

**WTTW
FY2024**

Local Content and Service Report to the Community



Firsthand: Homeless



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 is essential to Chicagoans, valued for high quality content and community engagement. The station serves a vital role in our region, serving 1.1 million monthly households and 1.7 million viewers in Chicago and surrounding suburbs, southern Wisconsin, northwest Indiana, and southwest Michigan. This past year, WTTW served 25.4 million streams and there were more than 9 million users and nearly 20 million pageviews on wttw.com.

(Sources: Nielsen NLTV Reach & Frequency for 11.1, 11.2, and 11.4 combined for January 2024; Google Analytics, YouTube, Hulu, Facebook)

We provide relevant quality content and trusted news coverage to our diverse community across five distinct television channels - our primary channel, WTTW; our secondary channel, WTTW Prime; WTTW Create; WTTW PBS Kids 24/7; WTTW World; on our website at wttw.com; and via the PBS app.

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.

In FY2024, WTTW's website, wttw.com, served approximately 25.4 million streams. There were 9.2 million users on the site, and 19.3 million pageviews.

(Source: Nielsen R&F Jan 2024 for 11.1+11.2+11.3, WTTW News 5:30p+10p+7p, 11.1 6a-1p+11.4 3a-3a; Google Analytics, YouTube, Hulu, Facebook)

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

In FY2024, *Chicago Tonight* reached almost 202,000 monthly households (253,000 viewers) across the region on television and served 1.3 million streams. There were almost 6 million users and more than 8 million pageviews on the WTTW News section of wttw.com.

(Sources: Nielsen NLTV Reach & Frequency for Chicago Tonight broadcasts Mon-Thu 5:30pm and 10pm and Fri 7pm for January 2024 combined; Google Analytics, YouTube, Hulu, Facebook)

News & Information

LOCAL NEWS

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



Chicago Tonight Anchor Brandis Friedman

In the past fiscal year, WTTW continued to deepen our local news coverage with more original reporting and increased our footprint with a steadfast commitment to both television and digital journalism and distribution. We are continually reimagining our nightly news series *Chicago Tonight* to address changing media habits and expand our reach to a broad and diverse audience. We continue to increase 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, education, and criminal justice systems; the environment; science and technology; politics; business; and arts/entertainment. For work in FY2024, [WTTW won eight Peter Lisagor Awards](#) for excellence in news and documentary coverage.

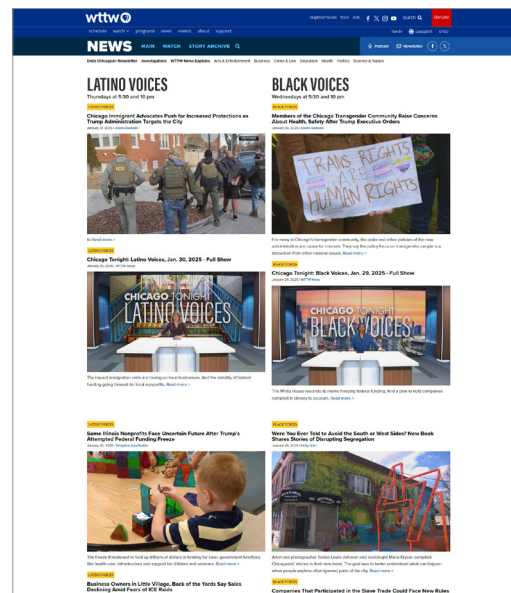
[WTTW News/Chicago Tonight](#) and its sister programs [The Week in Review](#), [Black Voices](#), and [Latino Voices](#) are all available live on WTTW, [wttw.com/news](#), Facebook, YouTube, and on demand across all of our digital platforms.

FY2024 HIGHLIGHTS

[Firsthand: Homeless](#) - Throughout 2024, WTTW's Emmy Award-winning multiplatform initiative explored year focused on the challenging experiences and unique perspectives of unhoused people across

Chicago's neighborhoods. In addition to the five documentaries telling their stories, included on the [website](#) are four expert talks by community and thought leaders; text and visual journalism exploring [economic and racial disparities in local home ownership](#), an interview with Chicago's [first chief homelessness officer](#); how a nonprofit is [helping people purchase homes](#), reporting on [Evanston's groundbreaking reparations program](#), and more; community conversations extending the reach of the project into Chicago neighborhoods; a discussion guide for schools, libraries, and other community organizations; and special news coverage.

[Firsthand: Homeless - The Migrant Experience](#) - In June 2024, in response to the influx of migrants arriving in our city, WTTW launched a series of new short films, in Spanish with English subtitles, as part of the *Firsthand: Homeless* initiative that explored the complicated migrant experience through the eyes of five individuals who reveal why they left their home countries, their perilous journeys across continents, and the political forces that have shaped their new lives in Chicago as they search for housing, jobs, and education.



Black Voices and Latino Voices homepage



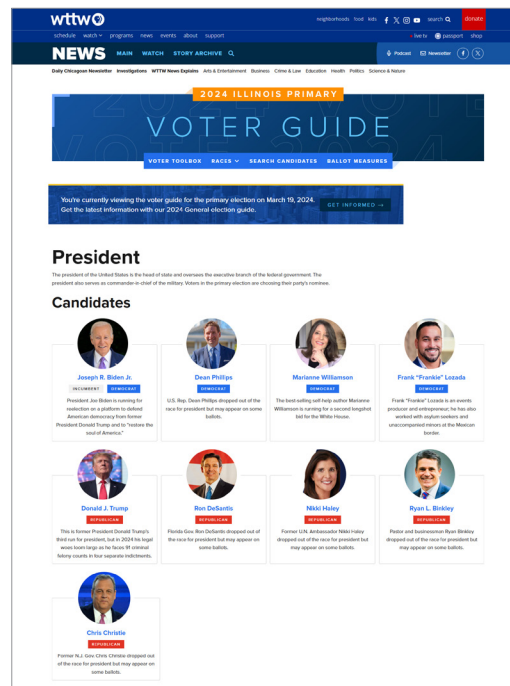
A Safer City web story

A Safer City – In July 2023, As crime in Chicago and the surrounding communities escalated, WTTW News and *Chicago Tonight* launched a new reporting initiative to dive deep into neighborhood crime, violence, and public safety as residents, policymakers, and community groups worked to address the growing issue. This essential, solutions-driven journalism focused on the impact of living around and with regular violence; what public safety officials and the police were doing about the problem; how segregation and our physical environment – community centers, parks, streets, sidewalks, and highways – drove or stemmed crime and violence; how social media came into play in everyday criminal activity; and what analysts and academics brought to the discussion.

Voter Guide to the 2024 Illinois Primary Election – In the run-up to the March 19 Illinois primary in advance of the November general election, WTTW reported on the races, held virtual and in-person candidate forums, and launched a comprehensive digital Voter Guide that provided profiles of the candidates and their key issues and a searchable map by ward or Congressional district, and provided a helpful explainer [tracing Chicago's history as a political convention host](#).

Chicago Tonight: Black Voices and Chicago Tonight: Latino Voices – These two weekly series, hosted by Brandis Friedman and Joanna Hernandez respectively, 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 *Voices* 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 News Community Conversations – On the final Monday 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



Voter Guide – 2024 Illinois Primary Election homepage



Firsthand: Homeless launch event

lives of Black and Latino Chicagoans, using topics in the shows as a springboard for discussion. Topics in FY2024 included safety in the city, the 60th anniversary of the 1963 CPS Student boycott, the movement to memorialize the Black Panther Party in the National Register of Historic Places, homelessness in the Latino community, a local LGBTQIA artist making a difference, screenings/discussions of the season's *Chicago Stories* documentaries, and more.

JOURNALISM TRAINING

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

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.

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.

FY2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Chicago Stories - In September 2023, WTTW premiered eight new documentaries in the station's award-winning local history series, with a microsite dedicated to each. Topics in fiscal 2024 included the tragic 1958 Our Lady of the Angels school fire, the race to reverse the Chicago River, railroad magnate George Pullman and his workers' fight for independence, the late Mayor Daley's controversial urban renewal initiatives, profiles of activists Jane Addams and Danny Sotomayor, the rise and fall of legendary retailers Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward, and Chicago's history as the candy capital of the world. The season's films garnered numerous nominations and four Midwest Emmy awards for excellence.



Photo: Elizabeth Stenholt Photography

A Little Night Music at Theo Ubique Cabaret Theatre



Photo: Loyd DeGrane / WTTW

Firsthand: Homeless – Yolanda

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.

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 continues to serve as co-producer of *Nature*

[The Most Beautiful Places in Chicago 2](#) and [Chicago Mysteries](#) – Two new programs hosted by Geoffrey Baer – each with companion websites – premiered in fiscal 2024: *The Most Beautiful Places in Chicago 2*, a sequel to the special WTTW launched earlier that year, featuring even more stunning sites cherished by Chicagoans; and *Chicago Mysteries*, in which Geoffrey and a team of sleuths set out to solve local mysteries that have always intrigued local residents, such as whether a graveyard is haunted, how an alligator landed in a Chicago lagoon, why ketchup should never be a hot dog condiment, and lots more.

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 [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#); and in October 2023, a microsite for Ken Burns’ series [The American Buffalo](#).

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 the center of everything we do and especially in what we



Photo: Liz Fainna Markel © WTTW

Chicago Mysteries – host Geoffrey Baer



Nature Cat's Daisy and a young event attendee

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 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.

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.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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

Gaps in readiness persist between Black, Hispanic, and Native American students. According to the 2022-



WTTW Kids Learn & Play

2023 Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), just 22% of Native American, 18% of Hispanic and 24% of Black Illinois kindergartners demonstrated readiness in all three developmental areas (Social & Emotional Development, Language & Literacy, and Math). Focusing on these three developmental areas, WTTW continued to offer free [WTTW Kids Learn & Play](#), a series of collaborative, playful, and participatory learning experiences live in Chicagoland area senior centers and at Chicago Public Libraries.

Chicago Public Library hosted Nature Cat for its Día de los libros/*Celebration of Children and Books*, and the costumed character also stopped by to visit patients at Lurie Children's Hospital outpatient center, handing out do-it-yourself activity packets and books.

Families interacted with other WTTW Kids characters including Daniel Tiger at Be My Neighbor Day in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood where kids partook in children's concerts and activities and helped neighbors in need via a successful migrant supply drive. The Donkey Hodie character made her Chicago debut at the *Art in Wilder Park* event and at the Elmhurst Art Museum in support of *Designing Donkey Hodie*, which explores the magic behind the series. A second exhibit, *Donkey Hodie, A Hee-hawesome Adventure* activity center pop-up, allowed children to learn and play through fun, character themed games as part of Lincoln Park Zoo's Fall Fest.

WTTW Kids at-home engagement opportunities continued including an expanded online *Explore the Outdoors* Nature Cat winter camp, and WTTW Kids monthly activity calendars. WTTW Kids, with Nature Cat and Daisy, promoted the importance of reading and nature education throughout the Chicago area, including at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum's Summer Fest, The Art Center Highland Park's Draw Together, and at Highland Park's Wayfarer Theatre.

WTTW reached viewers outside of Illinois as part of the WTTW-produced *Girl Scout Nature Cat Explorer Patch Program*, stopping in Ohio, North Carolina, and

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

In FY2024, WTTW continued to drive in-person and virtual community engagement events which attracted more than attendees. During the most recently completed fiscal year WTTW hosted more than 85 Community Engagement Events reaching more than 110,000 people.

Texas; and with the National Park Trust's *Kids to Parks Day* in Miami and Colorado, where Nature Cat met with fans and shared do-it-yourself nature activities.

ACCESS TO THE ARTS

WTTW is a strong and treasured brand with a reputation as a steadfast champion of the arts and 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



WTTW Gospel Showcase

artists. WTTW's *Chicago Tonight* programmed segments focusing on emerging artists, the diversity of Chicago's dance community, local businesses that support artists and collectors preserving their art, as well as new exhibitions. We believe that arts and culture are incredibly important for the health of the city, both for the economy and the city's life.

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 FY2024, 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 events highlighted WTTW-produced series, films by local filmmakers and aspiring student producers, and PBS documentaries. Many of the screenings featured films focusing on the Black, Latino, Asian, Jewish, or Native American experience and people of other cultures around the world, including *Wild Hope*, *The American Buffalo*, and *Frontline: 20 Days in Mariupol*. In addition, WTTW held behind-the-scenes previews and discussions of the latest season of *Chicago Stories* as well as three original multiplatform *Chicago Stories* productions: *Ida B. Wells*, *The Birth of Gospel*, and *Jane Addams: Together We Rise*.

WTTW hosted a free Gospel Showcase at the historic Shiloh Seventh-Day Adventist Church featuring Gospel Award-winning performances by Karen Clark Sheard, Lamar Campbell and The Spirit of Praise, Smokie Norful, and The Chicago Mass Choir. This in-

LOCAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHT

In FY2024, WTTW's educational content for kids reached more than 190,000 households monthly, or 329,000 viewers, and the station's community engagement events geared to kids and families attracted 42,175 attendees.

spirational music brought audiences of all ages and backgrounds together to celebrate and feel the joy of Gospel music.

Finally, as mentioned, WTTW held community conversations throughout the fiscal year for *Firsthand: Homeless* and *Firsthand: Homeless - The Migrant Experience* and produced two discussion guides for the series that has been uploaded to PBS LearningMedia.



Making Black America virtual conversation

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.