Local Content and Service 2020

GBH exists to engage, illuminate and inspire. Our vision is to be a pioneering leader in media that strengthens, includes and serves our diverse community, fostering growth and empowering individuals.
2020 was a year unlike any other, requiring all of us to recalibrate. The COVID-19 lockdown prompted a rapid pivot across all of GBH’s programs, events and services in order to continue to provide engaging and inspiring resources for our community.

GBH worked to engage in new ways during this challenging time by:

- Creating a new daily call-in radio program that focused on the impact of COVID-19 in our neighborhoods and fielded questions from listeners across the state
- Airing and streaming musical performances when concert halls were closed
- Providing broadcast and online resources for remote learning across the Commonwealth
- Producing a virtual graduation ceremony for our high school seniors
- Partnering with local community organizations and institutions to create dozens of new virtual events and forums including our first community book club and our monthly multiplatform community dialogue on The State of Race

Throughout the year we partnered with local organizations and community groups including the NAACP, Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Public Library, the Museum of Fine Arts, the cross-cultural professional organization Get Konnected, the Martin Luther King, Jr., legacy nonprofit King Boston, the Huntington Theatre Company and more to help amplify and support their efforts.

Our nation’s reckoning with racism prompted us to deeply reflect and commit to making meaningful changes in how we operate and to offer new programming. An especially contentious election season prompted GBH to intensify its local coverage, resources and events to inform voters. To serve all audiences, GBH provided continually updated digital resource pages on COVID-19, racism and the election.

When schools across the state closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GBH was the go-to resource for the Massachusetts Department of Education to ensure that learning could continue. We were able to respond and develop:

- Free, readily available digital resources from PBS LearningMedia
- On-air programming via GBH WORLD that reached those with limited access to broadband and devices
- Training and peer gatherings for Massachusetts teachers through webinars and interactive virtual workshops
- *Family Fun at Home*, an English/Spanish summer program and guide featuring hands-on activities, online games and programs to watch – all starring beloved PBS characters. In collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and New England Public Media with major funding from the PNC Foundation, the team produced 115,000 copies of the guide, which were distributed across the state through the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantees, resource and referral agencies and regional offices of the Massachusetts EEC.

When the pandemic began, GBH News created a new local daily call-in radio program to address COVID-19 concerns for the community. *In It Together*, which is now also a podcast, is hosted by Arun Rath, who was named 2020 Best Radio Personality by *Boston Magazine*. In September, GBH News launched *COVID and the Classroom*, a year-long series that follows three high school students from three different Massachusetts communities as they navigate their landmark senior year amid a global pandemic.

With the reckoning on racial injustice in America, GBH committed to immediate, concrete actions that address issues within the organization and the community, including the launch of *The State of Race*. This ongoing series of community conversations examining race and inequality in Massachusetts is hosted by Dan Lothian, an award-winning Boston journalist and frequent GBH News contributor. It is implemented in partnership with *The Boston Globe*, the NAACP Boston Branch and GBH WORLD. Topics have included COVID-19, education, police reform and housing, featuring local experts.

During the 2020 election season, in addition to its daily news coverage, GBH News offered voters the opportunity to explore the issues with a variety of events and resources: breaking down the ballot questions and disseminating information about polling places, voting options and rules.
A special Election Resources collection was updated regularly, and a new four-part GBH News Forum series produced by the GBH Forum Network took on misinformation and fake news, election polling and political polarization. Election week coverage culminated with *Election 2020: What’s Next*, a two-hour, multiplatform special with GBH News hosts Jim Braude, Margery Eagan, Joe Mathieu, Arun Rath and guests.

With entertainment venues still closed in December, GBH worked with numerous arts organizations to create new ways to continue to bring cultural events into people’s lives. As the year came to a close, GBH and the Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) produced *Handel’s “Messiah” For Our Time*, a COVID-safe video recording of the holiday classic, thus continuing H+H’s annual tradition of holiday performances that dates back to 1854. The production was done using robotic cameras, safe distances were maintained, all singers wore specially designed masks and all participants followed strict COVID protocols to ensure safety for all. The final product was broadcast on GBH 2 and streamed on YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo, wgbh.org, classicalWCRB.org and handelandhaydn.org. The special, viewed by nearly 150,000 people, was repeated throughout the holiday season on GBH 2 and GBH 44.

GBH was honored to host Yo-Yo Ma at our Fraser Performance Studio for a performance of J.S. Bach’s six cello suites in a memorial for those we have lost in the pandemic and a tribute to the resilience of our communities. The live event was broadcast locally on GBH 2 and streamed around the world.

With donor and community support, we have retained strength and stability in our role as an essential news and cultural hub for Boston and Massachusetts, the nation’s premier public media organization and the largest creator of educational and cultural content for PBS.
This year, we announced new branding, dropping the broadcast-centric “W” from our name to reflect the increased digital reach to our audiences and adopted a new logo. The organization is now known as GBH.

GBH serves our local audiences with trusted content and engaging experiences that are rooted in and reflect our region. Through TV and radio broadcasts, online and mobile content, educational activities, screenings, performances and forums in our Brighton and Boston Public Library studios, GBH fosters citizen participation and community connections. This year, many of these activities were virtual due to the pandemic.

GBH operates a variety of public television services: GBH 2, GBH 44, GBH Kids, and Boston Kids & Family TV (an educational service for Boston cable subscribers, in collaboration with the City of Boston); GBH WORLD and GBH Create. GBH 2 and GBH Kids are also available to YouTube TV subscribers.

GBH operates three public radio services: GBH 89.7, Boston’s Local NPR; CRB Classical 99.5, and CAI, local NPR for the Cape and Islands (90.1, 91.1, 94.3).

We offer six web services — wgbh.org, wgbhnews.org, wgby.org, classicalwcrb.org, wgbh.org/jazz247 and capeandislands.org — that provide streaming, podcasts, blogs, news updates and a wide range of program resources.

GBH offers a mix of national fare and locally originated content designed to serve the specific needs and interests of New England area audiences.
GBH NEWS

In 2020, GBH welcomed Massachusetts native Pam Johnston as the new general manager for news. At a time when many newsrooms are shrinking, GBH’s is thriving:

- In 2020, GBH News won five Regional Edward R. Murrow Awards including one for overall excellence, reflecting the breadth and scope of the local news operation’s radio and digital coverage.

- The Dorchester Bureau continued to serve as a resource for GBH reporters covering Boston’s largest and most diverse neighborhood.

- To bring trusted reporting to an underserved area, GBH News expanded to provide regional coverage in central and western Massachusetts with a Worcester Bureau in 2020. Worcester is a city of cultural and demographic diversity and economic innovation, as well as a hub for higher education and health care — and had been underserved by local news media.

GBH’s multiplatform approach informed all of its local programming in 2020:

- GBH 89.7 offers more than 30 hours every week of original, local programming that brings listeners a wide range of voices and opinions.

- Boston Public Radio, our three-hour live midday radio program, hosted by seasoned Boston journalists Jim Braude and Margery Eagan, offers thought-provoking discussions on the day’s news and issues. The show regularly hosts our region’s most influential policymakers, business leaders and cultural mavens. Monthly one-hour, in-studio conversations with Governor Charlie Baker, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Attorney General Maura Healey, in addition to appearances by Boston Police Commissioner William Gross, offered people an opportunity to directly connect with their elected officials about the issues they care about.

- Greater Boston, our signature weeknight TV news program hosted by Jim Braude, continued to provide insight into the stories and newsmakers that matter to our local community.

- Emily Rooney and a media-savvy panel of journalists on GBH television’s Beat the Press reviewed the news of the week every Friday night, holding the media accountable for journalistic lapses and giving credit to local and national news coverage that gets it right.

- Under the Radar with Callie Crossley focused on local stories from alternative press outlets and community sources often overlooked by mainstream media. Segments in 2020 included such topics as local
food groups’ needs during COVID-19, underrepresentation of women in STEM, Massachusetts ballot questions, serving breakfast in schools and Massachusetts’ distracted driving bill.

• The longest-running program on public television focusing on the interests of communities of color, Basic Black, hosted by Callie Crossley, has been at the forefront of emerging social media engagement and broadcast. The program broadened its audience by incorporating a simultaneous Facebook and Twitter stream and discussion with live TV to connect directly with viewers. In tribute to its outstanding and unique accomplishments, Basic Black was honored with the 2020 Governors’ Award from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (NATAS) Boston/New England Chapter.

Basic Black continues to be responsive to current events, providing a platform for local voices on national issues. Topics covered in 2020 included: COVID-19’s impact on communities of color, arts and social justice, economic disparities for Black business owners and community health centers.

Local News Events and Initiatives

In addition to the special programming discussed in the introduction and our regular programming, which includes local guests and features on Morning Edition and All Things Considered, a number of special news events and reporting initiatives were launched in 2020:

• With the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy theories, GBH doubled down on reporting about hate speech, disinformation and media manipulation, curating a resource page to combat disinformation and to encourage media literacy. GBH WORLD launched the six-episode Pulling the Thread, a series that unravels some of America’s most popular conspiracy theories to reveal the emotional, cognitive and social forces that lead rational people to believe irrational things.

• In its first installment, The Color of Public Money, an inquiry by the GBH News Center for Investigative Reporting, reported a 24% decrease in the value of state contract awards won by minority-owned firms over the past two decades. The report resulted in new legislation that would authorize the state to make minority contracting a priority.

• GBH News joined a first-ever collaboration with fellow NPR station WBUR to deliver local news reporting for NPR’s “Consider This” podcast.
GBH News and GBH WORLD provided extensive coverage for local audiences of the year’s news, including live broadcast of Supreme Court hearings and election results.

Our Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) worked with the Massachusetts Secretary of State’s office to make online voter registration accessible, especially to voters who may be using assistive technology, such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and screen readers. Most recently, NCAM worked with a local developer to ensure that its voting app, long used by overseas military personnel, extends to voters with disabilities.

Special Community Events

In February, before COVID restrictions went into place, GBH hosted the first Senate primary debate between Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey and his challenger Rep. Joe Kennedy III in our Brighton studio, broadcast live on television, radio and online. We invited in a range of community members, including the debate team from GBH’s neighboring Brighton High School, Debate en Español. As the coach later said, the students’ eyes were opened to the energy of live debate and the importance of election choices. “It’s hard to describe the effect that experience had on our students,” he said.

When high schools had to cancel year-end ceremonies, GBH created a special virtual graduation ceremony broadcast on television and online to enable graduating seniors from the 668 public and private schools across the Commonwealth to share in their accomplishment. It featured student-submitted videos, Massachusetts celebrities and a commencement address by Governor Charlie Baker. The community celebration was broadcast across the Commonwealth on GBH 2 in Greater Boston and on partner station WGBY/New England Public Media in western Massachusetts. Both stations streamed the program on their websites and social media platforms. In a first-ever cooperation, every Boston TV station carried it simultaneously, along with many community access channels - reinventing celebration and community for high school students and their families in towns throughout Massachusetts.
CAI, a service of GBH, celebrated its 20th anniversary of providing listeners on Cape Cod, Nantucket, Martha’s Vineyard and the South Coast with their own NPR station — one infused with a unique local sound and sense of place. CAI’s feature reporting covered topics ranging from COVID-19, homelessness on Cape Cod, the impact of climate change on the Cape’s environment and much more. Partnerships with the Cape Cod Times and the area’s weekly papers enrich the station’s robust news reporting. In 2020, the station won a second-place award from the Outdoor Writers Association of America 2020 Excellence in Craft for “Winter Clamming Digs Up Many Rewards.”

CAI’s ongoing programs highlight and reflect the many distinctive dimensions of life and issues in the region:

- The Point with Mindy Todd provides lively and informative discussions each day for local residents.
- The weekly Local News Roundup invites local journalists onto the airwaves each Friday to discuss top news stories.
- Local Food Report looks at the local food scene.
- Cape Cod Notebook features essays on nature.
- Ways of Life presents portraits of local Cape Codders.
- Poetry Sunday features readings from local writers.
- Hidden History focuses on lesser-known historic events, places and people from around Cape Cod, the Islands and the South Coast.
- The Fishing News captures who is catching what and where.
- Bird Report highlights bird sightings and migration.
- Looking Skyward covers the latest astronomy news and what’s visible in the night sky.

CAI produced the following two special series in 2020:

- “Toxic Ponds: The Struggle to Protect Public Health” explored toxic algae blooms in ponds across the region.
- “Race and Systemic Racism” examined race and diversity, police brutality and systemic racism in the U.S.
GBH continues to strengthen its foundational music profile and technical capacity, making it a hub for music in Boston and Massachusetts. During the pandemic this year we worked to become an essential community resource for local music organizations, sharing concerts and performances via broadcast on television and radio when they could not happen in person.

**Classical**

**CRB Classical 99.5** provides 167 hours a week of music programmed, hosted and produced in our studio. In addition, the station features the works of local music partners on our airwaves and digital platforms. More than a quarter million people listen to CRB Classical 99.5 during a week – via broadcast and online.

During the COVID lockdown, the CRB Classical 99.5 team partnered with such groups as **Celebrity Series of Boston, Boston Baroque, Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Chamber Music Society** and others to create live and recorded events. CRB Classical 99.5 made special arrangements to tap the archives for Saturday night **Boston Symphony Orchestra** broadcasts when the BSO had to cancel all of its performances, allowing listeners to experience its concerts. CRB Classical 99.5 also produced an array of special programming, holiday broadcasts and a special celebration of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth in December.

**Jazz**

Our exemplary jazz music program, **Eric in the Evening**, led by Eric Jackson, airs live every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening from 9pm-midnight. GBH digital’s online music station, Jazz 24/7, celebrated its fourth year, streaming the best in classic and contemporary jazz and available anytime on our website at wgbh.org/jazz247. Starting at midnight on 89.7 FM listeners can enjoy **Eric Jackson’s Playlist**, which alternates with **The Jazz Gallery with Tessil Collins** throughout the day. GBH provides jazz aficionados with rich web content, including in-depth looks at great artists, live interviews and performance webcasts from the GBH studios.
Celtic

For more than three decades, GBH 89.7 has reached deep into New England’s sizable Celtic and folk communities with the weekly music program *A Celtic Sojourn*, hosted by Brian O’Donovan. Born and raised in West Cork, Ireland, O’Donovan shares his expertise and passion for traditional and contemporary forms of Celtic music and has created multiple signature events staged in theatres around New England. This year, he converted his holiday classic *A Christmas Celtic Sojourn* to a series of virtual performances, partnering with many of the venues that would have normally presented the holiday shows, with a unique performance presented for each audience. A portion of every ticket purchased went to the specific partner theater. Each show was livestreamed in real time and was also available on-demand for days afterward for ticketholders.

Front Row Boston

*Front Row Boston* continues to treat audiences to new and emerging artists with socially distant sessions that are available 24/7 on wgbh.org. Highlights this year included live community-based shows in various Massachusetts locations: Lake Saint Daniel at the historic Powisset Farm in Dover and Hawthorn at the historic Stevens-Coolidge Place in North Andover, as well as Anjimile live at GBH Fraser Performance Studio.

Art

*Open Studio with Jared Bowen* invites audiences to the sets, studios and stages of both known and unknown, local and national artists. The weekly television series blends profiles, performances and contemporary exhibitions by artists in Greater Boston, New England and across the country. The program did not miss a beat as the pandemic took hold, continuing to bring the creativity of artists to viewers on GBH 2 and listeners on GBH 89.7. Highlights of 2020 included a May interview with Harvard graduate *Amanda Gorman*, the nation’s first youth poet laureate who became nationally known after reading at President Biden’s inauguration; *American Repertory Theater*’s Artistic Director Diane Paulus, and *Boston Museum of Fine Arts* Director Matthew Teitelbaum.

With theaters darkened in 2020, GBH partnered with the *Huntington Theatre Company* and *ArtsEmerson* to present a special broadcast of their stage performance of *Mala*, a poignant drama written and performed by local playwright and performer Melinda Lopez. This award-winning play aired on GBH 2 and YouTube TV, allowing audiences access to the performance from home.
EDUCATION & EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

As a leading and trusted producer of children’s media, our multiplatform educational resources inspire and entertain as they teach critical thinking, science literacy and civic engagement. During 2020, GBH continued to enhance the lives of children, youth, families and teachers, with a focus on those in Massachusetts.

When schools across the state closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic, GBH was the go-to resource for the Massachusetts Department of Education to ensure that learning could continue. We were able to respond and develop:

- **Free, readily available digital resources** from PBS LearningMedia
- **On-air programming** via GBH WORLD that reached families with limited access to broadband and devices
- **Teacher training** through webinars and interactive virtual workshops
- **Family Fun at Home**, an **English/Spanish summer program** featuring hands-on activities, online games and programs to watch – all starring beloved PBS KIDS characters

The 2Gen initiative developed educational media that addresses the learning needs of both immigrant children and parents. In collaboration with New England Public Media (an affiliate of GBH in western Massachusetts), this program builds on clear evidence that improving parent education and economic stability translates into gains for kids’ learning and development.

After **NOVA Science Studio**’s successful pilot with teens in 2019, a new cycle launched in 2020, which allowed young people to gather virtually to attend workshops featuring diverse STEM and tech literacy topics. We also created the **Interactive Polar Lab**, one of several NOVA Labs that excite students and allow “citizen scientists” to actively participate in the scientific process by visualizing, analyzing and sharing the data that scientists use during real-world investigations. As classes continued to meet virtually due to the pandemic, GBH created virtual field trips where students could gather together on NOVA’s Education Facebook page and on YouTube, where hosts provided presentations and Q&A sessions with scientists. This opened opportunities for even more participants to engage and exchange ideas with each other and the hosts about the natural wonders around the Earth.
Working across Massachusetts, Youth Stand Up focused on the pivotal years of adolescence when kids learn how they can actively participate in society. Showcasing near-peer role models, youth groups and middle school classrooms across the state, GBH is developing media resources to inspire and activate young people with civics curriculum and educational media. These are being tested with eighth graders in Boston’s Mattapan neighborhood.

Season 11 of GBH’s award-winning High School Quiz Show, the single-elimination academic team competition for Massachusetts students, continued to be broadcast through the spring of 2020. Plans for Season 12 came together during the summer, as did efforts to begin creating an Alexa skill. The program also offered a play-along stream on the popular Twitch platform, which allowed local, national, and international High School Quiz Show fans to engage with the show more interactively than ever before, including the chance to compete with other fans and past contestants.

As part of our longstanding commitment to supporting science education, GBH this year established a new scholarship for Boston Public Schools students. The Paula S. Apsell/GBH STEM Scholarship is open to public high school seniors planning to study in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics at the post-secondary level. Apsell is senior executive producer emerita of the science series NOVA, produced by GBH and seen nationally on PBS. The inaugural scholarship was awarded to 26 graduates of the class of 2020 from nine Boston public high schools with career plans across the STEM fields.

Get Konnected and GBH hosted an engaging discussion in September on COVID-19 and racism, with some of Boston’s most prominent leaders of color from Bunker Hill Community College, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology and University of Massachusetts Boston.
IN OUR STUDIOS

GBH Events

A 30-by-45 foot LED screen alongside GBH Studios signals the spirit and content of public media for thousands of passersby each week, with one theme a day showcased through photography or slow-moving images. The digital mural mirrors the vibrancy of our region: images reflecting events and issues in our community and nation are displayed drawing attention to the cultural richness of Boston and New England and to what’s on the minds of those in the neighborhoods we serve. Features in 2020 included tributes to first responders and other health care and essential workers, Boston’s Children’s Hospital, Boston Symphony Orchestra on CRB Classical 99.5, local Artists for Humanity and the 150th anniversary of the Museum of Fine Arts.

After March 2020, GBH transferred to virtual-only events, and with that transition, expanded access to audiences dramatically. From April through December 2020, GBH held 72 virtual events, attracting 26,500 registrants. In comparison, in the twelve months of 2019, 20,837 guests attended GBH events.

Virtual events in 2020 were tailored to the needs of people required to be at home, providing opportunities for audiences to talk, cook, learn and enjoy the arts together. Highlights of the year included virtual events and forums that directly addressed COVID-19 (impacts on the restaurant industry, how to stay fit during the lockdown), offered resources for community members on new interests (birdwatching, photography, gardening, beer brewing), invited audiences into “at home” sessions with popular GBH hosts (Jim Braude and Margery Eagan, Laura Carlo
and Chris Voss) and provided opportunities to meet public media favorites (Rick Steves, Chris Kimball).

- The 2020 debut of the Beyond the Page book club saw discussions with authors of novels and nonfiction, including Francesca Momplaisir’s *My Mother’s House* and *How to Educate a Citizen* by E.D. Hirsch Jr., in partnership with local community book stores.

- In conjunction with broadcast of AMERICAN EXPERIENCE’s *The Vote*, which tells the story of the fight to secure voting rights for women, GBH collaborated with the Boston Mayor’s Office of Women’s Advancement on a community forum that was moderated by Tanisha Sullivan, president of the NAACP Boston Branch. The panel explored the history of the suffrage movement and explored the ways the fight for the vote has informed the work of today’s community organizations.

- In a year of physical disconnection, Stories from the Stage used technology to deliver home-based storytelling that allowed us to continue to share our human connections.

- GBH provided technical and production support to “Black Men Speak: Reflections on Racism in America – Where Do We Go From Here?” an online conversation that gave voice to the experience of Black men. Moderated by attorney Michael Curry, member of the National NAACP’s Board of Directors, Chairman of the NAACP’s Advocacy & Policy Committee and former President of the Boston NAACP, the discussion involved a diverse gathering of Boston-area Black men. It was live-streamed by Roxbury Community College and GBH.

- In February, GBH, in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and housing experts, offered a community screening of *East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story*, from Ken Burns Presents, a film by Sarah Burns and David McMahon. The film chronicles a public housing community in 1970s Atlanta and raises critical questions about poverty and housing opportunities for African Americans.

- GBH Forum Network, our free online collection of thousands of video and audio lectures, also turned to virtual events that could be shared with the community. In a typical year, the GBH Forum Network records about 150 lectures through partnerships with such institutions as the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University, Ford Hall Forum, the historic church and gathering place Old South Meeting House, the Museum of Fine Arts, the convener on international topics WorldBoston, Cambridge Forum, Boston Society of Architects and about 25 others. In 2020, the GBH Forum Network created virtual events on diverse topics, including a forum on America’s political divides (with the free public lecture series
Ford Hall Forum); “StreetTalk,” a four-part series on the impact of the pandemic on our transportation system (with the transportation advocacy nonprofit Livable Streets Alliance), and a panel on how to interpret polling numbers (with GBH News). The GBH Forum Network also embarked on a partnership with Suffolk University to provide a series of lectures on the pandemic.

• GBH, King Boston and the Boston Foundation hosted a panel discussion with Boston-based Legacy of Love filmmaker Robert Mighty. His documentary film explores the mostly unknown story of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott’s formative years in 1950s Boston, where they met as students and started on their journey toward becoming leaders in the civil rights movement. The film premiered on GBH 2 in August.

GBH STUDIO AT BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY/ LUNCH HOUR LIVE

The GBH BPL Studio, a community gathering space in the heart of Boston, has proven highly successful in engaging the community since its opening in 2016, hosting twice-weekly broadcasts and live programming ranging from the popular talk show Boston Public Radio to live music performances to Lunch Hour Live interviews streamed on Facebook. In 2020, a diverse array of almost 100 virtual events were provided during the pandemic lockdown.