



## 2019 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



*Adam Zangari, entering the University of Rhode Island in September 2019, was this year's recipient of the competitive \$15,000 Rhode Island PBS Foundation Scholarship.*

Since 1967, WSBE has been committed to the principle of lifelong learning. That commitment is at the core of everything we do. We educate, inform, enrich, and inspire our viewers of all ages to **WSBE more**.



### AN INTEGRAL PART OF RI'S CULTURAL TAPESTRY

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

2019 saw WSBE produce original programs that extended “beyond the box” to touch the community in meaningful ways. We connected the elaborate efforts by day to spectacular jack-o-lantern displays by night. We connected families in crisis to resources for addiction and mental health. We connected 50 years of stories about the bridge that connects shores - and lives.

WSBE discovers and shares stories that matter to our community because these stories come from our community.

### IN 2019, WSBE PROVIDED THESE KEY SERVICES

WSBE also featured continuing services and content - snapshots of local life that are the bedrock of our value to the community. We shine the *Rhode Island Spotlight* on small organizations achieving big results, provide professional advice for tax preparation from the RI Society of CPAs, and engage community groups of school children through adults by hosting fun and informative station tours.

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 and present content about issues that impact our community.

#### KEY PRODUCTIONS:

- *American Graduate: Journey to Jobs*, about partnerships that train students for high-paying careers
- *The Newport Bridge: A Rhode Island Icon*, celebrating 50 years of connecting people
- *It's OK Not To Be OK*, about addiction and mental health

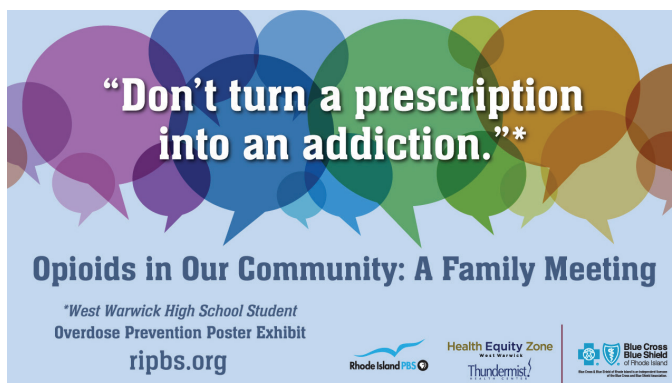
## OPIOIDS IN OUR COMMUNITY: A FAMILY MEETING

To address one of the most critical public health crises affecting our local community, Rhode Island PBS developed a cross-platform community outreach initiative. This project was created after the May 2018 premiere of the Rhode Island PBS documentary, *The Fix: Examining Rhode Island's Opioid Epidemic* and continued through September 2019. Using segments from the film as the basis of educational resources for middle- and high school classroom instruction, Rhode Island PBS Education Services, in close collaboration with Rhode Island Student Assistance Services, developed lesson plans, viewing guides, and student worksheets, distributed through Rhode Island PBS LearningMedia.

The initiative also included screenings of the documentary in two high-need communities. Planned in partnership with a lead health / community service agency in each location, both screenings included an information fair, connecting audience members with treatment and mental health support professionals. The screening event in West Warwick also featured a student-created Overdose Prevention Poster Exhibit. A third screening in September 2019 featured a teacher training workshop, showing the educators best uses of the classroom resources.

To raise awareness and encourage attendance, a robust communication campaign engaged the public on a variety of platforms - a social media campaign of targeted e-card graphics, news release and eNewsletters, television coverage by [WJAR NBC 10 Health Check Kids](#), on-air promotion, paid ad, as well as posters, postcards, and magnets, all bearing a coordinated and consistent visual theme to build recognition.

These efforts combined to create 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).





## IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK: DESTIGMATIZING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE

Every year, one in five Rhode Islanders is challenged by mental health or substance use. These issues do not discriminate against age, racial identity, or socioeconomic background, and as they warrant broader attention, many communities have been looking for open paths to a candid conversation.

Launched at a press conference at Rhode Island PBS studios in early December, the State of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Broadcasters Association began what will be a year-long campaign to break the silence and alleviate these unspoken burdens. In an unprecedented collaboration among local media, all four Rhode Island television stations simultaneously aired *It's OK Not to Be OK*, a powerful special that conveyed a message of hope and healing.



Driven by compelling firsthand accounts, the program's goal was to the narrative about mental health and substance use. It explored a wide range of perspectives and shared urgent, uncomfortable, necessary stories of struggle, recovery, and acceptance.

It also promoted a variety of resources available to the public, particularly BH Link, a 24-hour, 365-day walk-in mental health triage center in East Providence, RI.

After the 30-minute simulcast special, Rhode Island PBS extended the conversation with an exclusive round-table discussion with the journalists who reached out to the laborers, first-responders, and young people featured in the program. Host Margie O'Brien (Capitol TV) was joined by Katie Davis (WJAR NBC 10), Walt Buteau (WPRI CBS 12), and Ellie Romano (WLNE ABC 6) for additional commentary on how each story impacted the reporters personally. *It's OK Not to Be OK* represents a collaborative effort to raise awareness and end the stigma. More information about the services of BH Link can be found at [www.bhlink.org](http://www.bhlink.org).



## JOURNEY TO JOBS: AN AMERICAN GRADUATE SPECIAL



JOURNEY TO JOBS is a one-hour special, presented as part of the American Graduate: Getting to Work initiative, public media's commitment to help communities illuminate pathways to gainful employment in America. Rhode Island PBS is proud to be part of this initiative, and aired the program on Monday, October 14 at 7 p.m.

Hosted by PBS Newshour's Hari Sreenivasan, JOURNEY TO JOBS took viewers across the country, highlighting individuals and organizations connecting job seekers to employment at each stop.

The broadcast shared stories of communities providing support, advice, and intervention services to youth, veterans, and adults in career transition. In JOURNEY TO JOBS, viewers heard from job seekers and the newly employed, business and nonprofit leaders, as well as program staff, volunteers and mentors, as they create pathways to high-demand skilled careers. Each segment is tied to one of the American Graduate content strands, including Barriers to Employment, Career Pathways, Connecting Job Seekers to Networks, Innovative Career Education Models, and Mentorship.

Our own Rhode Island story featured Real Jobs RI, a partnership between the state's Department of Labor and Training, local industry, and area high schools to create career pathways that use hands-on learning to prepare students for highly-skilled, high-wage jobs. The segment features the Marine Trades Program at the Warwick Area Career & Technical Center in Warwick, RI.

"This American Graduate: Journey to Jobs initiative gave Rhode Island PBS the opportunity to showcase the important work being done through public and private partnerships to benefit our students, by preparing these young men and women for skilled employment in the marine trades," said David W. Piccerelli, president of Rhode Island PBS.

Philip Thornton, superintendent of Warwick Public Schools, agreed. "The Marine Trades Program here in Warwick is a great example of a high demand, 21st century school-to-career pathway. Our partnership with Electric Boat has allowed students to gain the necessary work skills and insight to afford them the opportunity to immediately enter the work force upon graduation," he said.

General Dynamics Electric Boat designs, builds and maintains submarines for the US Navy. With 17,000 employees and major facilities in Groton and New London, CT and Quonset Point, RI, the company is currently working to develop the next generation of skilled shipbuilders.

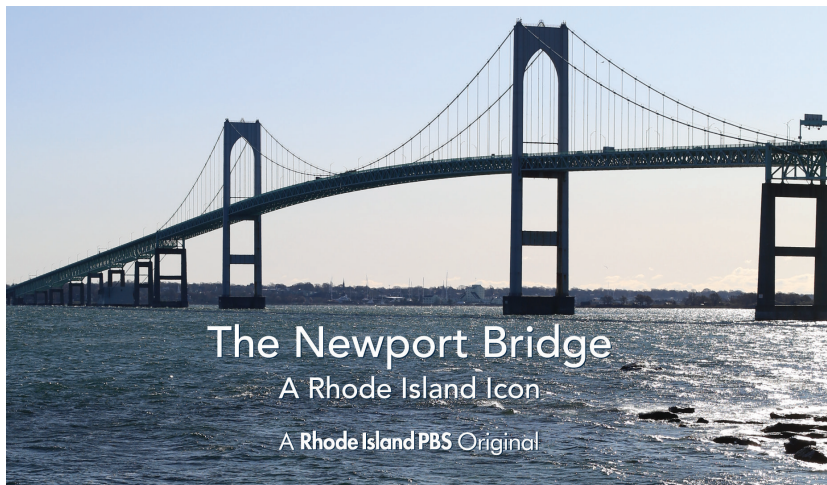
"Our strong partnerships with Rhode Island's government, agencies, and educational institutions continue to benefit EB, the broader manufacturing industry, as well as the state's economy," said Liz Power, director of communications, Electric Boat.

The one-hour *Journey to Jobs* documentary featured the Rhode Island PBS segment and stories from 14 other public media stations across the country. The project shared segments in social media to extend the reach of the stories, and promote tune-in.





## THE NEWPORT BRIDGE: A RHODE ISLAND ICON



The Claiborne Pell Newport Bridge, known commonly as the “Newport Bridge,” has graced the skyline of Narragansett Bay for 50 years, providing a vital link between Newport and Jamestown. At the time of its opening in 1969, the bridge was celebrated as a major commercial breakthrough and a marvel of human engineering.

But decades of social and political conflict nearly prevented the span from ever being built. Ultimately, the completion of the long-awaited crossing would serve as a

testament to the indomitable will of those who advocated for the bridge, and as a lasting tribute to those whose labors erected one of New England’s most iconic structures.

Blending past and present, the film includes never-before-seen footage of the original construction, and tells untold stories of the ironworkers, divers, and the political and community patrons who brought the project to fruition. In addition, the film featured breathtaking views from the towers’ most incredible heights 400 feet above the water, thanks to an adventurous production team. The producer and videographer walked the suspension cable with the maintenance crew, and quickly learned “safety first” is not just a slogan.

After broadcast, comments and emails continued to come in to the station and social media from a wide range of locations, praising the film, or expressing high interest in seeing it. The longest suspension bridge in New England also maintains a long reach across the region and the country, touching hearts and eliciting reminiscences from workers and children of workers who made possible this engineering wonder and iconic landmark.





## OH MY GOURD! THE JACK-O-LANTERN SPECTACULAR STORY



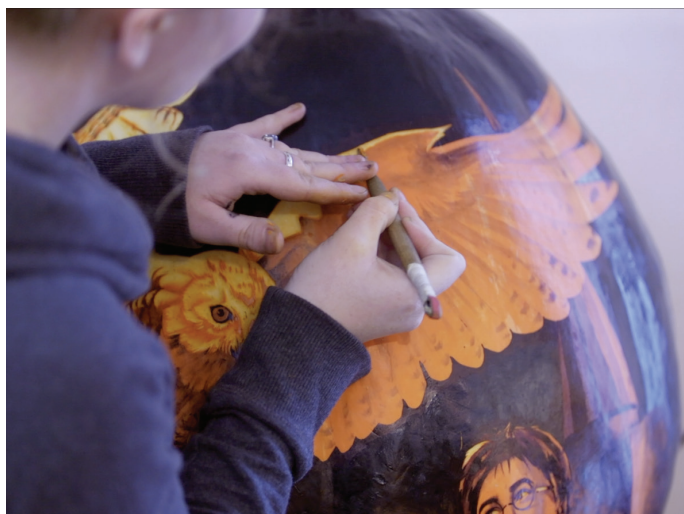
Filmed over the course of a year, *Oh My Gourd! The Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular Story* is a unique look at the family event that draws more than 100,000 visitors each year to Roger Williams Park Zoo.

With access to the pumpkin carvers, the documentary captured the behind-the-scenes choreography and brute work associated with staging this annual event. The filmmakers spent time in the “Pumpkin House” with the

carvers who wielded an array of special tools to transform the orange gourds into astonishing works of illuminated art – again and again, since the carved pumpkins only last about a week.

Interviews revealed the artists’ inspiration, motivation, and dedication as they sculpt 20,000 pumpkins to maintain the 5,000-piece display over the 32-night exhibition. Viewers also saw before and after transformations of the pumpkins, the logistics of transporting this delicate cargo, and the amount of after-care, culling the display to keep it fresh.

This documentary snapshot of this seasonal and cultural event quickly rose to among the most popular on the station’s [YouTube channel](#), with 973 views in its first 30 days.





## OUR TOWN: CHARLESTOWN - MARCH 2019

## OUR TOWN: MIDDLETOWN - SEPTEMBER 2019



*Our Town* is a Rhode Island PBS community project started in 2014 based on the successful series pioneered at WPSU a decade ago.

With the slogan, “Your voice, your vision,” Rhode Island PBS launched the project to encourage residents of Rhode Island’s 31 towns to become storytellers and filmmakers, to share the charm and character of their towns and villages. In addition, project goals of *Our Town* are also to build community among residents and businesses, and to connect Rhode Island PBS to the community in a meaningful way.

After the first documentary, *Our Town: Glocester* premiered in December 2014, two towns were chosen for 2015, North Kingstown (premiered in September 2015) and Portsmouth (premiered in December 2015); two towns in 2016, West Warwick in September, and Westerly in December; Smithfield in September 2017; Bristol and Johnston in 2018. In 2019, the featured towns were Charlestown and Middletown.

From the meetings with town officials, business owners, and residents, emerged a core group of storytellers in each town. They selected the topics and arranged filming. Rhode Island PBS provided technical and moral support throughout, and edited the stories together into documentaries, each about an hour long.

The residents and friends involved with the productions were invited to the studio to talk about their experiences and volunteer to answer phones during the fund raising premieres. The entire series, including the latest *Our Town: Charlestown* and *Our Town: Middletown*, are available on YouTube.



Community Watch Party at the Middletown Library



## PLAN TO SCAN CAMPAIGN

This is a story of impact of a different kind - the impact was on us. It is the powerful, humbling lesson of just how much we mean to our community.

Our Plan to Scan public information campaign launched on July 15, 2019, giving our audience the FCC-obligated 30-days advance notice of service change.



In a typical domino effect, though, delays at the previous site postponed the crew's arrival in Rhode Island until mid-September. To us that delay simply meant more time to notify our audience!

We mailed more than 8,000 letters, our station president and local program hosts recorded "Plan to Scan" messages, and we launched a robust website and social media campaign, news releases, [blogs](#), and eNewsletter announcements. When our over-the-air signal powered down on September 20, we expected - and so did the professional crew - to start broadcast on the new frequency by October 19.

However, in what had to be the wettest and windiest Rhode Island autumn on record (it was not - it just felt that way) weather delay after weather delay pushed us to Halloween, then to Thanksgiving, until we finally announced in early December, "We're back! Time to Scan." Our 3-week [Time to Scan](#) campaign continued through the holidays. We received more than 390 phone calls and messages between September 20 and January 31, and sent and received more than 780 email messages.

Among the most remarkable things to come from the extended over-the-air outage were the photos and videos from the site of the 1,000-ft. tall antenna tower. We shared them in stories [here](#) and [here](#).



It was a painful way for us to find out, but the bottom line from all of those community voices of over-the-air viewers: they love us, missed us, and appreciate the content and services we provide to them.

To those who endured with us - and to all of our viewers - we say, "Thank you!"



## LETTERS, E-MAIL, AND PHONE MESSAGES FROM OUR VIEWERS

...I practically live on PBS. It quenches a thirst for knowledge,  
I am very thankful it is on air. Thank you..

John F.  
Cranston, RI

Rhode Island Department of Corrections

Although I live in Massachusetts, I am fortunate to  
receive Rhode Island PBS through my cable service.  
Many of your programs are different from other stations  
and I enjoy them so much. I particularly like Maria's  
Portuguese Table. Because of this, I felt obligated to  
contribute something to your station.

Sincerely,  
Eileen B.  
Kingston, MA

3/14/2019

Our daughter loves Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood.  
Thank you for broadcasting and providing such  
wonderful content. Keep up the good work!

Arthur and Diane V.

Recently thoroughly enjoyed the concert with Joe  
Bonamassa - hearing him speak - and get to know  
him was the BEST! PBS is the best, too. Truly!  
Maureen O.

May 15, 2019

I am sending an extra amount to you this year to express my appreciation  
for the Saturday night opera performances on your LEARN channel. It's just  
wonderful to be able to see, finally, all the operas I've listened to on the  
live Met broadcasts, presented the way you are doing it. Thank you.

E.H.A  
Marstons Mills, MA