



## 2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



"Thank you for your daily news and broadcast station in NJ. I watch it every day – so informative and great station to tune into for information." – NJTV viewer

LOCAL  
VALUE

NJTV's local services had deep impact in New Jersey and its neighboring states, on and off the small screen.

2020 KEY  
SERVICES

In 2020, NJTV provided these vital local services: Emergency Broadcast Service, quality local and national public television programming and community partnership initiatives.

LOCAL  
IMPACT

NJTV, New Jersey's Public Television Network, is a valuable part of the New Jersey metropolitan area's advancement.

NJTV continues to provide more than 30 hours of local Jersey-centric programming each week, exceeding the 20-25 hours initially promised when the network operations began in 2011, and in 2020, ventured further into the virtual world than ever before to provide that content. Here are some of the network’s highlights and updates from the past year:

## Appointment Local Programming



NJTV continues to provide a dedicated primetime block called *NJmade*, featuring exclusively local programming. Viewers can tune in Wednesdays at 8pm to catch rotations of popular local series.

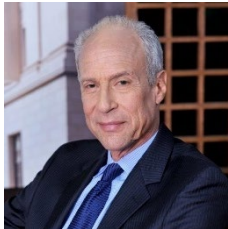
## Breaking News about the News



**NEWSCAST ANCHOR CHANGE:** Since 2014, Mary Alice Williams anchored the *NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams* weeknight newscast, along with multiple news specials, from the Governor’s State of the State addresses and election night coverage to the network’s specials like *In Your Neighborhood* and *Facing the Future*. In April 2020, she announced that she was stepping down from the anchor desk. Emmy-nominated journalist Briana Vannozzi, who has served in several capacities since



joining the news team in 2012, including Sr. Correspondent and interim anchor, took the helm and is the new nightly presence in living rooms across the Garden State.

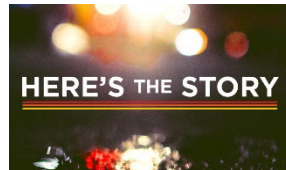
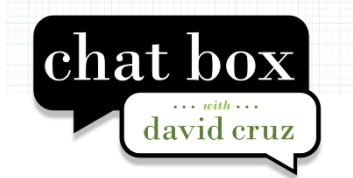


**MICHAEL ARON SEMI-RETIRES:** In July, Chief Political Correspondent Michael Aron stepped down from his daily role reporting to focus on weekly “special” contributions to the *NJ Spotlight News* broadcast. Aron, known as the “Dean of the State House Press Corps” from his decades-long career covering New Jersey politics, will also periodically appear as a guest on NJTV’s *Reporters Roundtable*, transitioning from his former role as anchor of that series, and contribute insight and interviews to other news specials.

**NEWSROOM REBRANDING:** To further unify our newsroom, which combines the award-winning talents of journalists from the NJ Spotlight and NJTV News teams, the NJTV news division was rebranded this year. The result: the new *NJ Spotlight News*. The official “flip” in October transitioned all of the news division elements, including the weeknight newscast, *NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi*, the website at [NJSpotlightNews.org](http://NJSpotlightNews.org) and social media outposts. Read a letter about it from Jamie Kraft and John Mooney [here](#).



## NJTV's Local Television Series



In 2020, NJTV continued many popular local series and also debuted several new ones, including series aimed at further diversifying the network's content and representing communities of color in the Garden State.

**Chat Box with David Cruz** (new): Half-hour weekly public affairs program featuring one-on-one interviews with New Jersey newsmakers and lawmakers.

**Classroom Close-Up NJ**: Half-hour weekly program produced by the NJEA featuring New Jersey's public school success stories.

**Here's the Story**: Half-hour monthly program that hits the road to tell the stories of unique people and places across the Garden State and beyond.

**NJ Business Beat with Rhonda Schaffler** (new): Each week, host Rhonda Schaffler, NJTV's business correspondent, takes a deeper look at the stories, trends and influencers shaping New Jersey's business landscape.

**NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi**: Half-hour local news program concentrating on issues and news affecting New Jerseyans.

**Pasta & Politics with Nick Acocella**: Half-hour program featuring conversation and cooking with local political figures.

**Pathway to Success** (new): Half-hour show spotlights the contributions of African American businesses in the state; produced by the African American Chamber of Commerce of NJ and hosted by John E. Harmon, Sr., the Chamber's Founder, President, and CEO.

**Que Pasa, NJ?** (new): Half-hour program hosted by business leader and entrepreneur Carlos Medina, who interviews the tri-state area's rising Hispanic stars and role models and celebrates the region's rich cultural diversity.

**Reporters Roundtable**: Half-hour weekly public affairs program founded by its longtime host Michael Aron, the next generation of the series is moderated by acclaimed NJ Spotlight News Senior Correspondent David Cruz, who leads its in-depth discussion of New Jersey issues from the State House and beyond with leading journalists from across the Garden State.

**State of Affairs with Steve Adubato**: Half-hour weekly public affairs show produced by Caucus Educational Corporation featuring in-depth analysis of critical issues that affect the lives of New Jersey residents.

**State of the Arts**: Half-hour weekly program goes on-location with creative personalities and places in New Jersey.

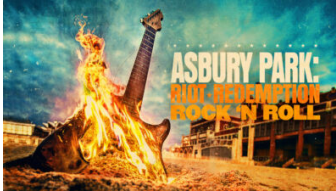
**Think Tank with Steve Adubato**: Half-hour Caucus Educational Corporation series with insightful studio interviews and discussion, tackling a range of important issues.

**Treasures of New Jersey**: Half-hour specials profiling some of New Jersey's iconic places.

**Special Programming:**



**AMERICAN CITIES REBUILDING** – An hour-long special that aired in November featured highlights from a virtual conference, focused on urban concerns through the dual lenses of COVID-19 and social justice. The program featured community leaders from around the country, with a special emphasis on Newark, NJ. (Read more about the conference later in this report.)



**ASBURY PARK: RIOT, REDEMPTION ROCK & ROLL:** This acclaimed 90-minute film tells the story of when the seaside resort of Asbury Park erupted with riots the week of July 4th in 1970 during a summer of civil unrest that would cripple the town for decades. From the flames of the burning city emerged the iconic Jersey sound. Featuring Steven Van Zandt, Bruce Springsteen, Southside Johnny Lyon and others.



**THE GLOBAL CLASSROOM:** Over the summer, One To World and NJTV partnered to bring a new six-episode weekly cultural education series, *The Global Classroom*, to young viewers teaching youth in grades three through six about cultures around the world by exploring new destinations with a team of international students.



**JERSEY 4 JERSEY:** In April, NJTV joined other area stations in airing the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund's one-night event to raise funds to fight the impact of COVID-19. The special featured some of New Jersey's biggest celebrities, including Saquon Barkley, Tony Bennett, Jon Bon Jovi, Danny DeVito, Whoopi Goldberg, Halsey, Chelsea Handler, Charlie Puth, Kelly Ripa, Chris Rock, Bruce Springsteen, Jon Stewart and SZA.



**NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME:** In October, this pre-recorded ceremony celebrated some of the Garden State's best and brightest, including former New York Giants quarterback Eli Manning; gospel singer Cissy Houston; basketball coach Vivian Stringer; actors Ed Harris and Jason Alexander, and more.



**NJTV BENEFIT: A TRIBUTE TO INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM:** In June, when an in-person Gala was not feasible due to COVID-19, NJTV pivoted to host its first-ever virtual fundraiser. The program was a tribute to New Jersey public television's long legacy of quality, independent, local journalism, and to honor individuals and entities who have contributed to independent media and the state. [Watch it here.](#)

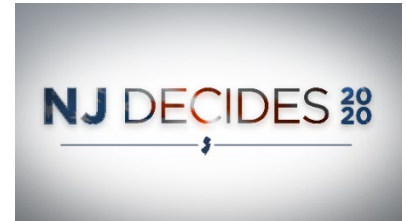


**NHK World TV:** NJTV is partnered with NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) to distribute its 24/7 public television network featuring hourly live news and Japanese lifestyle programming on NJTV's first multicast channel.

## Political Coverage

NJTV is proud to be a trusted source for local political news coverage. Our constituents rely on us for the latest updates out of Trenton, and full on-air and online coverage of important events like the Governor’s State of the State and Budget addresses. During an election year, NJTV steps up with deep dives into the headlining district competitions and provides useful voter information and special events. Here’s a snapshot of some of those in 2020:

**NJ DECIDES POLITICS HUB:** The online *NJ Decides 2020* politics hub was created to be a one-stop resource for stories on this election season’s contests and candidate profiles, as well as useful information to help voters check their registration status, district details, and voting options. Visit the Hub [here](#). It will continue to report on the post-election political scene.



**DEBATES & ELECTION NIGHT:** NJTV co-hosted a CD-2 debate between candidates Amy Kennedy and Jeff Van Drew on October 8, in partnership with Stockton University.

On November 3, NJTV broadcast three hours of live election night coverage from Montclair State University.

## Comprehensive, Continuous COVID-19 Coverage

The news team’s first Coronavirus report was [January 24, 2020](#). Since then, NJTV has been diligently reporting on the COVID-19 virus, from field reports to live-streaming key press conferences. Despite losing access to our studio in mid-March with the statewide shutdown, the news team has not missed a beat in reporting the latest news and information with audiences on-air and online. Briana Vannozi assumed anchoring duties from her home in Jersey City. The graphics and ingest teams were delivered laptops and external hard drives to enable them to assemble the show from home. Correspondents continued working in the field and also began conducting interviews from home using Zoom and Skype. Videographers remained in the field working on assignments daily.

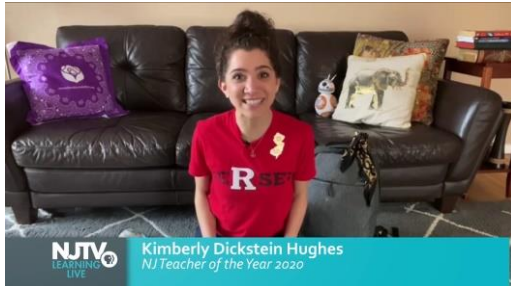
And the public noticed. Both broadcast and digital audiences grew in the first months of the state lockdown. What’s more, NJTV has continued to grow and innovate that coverage.



Here is a brief look at some content highlights:

- CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION HUB:** The online [Coronavirus Information Hub](#) was launched at the end of February and has since been constantly updated. The Hub includes a collection of local reports from *NJ Spotlight News* on the pandemic and its effect on New Jersey. In September, the Hub reached a new milestone of three million pageviews since it was published. It remains the most visited page on the News site during this pandemic and accounts for over half of its traffic.
- VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLES:** The news team, which previously hosted live community roundtable events on a regular basis, successfully pivoted to a virtual format and paid close attention to issues related to the pandemic, including the challenges of remote learning, the importance of childcare for economic recovery, the structural racism exposed by COVID-19 and more. Read more about these later in this report.
- NEW DIGITAL CONTENT:** Without access to our broadcast studio, NJTV maximized its digital platforms to continue providing our audience with new programming. In May, it launched “*Computerside Chats*” with Sr. Correspondent David Cruz via YouTube. Cruz pulled up a monitor for live remote, one-on-one discussion about the impacts of COVID-19 on New Jersey with state leadership, including [Governor Phil Murphy](#), [Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli](#) and [U.S. Senator Cory Booker](#) about the pandemic. The series would later evolve into *Chat Box with David Cruz. Reporters Roundtable* also went remote during this time. Both would resume broadcasts in the fall (see the Local Programming update below).
- SECOND SPOTLIGHT NEWSLETTER:** When it became clear in the early weeks of the pandemic that news about COVID-19 was coming in strong daily cycles, the news team responded by adding a second daily newsletter to its roster for subscribers. The longstanding “Today’s Spotlight” newsletter at 7am, which encapsulates headlines across the state, was complemented by a second newsletter at 7pm, entitled “Tonight’s Spotlight”, specifically launched to share the latest Coronavirus updates and other timely news stories along with a link to the weeknight news program. Anyone can sign up for these newsletters [here](#).
- IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY – SPANISH TRANSLATIONS:** The news team and Montclair State University’s Center for Cooperative Media announced a collaboration to translate NJ Spotlight News stories into Spanish. The project launched with a focus on COVID-19 coverage, and now appears in a dedicated section of the news website called [EN ESPAÑOL](#). The partnership hopes to include additional content in the future.

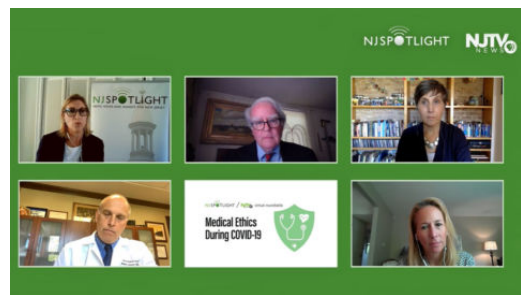
## NJTV Learning Live



**Lessons Learned, On-air and Online.** When schools closed last spring and the transition to digital learning only worsened the digital divide, NJTV moved quickly to partner with the New Jersey Education Association and the NJ Department of Education to launch *NJTV Learning Live*: a four-hour daily programming block featuring NJ public school teachers for grades 3 to 6, broadcast for free across the state (and thus accessible even to students lacking internet access). Over 200 hours of lessons were produced in 2020, all archived online on the NJTV website and continue to air within the WNET family of stations.

## Community Roundtables and Conferences

**VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLES:** In 2020, NJ Spotlight News hosted 13 hour-long virtual roundtable events on a variety of topics, archived [here](#). A few highlights: In October, *Maternal Health and Family Planning in NJ: Working Toward Better Outcomes* featured opening remarks by First Lady Tammy Murphy and discussed reproductive health services legislation that looks to improve maternal health outcomes for women of color. In November, *New Jersey's Landmark Environmental Justice Law: How Will It Work?* explored the path toward implementation of the newly passed law and featured remarks from NJ Governor Phil Murphy and U.S. Senator Cory Booker.



These events each attract hundreds of attendees – indeed, the shift to a virtual format necessitated by COVID has significantly increased the number of registrants and participants for each roundtable.



**AMERICAN CITIES REBUILDING:** In October, NJTV partnered with WNET and NJ Spotlight for a special virtual conference, focused on urban concerns through the dual lenses of COVID-19 and social justice. Panelists examined the issues that will determine how cities newly emerge as resilient and thriving ecosystems, along with the persistent and new problems facing urban communities, and potential solutions. The multi-day event utilized a combination of broadcast and digital platforms to connect dynamic voices from around the country, with a focus on Newark, home of the Agnes Varis

NJTV Studio. The program was originally intended to be live in Newark in April and was adjusted to a later date and virtual format due to the pandemic. The sessions were recorded and are available [here](#). A broadcast special with highlights from the event aired in November. [Watch here.](#)

## The Public’s Television Network



The Agnes Varis NJTV Studio at 2 Gateway Center in Newark, NJ serves as a hub for the network and broadcast home of the network’s weeknight news program and several of its other series. Though closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic, it is also normally a space that regularly welcomes visitors and tours, from Cub Scouts and students to professional groups. We look forward to welcoming the public back into our studio once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

NJTV began a long-planned major expansion and upgrade of the studio just prior to the pandemic. After a state-ordered pause on construction was lifted, work was able to proceed under strict COVID protocols. With

the studio closed for business purposes and the news team working remotely, construction moved forward efficiently toward planned completion in early 2021. Final layout of the space is being adjusted to take new workspace protocols into account. NJTV looks forward to safely returning to its new and improved studio at a future date, to be determined.

## Community Partnerships and Involvement

NJTV seeks to be a good neighbor in New Jersey’s local communities through partnerships and special events. Our on-air news talent regularly moderate forums for various community and industry organizations as well as NJTV’s own engagement events.

NJTV partnered with film festivals across New Jersey again this year, including the **Garden State Film Festival** and the **Teaneck International Film Festival**. In May, NJTV and the **Montclair Film Festival** partnered to broadcast *The Sacrifice Zone*, a documentary about the Ironbound district of Newark, NJ, one of the most toxic neighborhoods in the country. The film described how resident Maria Lopez Nuñez is waging a war for environmental justice there, hoping to break the cycle of poor communities disproportionately suffering from industrial activity and related pollution and health impacts. The documentary by Talking Eyes Media was followed by a panel discussion.

## Community Advisory Board

This group, representing various sectors and communities across the state, provides insight and feedback about the network’s programming and how it can best serve New Jersey. In 2020, the NJTV CAB welcomed a new Board Chair **Ingrid Reed**. She has been a member of the NJTV CAB for seven years and assumes the post from the group’s former Chair, Roger B. Jacobs, Esq.

“Ingrid is an extraordinarily engaged citizen of New Jersey,” said NJTV General Manager John Servidio. “Her leadership of this group will greatly benefit the network by generating keen insight into how well the network is serving our local communities with its programming and other content. We thank Roger Jacobs for his years of service to this group, including helping us to grow and diversify the CAB.”

## Student Internships

When our studio facilities are open, NJTV welcomes college students from across the state into the newsroom to get hands-on experience learning the ropes of broadcast journalism.



## Viewer Feedback

### Regarding NJ Spotlight News:

*"Thank you for your daily news and broadcast station in NJ. I watch it every day - so informative and great station to tune into for information."*

*"You've been doing a great job throughout this COVID-19 crisis. I have NJTV on most of the day and appreciate all the information that is presented in calm, measured tones by your anchors and reporters. A former TV news producer/exec, myself, I know the pressures you are working under all too well. Keep up the good work!"*

*"Great coverage today, presenting the reality of those around us, while we're keeping distance."*

*"I much enjoy the NJTV evening news."*

### Regarding NJTV Learning Live:

*"I have to say...that the learning videos have been amazing so far. My son is a fifth grader and every day he has taken a break from his online learning to attend these live learning classes."*

*"I love these videos and share them with my families. I am a K-6 technology educator in South Jersey."*

*"Your wonderful programs...help our students in this difficult time."*

*"My children (8 and 10) have started watching the Learning Live series (grades 3 and 4/5) to help supplement their online learning. I had to reach out specifically to commend the teaching style of Christal Holmes. She has my kids engaged, learning, and laughing."*

*"Thank you so much for the programming. My son really loved and enjoyed how Ms. Wilkins teaches dividing fractions. He loves the song!! He is speech delayed and her way of explaining things in a simple and fun way made him engaged in the lesson."*