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Mayor Emanuel Interviews Governor-Elect J.B. Pritzker on "Chicago Stories"

J.B. Pritzker wants to be the best "Chief Marketing Officer" Illinois has ever had—and a whole lot more.

On this week's episode of [Chicago Stories](#), Governor-elect J.B. Pritzker dropped by City Hall to talk to Mayor Emanuel about his big plans for the state, as well as look back at some of his early challenges, his family's tradition of philanthropy, and how he almost didn't get a second date with his wife M.K.

As J.B. told Mayor Emanuel, right at the top of his agenda is making early-education a reality for children across Illinois. It's a passion both he and the mayor share, and in J.B.'s case it's one he's had for two decades thanks to early-education pioneer Barbara Bowman and philanthropist Irving Harris.

"I was sold on day one on the idea that not only is this great for kids," J.B. said, "but it changes the trajectory of their lives, and—very importantly—it's fiscally responsible."

When it comes to early-childhood education, J.B.'s seeking nothing short of universal pre-school along with quality childcare, but that's only the beginning of J.B.'s vision for our state.

During their conversation, J.B. and Mayor Emanuel also talked about spurring job creation and economic development by leveraging Illinois' huge pools of talent, entrepreneurial dynamism and other assets, not to mention also balancing the state's budget and tackling pension reform.

"I understand it's a little like family," J.B. said. "You have your own challenges inside your home and you have your own challenges inside the state that we're dealing with, but that does not mean you need to be down in the mouth out in the world, because we've got a lot going for us, and I intend to be the best Chief Marketing Officer this state's ever had."

As Mayor Emanuel quipped: "That's a fresh start, I can attest to that."

If J.B. sounds optimistic, it's because he is. To know J.B. is to know his positive outlook that runs through everything about him, from his business and public life, to his personal relationships and philanthropy.

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But as J.B. shared with Mayor Emanuel, much of it is borne out the personal tragedies and challenges J.B. experienced growing up, first with the sudden death of his father at the age of seven, then with his mother's 10-year battle with alcoholism before her own death when he was just 17.

"The experience of watching her, helping her, trying to lift her up, working with my brother and sister and trying to deal with that, just living through that, fighting through some of that," J.B. said. "That made me learn to be optimistic, to see someone try to overcome. She didn't overcome, and it's tragic, but it made me try to overcome."

Be sure to listen to the full episode as J.B. and Mayor Emanuel also dive into creating tech communities across Illinois, how J.B.'s family first came to Chicago, legalizing marijuana, along with Mayor Emanuel's sage advice on getting journalists to cover early-childhood education events.

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