

Historical Highlights

Springfield chapter Association of Women in Communications (AWC and WICI)

- There were five members in 1977 when the chapter was formed with a petition to the national organization and fifteen members by its second year. The effort to start the Springfield chapter was lead by a journalist, Monica Bayer [now Heaton], then assistant city editor at the State Journal-Register.
- The first record of a chapter program, on the state's Open Meeting Act, was for October 1977 at Lincoln Library. Speakers were Bill Miller of Sangamon State University's Public Affairs Reporting Program and a representative of the Illinois Attorney General's Office.
- The first workshop sponsored by the Springfield chapter was a Saturday workshop for high school and junior college students titled "Careers in Communications" held in March 1979. Paul Simon, Illinois Congressman, and Fletcher Farrar, Illinois Times editor, were keynote speakers.
- The editor of "Progressive" magazine, Sam Day, spoke for a chapter program in November 1979. Day assigned a magazine series on nuclear weapons which landed the Progressive in the middle of a major issue of freedom of the press as it was the first time the Federal government tried to prevent an American publication from publishing.
- The Springfield chapter was actively involved with the national organization's discussions about changing its name in 1979-80. Springfield proposed the name be changed to "In Communication, Inc. (or INC). A national survey showed the majority was not in favor of a name change at the time, though there was a strong sentiment that it might be an eventuality.
- The chapter hosted an annual Hearts and Darts program for nearly 20 years (1978-97), designed to help make media representatives and public relations professionals more aware and appreciative of each other's role. It also provided a forum for a critique of local media performances.
- There have been more than a dozen male members in the chapter over the years, including Jeff Brody, State Journal-Register, who served as the chapter's fourth president (1980-81).
- The Springfield chapter hosted the 1982 regional meeting when plans for the four central Illinois chapter (Champaign, Bloomington, Peoria and Springfield) to cosponsor the meeting failed. Carol Fowler, WCIA-TV and chapter president, agreed to the request. The meeting theme was Target Your Tomorrows and 76 people attended. Chapter representatives voted all \$36 in profits from the meeting be left with Springfield as thanks for the Herculean effort of organizing the conference in less than four months.

- Chapter officers and members began planning two major initiatives in 1988-89 – a new communications awards program - eventually named Master Communicator - and a how-to booklet for working with the media. The award program began later in 1989 and was a joint effort of the local chapters of Public Relations Society of America and International Association of Business Communicators, and the Springfield and Bloomington-Normal chapters of WICI.
- “Making News in Mr. Lincoln’s Hometown,” a media directory and guidebook was published by the chapter and the Springfield Chamber of Commerce. After a two-year volunteer effort to write, edit and design the publication, the 54-page booklet was available in early 1991.
- The first time the chapter was honored by the national organization was in the fall of 1992, when the chapter received the National Outstanding Chapter Award. The nomination was submitted by outgoing president Denise Joehl and incoming president Jean Richards. Accomplishments included hosting the 1992 North Central Regional Conference including a public event with Gloria Steinem that had 750 attendees.