In a year like no other in our collective lifetime, 2020 challenged our community, our country, and our world. WSBE Rhode Island PBS faced the challenges head on with the courage and creativity required by our role as convener in the community. We reached out - virtually in many cases - to support the community that supports us, relies on us, trusts us to educate, inform, enrich, and inspire.

AN INTEGRAL PART OF RI’S CULTURAL TAPESTRY

Delivering viewpoints with a local focus, WSBE amplifies voices that might not otherwise be heard.

In 2020, WSBE produced original content that extended “beyond the box” to touch the community in meaningful ways. We pivoted from studio production to Zoom conferencing with web cams to continue the tradition of professional commentary and storytelling our community expects. We strengthened our live streaming service and launched our free Video-On-Demand portal. We also used virtual gather spaces to share video and chat together, sharing neighborly connectedness.

IN 2020, WSBE PROVIDED THESE KEY SERVICES

WSBE featured services and content - snapshots of local life that are the bedrock of our value to the community. Our Education Services team partnered with RIDE to curate and launch a strong collection of virtual classroom resources from PBS to serve the urgent needs of educators and students in At-Home learning environments. And, as they have since 1978, RI Society of CPAs provided professional advice for tax preparation. WSBE reflects and services the issues and topics our community says are important.

EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES, AFFECTING CHANGE

As both guides and explorers on the journey of lifelong learning, we produce content about issues that impact our community.

KEY PRODUCTIONS:

- *Kids Want to Know* short films feature teens and children asking COVID-19 questions of local doctors.
- *Your Year 2020* celebrated the virtual graduation of 9,000 high school seniors.
- *Rhode Island PBS Weekly* news magazine tells stories that matter.
KIDS WANT TO KNOW - COVID-19 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On Friday, March 13, 2020, Rhode Island PBS, along with just about every other Rhode Island organization, business, and school, closed its doors as the state went into lock down. With updates and information of the COVID-19 outbreak at the forefront of all news and media outlets, the public was still left with uncertainty and questions.

Staying true to the mission of educating and communicating with the community, Rhode Island PBS quickly adapted to the restrictions of the lock down to safely produce the series of short films, Kids Want to Know. With the goal of providing fresh, relevant information without shadowing or repeating the work already out there, Rhode Island PBS gave children and teens a platform to ask questions about COVID-19.

Teens and children sent in COVID-19 related questions on video. Those videos were then paired with local medical professional who provided thoughtful, informative answers. The episodes each ranged from two to three minutes in length. Premiering on Monday, March 30, 2020, the first of 27 episodes featured three teens, ages 14 and 15. Episodes were released Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays on both television channels, the station website, and on social media. On April 17, the series caught the attention of The Boston Globe’s local newsletter, Rhode Map. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of RI became the series sponsor on April 20. The series subsequently produced 6 Spanish language episodes.

Medical professionals appearing in the series were Brian K. Alverson, M.D., Director of Pediatric Hospital Medicine at Hasbro Children’s Hospital; William D. Binder, M.D., a practitioner based at Brown Medicine in Providence affiliated with Rhode Island Hospital, Miriam Hospital, and Massachusetts General Hospital; Rebecca M. Brown, M.D., specialist in geriatric medicine at Roger Williams Medical Center, Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, and The Miriam Hospital; Tanuja P. Gandhi, M.D. child psychiatrist at Bradley Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital, and Hasbro Children’s Hospital; and Carla Martin, M.D., Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Providence Community Health Centers.
2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT
Rhode Island PBS
STORIES OF IMPACT

SUPPORTING AND EXTENDING IMPACT WITH DISTANCE LEARNING RESOURCES

In the early 2000s, Rhode Island PBS pioneered streaming video to public and private schools. At that time, instructional television moved from broadcast TV to online access on-demand, and since evolved into PBS LearningMedia. The free service has increased its content to more than 100,000 grade-indexed, standards-based clips and videos, as well as accompanying lesson plans, worksheets, and study guides.

In 2020, Distance Learning saw use of PBS LearningMedia skyrocket locally and nationally. In Rhode Island, registered users rose to more than 3,500 since March 2020, and visits increased to 35,000 - a growth of more than 500% over the previous year. Rhode Island PBS also compiled a list of free distance learning resources for educators, families, and students to help them navigate the transition to learning from home. These resources include tools to help parents talk to their children about COVID-19, and teacher training and professional development offerings to support educators during this transition.

As schools across Rhode Island closed in response to COVID-19 virus, WSBE Rhode Island PBS and WORLD Channel partnered to support distance learning with a collection of programs for television broadcast across a variety of subjects. The WORLD Channel provided a daily five-hour At-Home Learning Service for students in grades 6-12. The content aired on WSBE Learn, digital 36.2 from noon to 5 p.m. weekdays. WORLD offered science, history, and English language arts programs, and include related learning resources from PBS LearningMedia. The new custom schedule complements the ongoing PBS Kids early childhood and elementary programming that continued to air daily from 7am-12pm.

On the main channel, At-Home Learning extended additional instructional content 3 to 6 p.m. weekdays. The collection included episodes from NOVA, American Experience, History Detectives, Secrets of the Dead, and other general content with rich educational merit, and aired through August 31, 2020.
Your Year 2020: Bringing Pomp to These Circumstances

As closures and cancellations upended the school year nationwide, more than 9,000 students in Rhode Island’s graduating class of 2020 were left without their long-awaited senior traditions and commencement ceremonies. WSBE Rhode Island PBS answered the community call to help change that, producing a televised graduation special that brought pomp to the unprecedented circumstances.

Presented in association with Governor Gina Raimondo, the Rhode Island Department of Education, and in partnership with Coast 93.3 (WSNE-FM), Your Year 2020 was an hour-long celebration of Rhode Island students’ resilience and academic achievements in spite of a global pandemic. Graduating seniors were invited to submit videos of their own, sharing favorite high school memories, extracurricular highlights. The special included remarks by valedictorians, and a student singing competition.

Opening remarks were offered by Governor Raimondo, as well as Education Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green, RI House Speaker Nicholas Mattiello, and RI Senate President Dominick J. Ruggerio. Erika Van Pelt (American Idol) performed the National Anthem, and Billy Gilman (The Voice) sang his hit single “Soldier.” Rhode Island-raised Viola Davis, winner of an Academy Award, an Emmy Award, and two Tony Awards, delivered an inspiring keynote address for the graduating class.

The broadcast also featured messages from a variety of local and national celebrities, including veteran broadcaster Meredith Vieira, Olympic swimming medalist Elizabeth Beisel, Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane, New England Patriots wide receiver Julian Edelman, running back James White, quarterback Jarrett Stidham, Red Sox manager Ron Roenicke, Miss Rhode Island Teen USA 2020 Sofia Ledoux, and Scottish singer-songwriter Lewis Capaldi (Someone You Loved), and more.

The special culminated in a spectacular, synchronized performance of Pomp and Circumstance by more than fifty high school marching band members across the state, each playing their instruments from their homes.

Made possible with an outpouring of support from Rhode Island and beyond, Your Year 2020 aired on June 15, 2020. The premiere was promoted in a number of local media outlets, including WPRI Channel 12 and the Providence Journal. The broadcast was available through live streaming at ripbs.org. Audio encores were featured on both Coast 93.3 and the iHeart App.
CAMP TV: A DAY CAMP EXPERIENCE AT HOME

In March of 2020, children nationwide were faced with disruptions in their education as the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 began to take its toll. Those effects continued into the summer, leaving many unsure of what that meant for their usual summer activities. As many beloved day programs and camps closed throughout Rhode Island, Rhode Island PBS seized an opportunity to respond to the ‘COVID-19 slide’ and give children an educational camp-like experience from the safety of their homes.

Produced by WNET in New York, CAMP TV became a unique, one-hour public television series that brought the day camp experience to children nationwide. Hosted by a “head camp counselor,” CAMP TV consisted of theme days such as Silly Hat Day, Camping Day, Rhyme Day, Silly Sock Day, Backwards Day, and more. Children who watched the daily one-hour episodes were guided through activities that explored nature, math, science, the arts, movement, storytelling, and writing.

As a grant-funded project with other public television stations across the country, Rhode Island PBS aired the 20-episode series weekdays at 10 a.m. for four weeks starting July 13. The grant required production of three local stories, which stations submitted into a competitive selection process for integration into national episodes. Two of Rhode Island PBS’s stories were chosen for national broadcast. Project partners were Roger Williams Park Zoo and Save The Bay.

In the segment titled Be Like a Sloth, campers observed the sloths at Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island. Jen Hennessy, a Roger Williams Park zookeeper, introduced viewers to the zoo’s sloth family; Fiona, Wesley, and their baby, Beany. Combined with footage of the sloth family, Hennessy taught campers how to be like a sloth by slowing down and focusing on the present moment.

Two segments were produced with Save The Bay in Narragansett, Rhode Island. The first, titled Ocean Acidification, taught campers about fossil fuel emissions and how they are affecting sea life. Through an experiment with Save The Bay, viewers learned how different fossil fuel emission practices cause higher (acidic) pH, harming plants and animals. In the second segment, titled Food Webs, Save The Bay used local sea life to teach campers how energy is transferred from organisms to humans through a complex network of food webs, once called the food chain.

Stories produced by Rhode Island PBS, and the 20 episodes from the series, were integrated into Rhode Island PBS LearningMedia. Paired with learning materials and activities, the content is fully accessible for viewing and interaction.
Enjoy the local history of RI feature programs and of course all of the Masterpiece and other classic and period piece programs available. The health and exercise programs at fund-raising time are also of interest.

Roy E. of Wakefield, RI
June 2020

Although I live on Cape Cod and have four Boston PBS channels, you still provide me with different programs. I find that PBS is about all that I watch so I’m grateful for the wide selection of programs to choose from.

Lucy M.
North Chatham, MA
July 2020

This gift is given knowing all the hard work and programming for this challenging time.

Deb S. of Warwick, RI

I have found PBS to be a sanctuary of wonderful programs, NOVA comes to mind. The news programs also are balanced and believable. The covid 19 epidemic has taken an emotional toll but watching today’s NOVA and other programming has not only cheered me up but put back a faith in humanity, in the future, our future.

THANK YOU

Christopher B.
Exeter, RI

I love PBS!! Lost it for about a year due to the frequency change, but had an outside antenna installed yesterday and I’m good! This is the best, most informative, most intelligent TV out there. Every program is so well done. Masterpiece is my favorite, but love so many other shows too. Thanks PBS!

Evelyn P. of Riverside, RI
June 2020
COMMUNITY OUTREACH GOES VIRTUAL

Although in-person gatherings came to an abrupt halt because of COVID-19, the need for people to connect with each other did not stop.

Recognizing the community’s need, Rhode Island PBS pivoted from live events to hosting a number of highly successful screenings on the OVEE platform - a virtual movie theater that combines shared video viewing with live interactive chat. A brand-new experience for staff and audiences from a technological perspective, these online events prioritize viewer engagement, allowing participants to watch full episodes or documentaries or selected clips and previews, while interacting with filmmakers, and chatting with each other in real time. The combination of a shared viewing experience, real-time interaction, and the convenience of safe access at home eased isolation and fostered a sense of community and connectedness.

On June 26, Rhode Island PBS hosted a virtual “Bob Ross Paint Night at Home.” Featuring a classic episode of The Best of The Joy of Painting and a live demonstration with Certified Ross Instructor Nic Hankins, who provided an expanded tutorial and answered questions after the episode aired. “Bob Ross Paint Night at Home” had more than 200 registrations from both the US and abroad.

On August 17, Rhode Island PBS viewers were invited to relive summer memories from one of the state’s most iconic amusement parks. In an event called “Rocky Point Revisited,” filmmaker David Bettencourt shared clips from his film You Must Be This Tall – The Story of Rocky Point Park and took viewers on a present-day video tour of the grounds. The virtual event included new footage and live chat, during which guests were able to ask questions and share personal stories.

More than 150 guests from across the country registered for the screening, resulting in a lively and enthusiastic OVEE presence.

In a year unlike any other, Rhode Island PBS captured the hearts and minds of nostalgic fans by going virtual – providing access to much-needed activities and entertainment from the comfort and safety of home.
Commemorating World Oceans Day on June 8, the Inner Space Center at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, the Ocean Exploration Trust, and Rhode Island PBS Education Services announced *Ocean Exploration: Inner Space*, a new immersive digital series for students and teachers. The collaboration pairs extraordinary, never-before-seen footage with creative lesson modules, to present and explore various facets of deep-sea missions, right from students’ own computers. In a pilot program to bring ocean exploration resources to middle and high school students, three episodes were adapted for instructional use in grades 8-12 and are currently available through Rhode Island PBS LearningMedia. Lesson plans facilitate added engagement through printable worksheets and online exercises associated with the material.

The newest addition to the suite of educational materials produced by Rhode Island PBS in its award-winning community outreach project, *Opioids in Our Community*, is translation of videos and resource materials into Spanish. Made possible by funding from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of RI (BCBSRI) and translated by Latin@Link and the Rhode Island Student Assistance Services (RISAS), videos were dubbed and captioned, and accompanying lesson plans and worksheets for middle and high school teachers, students, and parents. The resources debuted on Rhode Island PBS LearningMedia in September 2020 during National Recovery Month.
LETTERS, E-MAIL, AND PHONE MESSAGES FROM OUR VIEWERS

My mother worked at WSBE, I’ve volunteered there. The world is falling apart as we speak. A small small salve against misinformation.

Janet I. of Providence, RI
October 2020

I am taking an online class at CCRI and had to read about the television industry for a homework assignment. The reading discussed the mission of PBS and explained its funding source. That reading inspired me to support RIPBS even though I have cut the cord and am a few years away from watching Sesame Street with my kids every morning.

- Robert L of Newport, RI

I enjoy all your programs & learn something new every time.

Ilene W. of Storrs Mansfield, CT
September 2020

A long time coming. We love RIPBS. Your recent documentary about Haven Bros was so good. There have been many others, but I just haven’t had a chance to become a member until now.

Bartholomew N. of Foxboro, MA
September 2020

Because I’m disabled, and not only isolated and alone, but wheelchair bound, but college educated and very much believe in life long learning, and at 57, I still have A LOT to learn, and RIPBS is where I love to learn!

Astra K. of Middletown, RI
September 2020
While the entire world came to an abrupt halt, with residents and businesses hunkered down and off routine, the intrepid minds and creative staff at Rhode Island PBS did not skip a determined beat in preparing for the November 11 launch at 7 p.m. of a new broadcast news magazine, Rhode Island PBS Weekly.

When the COVID-19 lock downs began in March, the team followed the story - masked and socially distanced - including how the lock down affected businesses, and how COVID affected children. And, as racial justice protests began locally, Rhode Island PBS Weekly documented the issues and stories around racism.

The first of its kind for the station, the news magazine brought together an award-winning team of producers with reporters whose mission is to pursue truth through in-depth journalism, contextual reporting, and narrative storytelling.

The premiere episode featured a story about racial justice entitled, 'Justice for All?' The half-hour broadcast also included a profile of Rhode Island’s Youth Poetry Ambassador, and a short feature about the 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote. Other stories in 2020 included a profile of RI’s Education Commissioner; opioid use disorder and treatment under COVID-19 and a growing number of grandparents raising grandchildren; how the pandemic is affecting local restaurants; life on Federal Hill at the turn of the 20th century; and local recycling efforts. For additional local flavor, recurring features profiled community leaders, highlighted pivotal moments and sites of interest in local history, and expanded the ‘Kids Want to Know’ feature launched in March as an independent COVID-19 special series.

Rhode Island PBS Weekly airs Wednesdays at 7 p.m., and encores Sundays at 7:30 p.m.
OPIOIDS IN OUR COMMUNITY: A NEIGHBORHOOD CONVERSATION

Parallel to the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, fatal overdoses in Rhode Island continued to rise in 2020.

In its second year, Opioids in Our Community took to a virtual platform to convene discussions around this critical issue. To help connect the community with necessary resources, Rhode Island PBS and CODAC Behavioral Healthcare presented Opioids in Our Community: A Neighborhood Conversation on Tuesday, December 8. The virtual event brought Newport families and residents together with local prevention and treatment professionals to open channels of discussion about opioid use disorder. The event included screening of the Rhode Island PBS documentary, The Fix: Examining Rhode Island’s Opioid Epidemic.

Following the screening Linda Hurley (top left), president and CEO of CODAC Behavioral Healthcare led a discussion with Rebecca Boss, COO and vice president of strategic development of CODAC; Jon Brett, PhD (bottom left), Lifespan Physician Group and program director of Partial Hospitalization program at Newport Hospital; Lt. Michael Naylor, Professional Standards, Newport Police Department.

This event continues the most comprehensive program-based engagement project our station has implemented to date, all made possible with the ongoing support of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. This community initiative won the top award for Best Community Engagement Initiative for 2019 by the National Education Telecommunications Association (NETA).
LETTERS, E-MAIL, AND PHONE MESSAGES FROM OUR VIEWERS

We can’t live without British comedy. Tuesday nights and Saturday nights, especially now!
- Cynthia H. of Plymouth, MA

Thank you with all my heart for re-airing Miranda. I set my DVR to record the episodes, and I spent time binge-rewatching and laughing hysterically. Thank you! It was much needed respite from the world at large. And, thank you for all the good work you do. I’m a fan of RI PBS, and a supporter.
- Ann R.
  West Warwick, RI
  November 2020

Love the programming - you offer so much information for improved living - thank you!
- Cathy Lewis of Woodstock Valley, CT
  November 2020

We love and believe in PBS programming - it has given us so much quality content our whole lives, and now our children’s lives too!
- Daisy B. of East Greenwich, RI
  December 2020

RIPBS is fast becoming our favorite television station! My husband and I enjoy so many of your program choices and are happy to become sustaining members.
- Jillian S.
  Wellesley, MA

I have watched PBS for most of my life. I appreciate ALL the programming you provide, and I am grateful for you. I should have done this years ago, but now I’m in a position to support you. Thanks!
- Jade P. of Newport, RI
  December 2020