

Historical Highlights

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

These are just a few of the many activities of this chapter over the decades. Any present or past members, especially officers, are invited to contribute materials to our archives including chapter records, newsletters, correspondence, photos, etc. Contact anyone in the chapter or email archivist@awcspringfield.org.

- 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 in October 1977, was on the state's Open Meeting Act and held at Lincoln Library. Speakers were Bill Miller of Sangamon State University's Public Affairs Reporting Program and a representative of the Office of the Illinois Attorney General.
- The chapter has 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. The first, The Springfield Media Look at Themselves, was held in April 1978.
- The first workshop sponsored by the Springfield chapter was a Saturday program 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 that made the Progressive part of a major freedom of the press case, 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.
- 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 North Central regional meeting when plans failed for the four central Illinois chapter (Champaign, Bloomington, Peoria and Springfield) to cosponsor the meeting. Carol Fowler, WCIA-TV reporter 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.

- You're the Boss was the topic for the October 1983 monthly meeting with guest speaker Kay Wallace, a professional organizational consultant from St. Louis. In her presentation, and in her book by the same name, Wallace focused on ways members might take charge of their careers.
- For the Matrix Dinner in June 1984, the members of the chapter boarded Amtrak and headed to Lincoln for dinner and an end-of-the-year celebration program.
- In April 1985, a careers exchange was held at Sangamon State University for students from SSU, Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield College as well as Richland, Milliken and Blackburn colleges. Chapter members Isolde Davison, Kathy Rem, Carol Fowler and Jeff Brody discussed career options in communications.
- The chapter's long-running program, Hearts and Darts, was held in February 1986 was on the topic of Covering Crime in Springfield. Panelists were attorney Michael Metnick, SJR city editor Mike Kienzler, Springfield Police PIO Mike Murphy and WICS reporter Jo Warfield.
- An evening program with four local experts was presented in September 1987 on desktop publishing after a summer survey of the membership had it as the most requested topic. Presenters were from MicroPower, LOEL Graphics, Minuteman and Illinois Legislative Research Unit.
- 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 awards 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 first published by the chapter and the Springfield Chamber of Commerce in early 1991. After a two-year volunteer effort to write, edit and design the publication, the 54-page booklet was available for sale.
- The chapter hosted a half-day workshop on desktop publishing and electronic communication, titled Communicating: The Challenge of the '90s, at Sangamon State University in May 1990. Cosponsored with SSU's Communication program, session topics included how to build a basic computer system.
- 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. Accomplishments included hosting the North Central Regional Conference in April 1992, The Politics of Communication, which include a public event with Gloria Steinem that had 750 attendees.

- The chapter co-sponsored a program, Celebrate Freedom of Information Day, in March 1992 featuring Virginia Marmaduke, a veteran journalist from the Chicago Sun and member of the Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame. Co-sponsors were Secretary of State/State Librarian, Illinois Press Association, Sangamon State University and Southern Illinois University.
- Mary-jane Snyder, a founder of the National Organization of Women (NOW) and head of PR firm, M-j Enterprises, presented the April 1993 program – Communicating Green: Who Holds the Key to the Environmental/Population Dilemma? The program was a special fundraiser for the WICI scholarship.
- Capitols and Crumbs awards were announced by the chapter in February 1994, a new event chaired by Mary Bohlen from Sangamon State University. Winners included the Illinois Times. Losers in the news category included a WCVS radio DJ and a columnist for the State-Journal Register.
- Gwendolyn Brooks, Illinois Poet Laureate, was the featured speaker for the chapter's literary fundraiser, Paint the Town Read, in April 1994. Brooks did a reading and book signing at an evening reception and presented a half-day workshop on creativity. Proceeds went to two local adult literacy programs as well as the chapter's scholarship fund.
- Molly Ivins, a three-time Pulitzer Prize finalist and Ft. Worth-Star Telegram columnist, was guest speaker for a March 1995 dinner co-sponsored by Women in Government Conference and the Springfield WICI chapter.
- In June 1995, the Springfield chapter voted to begin the process to incorporate, allowing the chapter to pursue tax-exempt status.
- A second Paint the Town Read literacy fundraiser was held in July 1996 at UIS Public Affairs Center with speaker Senator Paul Simon. It included silent and live auctions of autographed books.
- The 20th anniversary of the Springfield chapter was celebrated in September 1996 with a special reception at the roof terrace of the State-Journal Register. It was followed by another workshop and media panel presentation of Making News in Mr. Lincoln's Hometown for the public at Lincoln Library. A revised media directory and guidebook was available for sale.
- Chapter members hosted students from Eastern Illinois University for a Shadow Day in April 1997.
- Making Choices, a life skills program for teenage girls, was introduced to 14 local schools, in the spring of 1997, thanks to a collaboration effort by WICI, Land of Lincoln Girl Scouts Council and the Rape Information and Counseling Service.

- The chapter hosts Pat Troy, national executive director of AWC, for its May 1998 meeting held at SIU School of Medicine.
- Past, Present and Future – A Homecoming Reunion was held in October 1999, celebrating the founding of the chapter in 1977. Eight chapter past presidents attended the evening dinner program at the Sangamo Club. Two spoke about the early days of the chapter and the student scholarship winner was introduced.
- Communicating in a Crisis was the topic for the January 2000 meeting. The two presenters from Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee offered lessons learned from the March 1999 Amtrak accident in Kankakee, considered the biggest Illinois story of the year when the City of New Orleans passenger train collided with a truck loaded with steel bars.
- Reputation Management was the topic of the February 2001 meeting at the Springfield Hilton. Guest speakers were Judith Barringer of Springfield Planned Parenthood and Barbara Turner of Contact Ministries.
- A daylong professional communications seminar, Recharge and Renew: Gear Up for Success, was held in May 2002 at UIS Public Affairs Center. Topics included media training, crisis management, good writing and building interactive web sites.
- A one-day professional communications seminar, Do More With Less, was held in October 2003 at UIS Public Affairs Center. It was co-sponsored by the UIS Communication Department and sponsored by the AWC chapter's Past Presidents Council.
- In November 2004, three communication groups co-sponsored a half-day professional development program with an evening keynote speaker. The Master Communicator Media & Public Relations event in Bloomington was sponsored by AWC Springfield and Bloomington chapters and Central Illinois PRSA chapter.
- Another evening workshop for the public on how to work with the media was presented in October 2006 at Lincoln Library. The panelists for Making News in Mr. Lincoln's Hometown were Gary Darigol, WICS-TV; Tim Landis, State Journal-Register; Kavitha Cardoza, WUIS-FM, and Don Hickman, Springfield Scene. An updated copy of the directory and guidebook was available for sale.
- The Springfield chapter was a co-sponsor, along with other communications and university groups, of a March 2008 program hosted in Brookens Auditorium by University of Illinois Springfield. Dr. Jean Kilbourne, spoke on the topic Deadly Persuasion: Advertising and the Corruption of Relationships.
- A membership scholarship was started in 2009 by the chapter to help provide a financial boost to those who may temporarily struggle with paying dues. The scholarship continues today.

- Finding Balance in Your Work and Personal Life was the topic for the March 2010 meeting. Jill Koester from SIU School of Medicine was the presenter.
- In October 2011, three national awards were presented to the Springfield chapter at the AWC national conference. The Overall Outstanding Award recognized various chapter activities such as programming, progress and recruitment. The chapter also was recognized with the Best Web Site Award and the Most Improved Chapter.
- Two more national awards were presented to the Springfield chapter at the AWC national conference in 2012. It was recognized for excellence with Most Innovative Recruitment Activity and Best Newsletter awards.
- In October 2013, the Springfield chapter hosted the national AWC conference, titled Worth Every Penny. The two-day gathering drew 120 participants to the meeting at the Springfield Hilton. Keynote speakers were Bonnie St. John, Sarah Petty and Margery Krevsky. Thirteen states were represented and all but three of the professional chapters as well as some independent members were in attendance. Five of the national Clarions awards went to Springfield winners.
- In October 2013, three national awards were presented to the Springfield chapter at the AWC national conference. The categories recognized with awards were Best Newsletter, Most Innovative Recruitment Activity and Chapter Excellence.
- A student chapter was established in the spring 2014 at Benedictine University, with assistance from Springfield chapter member Karen Mollet.
- In the spring of 2015, under the leadership of Christy Broccardo, the chapter completed transfer of its Communications Scholarship Fund to the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln (CFLL). The foundation staff will administer the AWC funds, ensuring that there can always be an annual AWC scholarship. (Donations can be made online www.CFLL.org or mailed to the foundation offices in Springfield. Indicate your contribution is for The Association for Women in Communications, Springfield Chapter Scholarship Fund.)
- The chapter hosted a highly successful half-day workshop on social media in April 2016 at University of Illinois Springfield. Guest speakers talked about trends and best practices as well as emerging technology.