21 % Total	FY20 Total
State Support	6,542,281	22%	6,747,943
In-Kind Support	951,440	3%	902,289
Listeners	11,682,275	39%	11,315,449
Business Support	2,292,228	8%	2,665,343
CPB	1,770,430	6%	1,620,526
Capital Contributions	191,622	1%	878,038
Other	6,769,978	22%	1,818,921
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>30,200,254</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>25,948,509</b>

Expenses	FY21 Total	FY21 % Total	FY20 Total
Broadcasting and Programming	19,283,184	74%	16,607,168
Administration	3,440,213	13%	3,361,953
Fundraising	3,305,322	13%	3,702,057
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>26,028,719</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>23,671,178</b>

<b>Increase In Net Assets</b>	<b>4,171,535</b>	<b>2,277,331</b>
-------------------------------	------------------	------------------



# Remembering Gene Purcell

While there were many joys to be found in 2021, there were moments of sadness as well — none so great for those of us in public media as the sudden and tragic death of our longtime friend and colleague, Gene Purcell.

From his early days as a reporter and manager in La Crosse, to his leadership of the Educational Communications Board and Wisconsin Public Media, Gene shaped nearly all aspects of Wisconsin's public media. We miss him dearly.



## WORKING FOR WISCONSIN

WPR is a service of the Educational Communications Board and University of Wisconsin-Madison with support from the Wisconsin Public Radio Association. It has reporters, staff and studios throughout the state.

**Listen, learn more and donate online at [wpr.org](http://wpr.org).**

Questions? Call our Audience Services team at 1-800-747-7444 or email [listener@wpr.org](mailto:listener@wpr.org)

*All front cover photos ©Angela Major/WPR*