



BROOKLINE  
INTERACTIVE  
GROUP

2020  
Year In  
Review

## 2020 BIG (Covid Times) STAFF



Kathy Bisbee,  
Executive Director



Ann Theis,  
Deputy Director



Andrew Doig,  
IT Systems Administrator



Corbin Riedel,  
Production Manager

---

Morgan Buckland,  
On-Site Government Meetings

Josh Widdecombe,  
VR Coordinator/Events

## Thank you to the BIG Board of Directors!

### Board President

Dan Salzman, Brookline: Town  
Government, Strategic Planning &  
Executive Committee

### Vice-President

Lori Landay, Brookline: Nominating &  
Fundraising Committee

### Secretary

Sarah Wolozin, Brookline: Strategic  
Planning Committee

### Treasurer

Amy Emmert, Brookline: People/  
Personnel & Finance

Eric Hyett, Brookline: Nominating &  
Fundraising Committee, Chair

Laura Nooney, Brookline: Nominat-  
ing & Strategic Planning Committee  
Past Board President

Bonnie Bastien, Brookline: Town  
Government & Nominating  
Committee

## Thank you to '19-20 Board Members:

Russell Paul, Brookline, Bylaws  
Karim Abdul Matin, Finance  
Crystal Johnson, Outreach  
Juan Carlos Kuang, VR Education

## 2021 Staff:

Rebecca Zinner, Communications  
& Engagement Manager

Ian Bauer, IT/Special Projects

Dan Rodriguez, Broadcast Engineer

## Welcome to our NEW 2021 Board Members!

Adena Walker, Brookline:  
Fundraising, Education & Outreach

Joe Urena, Brookline: Education &  
Outreach Committee

Malcolm Doldron, Brookline:  
Education & Outreach

Ihssane Leckey, Brookline: Finance

Debby Pereira, Brookline: Strategic  
Planning & Town Government

Ted Lewis, Boston: Education &  
Outreach Committee

Jonathan Golden, Brookline:  
Education & Outreach Committee

## 2020-21 BIG Interns:

Nora Lucy, Social Impact/Civic  
Brookline

Avery Merton, Production

Andy Jung, Podcast & Marketing

Eli Villa, VR

Talis Reks, VR

Christine Helen Mary Smith, Design

David Cifarelli, Production

Mackenzie Arnold, TV & Marketing

Megan Tsao, TV & Marketing

Nicole Avazian, TV & Marketing

Kelly Sou, Production

Gabi Kenney, Production &  
Programming

Annie Williams, Production

Edward Sho Sweeney, Social Media  
& Marketing

Kyle Benor, VR/XR, Sound

Production

Jermane Anyoha, Animation

Miaomiao Liu, Production

Amelia Rosenthal, Social Media

Paul Cifarelli, Graphic Design

## 2020 Contractors

Aletta Steynberg

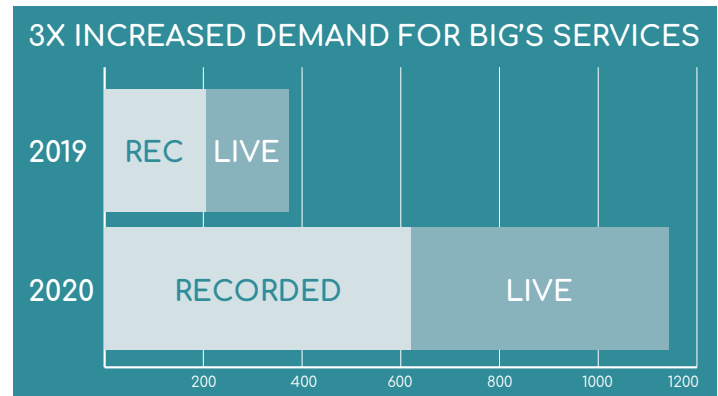
Nicole Marquez

# BIG kept our local democracy transparent and amplified Brookline voices during a global pandemic and major societal change

What started with an all-day-then-week-long, open Zoom in March of 2020 for our staff to troubleshoot technical problems quickly turned into a massive transitioning of ALL of our operational systems into a remote television station. With just **four staff** working remotely, our team brought critical information and facilitated important community discussions via our cable and online channels, streaming multiple programs daily to YouTube and Facebook and providing youth media, intergenerational storytelling, and curbside media-making services to our members. We expanded our coverage and technical assistance to town officials, staff, committees, departments, and nearly every organization in Brookline, **TRIPLING** the amount of content produced by our team and the community. We are working closely with our Town of Brookline partners to plan for accessible, **hybrid meetings**, which will allow more residents to continue to attend public meetings from anywhere and engage more Brookliners in civic participation, whether in-person or remotely. Hybrid meetings will increase our staff time, require new equipment, and meet residents' needs at a time when BIG's traditional cable funding is **decreasing by 12-14% annually** and investments in alternative funding dried up due to our focus on the community's pandemic needs.

**BIG, and community media overall, has gained new recognition and seen increased use due to the pandemic, while simultaneously losing 20% of its funding.**

However, hybrid events and meetings will further strain our future-proofing strategies and require a financial investment of the entire community to assure that local, open media resources like BIG continue to exist. We hope that Town Meeting Resolution #40 about BIG will encourage residents to work together with our team to explore new ways to fund BIG and protect our community media resources for years to come.



**Thank you to all who have donated to BIG and joined our board of directors this year!** Your donations, passion, and participation have encouraged us, provided more services, and resulted in greater community engagement.

**Thank you immensely to Town staffers:** Devon Fields, Justin Casanova-Davis, Karim Abdul Matin, Feng Yang, Ren Avellani, Melissa Goff, and Mel Kleckner for their collaboration, COVID-19 relief funds, and partnership in 2020-21!

**A virtual high five and huge gratitude to our dedicated BIG COVID-19 core staff** of Ann Theis, Corbin Riedel, and Andrew Doig, as well as part-time contractors Dan Rodriguez, Nicole Marquez, and Aletta Steynberg, who have been the real pandemic heroes behind the scenes! (and thanks to their animal friends!) A warm welcome to our new staff members, Rebecca Zinner, Communications & Engagement Manager, and Ian Bauer, our Special Projects/IT Specialist. In 2021, let us know how we can support your civic participation, media-making, and creativity, and help protect the future of community media in Brookline!

*In gratitude,  
Kathy Bisbee, Executive Director,  
and the entire  
team at BIG!*



# BIG IN COVID TV

Throughout the past 15 months, BIG adapted to meet a wide variety of public decision-making, government accessibility, and community information needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the first eight weeks of the pandemic, in March of 2020, BIG livestreamed 55 local government and community meetings, many in the emergency meeting category, convening on the same day. During this timeframe, BIG's live content also had to transition from cable-only programming to managing both cable and live streaming simultaneously, all while being managed remotely by an initial team of four, and a cavalry of late fall supportive part-time contractors.

By the end of 2020, BIG had provided coverage for over **552** individual government meetings, public forums, special events, fundraisers, town meetings, protests, celebrations, police reform committees and task forces, community discussions, school reopening conversations, and emergency communications via its cable and online channels.

We trained elected officials, worked collaboratively with town and school committee staff and organized public health and Covid-19-related forums and press conferences as requested by Town Selectboard members and town departments, and by a wide diversity of community groups. BIG sponsored nonprofit fundraising events, live streamed residents' cell phone coverage of live protests and educational events straight to the cable and online channels, memorials, and hosted two LIVE election

night shows with State Representative, Tommy Vitolo, who also began his own weekly Brookline-focused community show, *Tommy TV*.

We aired Governor Baker's *daily* emergency press conferences and created a printed senior program guide to assist seniors in finding strategies for staying safe and healthy during the pandemic. BIG co-produced new children's storytime, senior yoga, and craft-along programs in partnership with the Public Library, Mask Making Sew-Ins with Welcome Blanket and Inclusive Brookline, and streamed live Friday night shabbat services with Temple Ohabei Shalom, Temple Sinai, and the St. Marys' of the Assumption Catholic mass each Sunday.

BIG has posted *daily* since the pandemic began on traditional and social media to support nonprofits, local business and government to promote safety, reopening and economic development via cable on our community bulletin boards for various Town departments and community-service organizations. BIG has created graphics, built web pages, coordinated, hosted and trained participants during zoom events, and shot, edited and archived critical public health, community safety, educational and emergency information videos. We created video and social media voter guides with the Town Clerk's office, Inclusive Brookline and the League of Women Voters, and hosted non-partisan multiple candidate's forums for every major race.

Our community media work in 2020 includes but is not limited to streaming live and recorded events for:



# IMES

the Small Business Economic Development committee, Brookline CAN, Age-Friendly Cities, the Senior Center, Brookline Music School, The Winiker Band Heroes fundraiser, the Brookline Youth Awards, Brookline Strong, Brookline Mutual Aid, and many other organizations.

- **Our usual government coverage** (with *quite a few more hours* each night added on) for Select Board, Town Meeting (10 nights in 2020), and School Committee.
- **New coverage of events and meetings for local government and education;** zoning, public advisory on health, Health Department, Virtual Town Hall for Businesses, Brookline Police and Fire, the Town Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Brookline Transportation committee, the BHS Innovation Fund, Brookline Adult Education, both of the town's Police Reform/Reimagining Policing committees, Brookline Education Fund, Brookline High School Graduation and parent safety videos, and the sub-committees of Select Board and School committees.
- **Zoom Training, Technical Production Support, Event Coordination & LIVE Streaming Coverage of Town Committees & Nonprofit Organizations** such as: Supporting our Asian Community, the MLK Day Celebration committee, the Community Engagement Committee, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the JFK Memorial Committee, the Brookline Food Pantry, Steps to Success (STS), the 9/11 Memorial, the Brookline Community Foundation (BCF), the Brookline Teen Center (BTC), the Brookline Rotary, the Brookline Chamber of Commerce, Safety Net, The Memorial Day committee, Brookline Rotary, the Community Engagement Committee, Building a Better Brookline, Temple Beth Zion, the Racial Equity Advancement Fund, Brookline for Racial Justice & Equity (BRJE), League of Women Voters, Be More Brookline, The Puppet Showplace Theatre,

In response to this important work, BIG's team is deeply honored to be awarded the **2020 Cultural Contributor Award by the Brookline Commission for the Arts**. This award is an annual award recognizing one person or organization that has made a significant contribution to the cultural life of Brookline.

In addition to the hard work of our BIG team on community coverage, the work of our community volunteers and members had a significant impact on our programming in 2020 as well. With BIG's media-making resources and staff assistance, they created new programs about meditation, yoga, fitness, politics, cooking, bread baking, crafting, mask-making, Bayard Rustin, climate change, open mic nights, health, reading, history, disability justice, intergenerational stories, music, senior housing, Juneteenth, nature, seniors, youth, sports, racial justice, quilting, sewing, and equity and inclusion. The unexpected cost of meeting these immediate Covid-related community needs and the loss of contracted production and education programs for BIG's 2019-20 budget was well over an extra \$230k while increasing service by 200%.

Thanks to a generous Covid-relief grant from the Town of Brookline and a PPP loan, BIG was able to meet these urgent community needs, at least in FY2020.



# CIVIC BROOKLINE

It is no secret that the worldwide pandemic has altered the way people find and receive data; being able to access organized information in a timely manner is something that the public needs now more than ever. It can be incredibly difficult to find information regarding town meetings, vaccination updates, and even calendars for afterschool activities. BIG has a plan to solve this issue, and that plan is called Civic Brookline.

Civic Brookline is intended to be a participatory, civic website for the Brookline area, serving as a media hub for members of the Brookline community. Recordings of previous Select Board, School Committee, and Town Hall Meetings, along with a plethora of other events covered by BIG, would be posted to Civic Brookline with the intention of making it easier for community members to become more civically engaged. The initiative will allow BIG to partner with other local nonprofits and organizations to build a non-partisan digital information center for all things Brookline.

It will catalyze the following:

- **Civic participation**
- **Community engagement**
- **Unrepresented voices**
- **Hyperlocal media**
- **Voter education**
- **Neighborhood revitalization**

Having all information in one central location will encourage the people of Brookline to participate in civic matters and to improve engagement efficiency. Brookline Interactive Group, being an integrated media and technology center for Brookline, is more than capable of operating a platform of this magnitude, let alone one that intends to make media accessible to all. In doing so, BIG will be doing their part in keeping democracy in Brookline transparent and giving a voice to all those who want one.



# PROGRAMMING FOR OLDER ADULTS AND QUARANTINED BROOKLINERS

Though social distancing guidelines have caused many individuals to feel more isolated than they typically do, older adults were amongst the most significantly impacted. Social distancing was only one piece of the puzzle; while some were able to swiftly shift gears and connect digitally, others faced a significant learning curve when it came to adopting new communication tools. Deputy Director Ann Theis quickly recognized the need that was developing in the community and BIG's ability to help facilitate a much needed connection.

BIG staff members led training for remote networking tools such as video conferencing, which many were using for the very first time. One-on-one training sessions covered topics according to individuals' needs. While some were learning how to navigate the user interface on Zoom, others needed tips to make their video feed appear more professional.

Through a collaboration with Laura Baber from Hebrew Senior Life, Ann Theis developed a television programming guide and partnerships within the community to create additional programs geared towards older adults and those in quarantine. The weekly Senior TV Guide highlights relevant content airing on BIG's TV channels and is distributed through Hebrew Senior Life, the Brookline Senior Center, Goddard House, 2Life Communities, and BrooklineCAN.

A number of community partners collaborated with BIG to produce new programs. The Brookline Public Library began hosting Gentle Chair Yoga with Keith. For those interested in broadening

their language skills, Community Spanish classes presented by ROLA Languages offer digestible lessons. 2Life Communities leads fun and engaging exercise classes while arts and crafts enthusiasts have been enjoying The Brookline Bees crafting sessions as well as Spraycasso spray painting tutorials. Local youth media makers have also been creating original content through the Intergenerational Digital Storytelling program, which chronicles stories from senior community members (read more on page 10). Other community-oriented programs including local government committee meetings, religious services, and Brookline Rotary Club presentations in addition to long-standing programs, such as Age Friendly Cities and Grandstanders, round out the offerings.

"BIG provides support for older adults at all times, but right now it's especially essential [...] It's an exceptional organization."

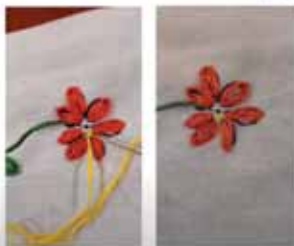
— Matt Weiss, Host of Age Friendly Cities, BrooklineCAN

On a recent episode of Age Friendly Cities, Ann Theis voiced the desire to continue BIG's robust offering for adult and older community members, "There are so many positive things that have come out of the pandemic in terms of our communication and not having to rely on where we are to connect and be with people. I hope to continue building these programs and partnerships into the future."



## French knots

- Wrap the thread around the needle. Draw them firmly around the needle.
- Put the needle down at least 2 thread away from where it came up.
- Make more knots as needed.



“Thank you guys for all you do for us. We do appreciate it. It’s been terrific, you’ve been great partners.”

— Helen Charlupski, School Committee Member

“[BIG] is not optional. It is not something we can allow to disappear.”

— Andy Liu, School Committee Member

# EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

## Brookline Public School District & Brookline School Committee



Of all the public health issues that were put in the spotlight during the COVID-19 pandemic, the continuity of education became one of the most crucial for the Brookline community. Balancing concerns between the safety, mental health, and developmental and educational progress of students was a difficult task and one which many had a vested interest in.

BIG was able to support these discussions by broadcasting and live streaming the Brookline School Committee’s Regular Meetings and Subcommittee Meetings, which were held virtually on Zoom every other week. Making these meetings accessible to the public meant that community members could

stay up-to-date on recent developments around school reopening and safety protocol decisions.

These broadcasts received significant viewership and active participation amongst viewers and the School Committee has reported an overall increase in engagement since their meetings have been airing on BIG. In fact, BIG’s second most viewed broadcast was a September Regular Meeting broadcast (the first was the High School’s Graduation Ceremony)! We at BIG appreciate all of the work that the Brookline Public Schools and the Brookline School Committee have done to ensure the wellbeing of our youth and we are proud to continue to support their mission.

“BIG is more than just public access TV. There is a whole media training and educational aspect which happens with high schoolers and students. It would be nice for the School Committee to [recognize] that educational mission and not just the public access mission.”

— Mariah Nobrega, School Committee Member

“It’s an amazing amount of work and hours that go into this and making sure that all of our meetings are accessible to people. I can’t imagine if we hadn’t had this sort of system setup what access would be like for folks. ... We need to figure out what [BIG’s future funding] is going to look like. It’s a very valuable service for our community.”

— Jennifer Monopoli, School Committee Member



# YOUTH MEDIA AT BIG

In the Fall of 2019 Brookline Interactive Group launched **Arts2Work: Youth Media Training Program**, an initiative to engage and support young community members interested in becoming media arts professionals. The program is rooted in a free, weekly after-school program designed for technical skill development through project-based learning. As youth want to take a deeper dive into career exploration in media, peer mentorship and paid production opportunities give motivated youth leadership roles with resume-building opportunities and chances to earn stipends.

Recognizing the importance of extracurricular activities and the opportunity for students to build relationships with trusted adults outside of a school setting, Deputy Director Ann Theis prioritized reshaping the Arts2Work programming to ensure that BIG could continue to provide technical training and support youth through the COVID-19 pandemic. The effort included adapted versions of the existing programs in addition to a new program, Intergenerational Digital Storytelling, which provides youth filmmakers to interview and produce films about the experiences of senior members of the community.

A hybrid partnership with the Brookline Teen Center's Music Program allowed middle and high school students to learn media skills needed to showcase the musical talents of Brookline's youth. They were taught how to run sound and video for Open Mics and live music concerts over Zoom and how to produce music videos for broadcast on BIG's Channels and streams. Students gained experience in project management, camera operation, directing and talent management, post-production, and social media and promotion – and most importantly, teamwork and communication!

Eleven middle school media makers joined us for the 2020 virtual session of Summer Connections, BIG's annual program focused on service learning and media and technology literacy. This program, made possible with support from Steps to Success, utilized the curriculum developed by Black Lives Matter, the group engaged in discussions

and explorations about bias, systemic inequality, restorative justice, and current events. Threaded throughout the session was a focus on how to develop “messages with meaning” and how to clearly communicate ideas through various modes of media. Students learned a range of technical skill sets ranging from graphic design to video editing in order to create posters, audio projects featuring personal narratives, and public service announcements.

Throughout the 2020 - 2021 school year, youth media makers have continued to produce media through BIG. In the Fall they created a series of public service announcements in an effort to encourage young eligible voters to participate in the 2020 presidential election. In the Spring the group began “Stop Motion Storytelling,” learning the technical elements of animation. Also in production is a short documentary investigating how local young artists have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a series of short films documenting the personal stories of older adults created through the Intergenerational Digital Storytelling Program (see page 10 for more information).



# INTERGENERATIONAL STORYTELLING

After recognizing the challenges COVID-19 presented to both Brookline's students and senior citizens, Deputy Director Ann Theis created a project to bring these groups together. The Intergenerational Digital Storytelling Project at BIG invited youth media makers to connect with older adults in order to conduct and record interviews over the phone and then create videos about their stories.

Intergenerational programming and storytelling initiatives are considered effective in cultivating empathy and closing the technological gap between older and younger participants. During COVID-19, such a program also presented the opportunity to ease the sense of isolation many have experienced while social distancing.

Since the program's launch in Fall 2020, BIG has successfully facilitated two sessions and produced a total of eight films! Financial support was provided by the Brookline Community Foundation and Steps to Success to run the program and to provide youth filmmakers with stipends to defray any financial burden caused by limited employment opportunities due to COVID-19. Partnership from the Brookline Senior Center helped to raise awareness of the project and to identify individuals who were excited to share their stories.

For senior participants this project allowed them to share and preserve their stories while also

developing connections with their young biographers. Student filmmakers were able to hone both technical and interpersonal skill sets. Theis also commented on the growth of the students stating that they had been, "working hard and giving it their all...they've come a long way and they've learned a lot!"

Each session concluded with a virtual screening with filmmakers, their families, and interviewees in attendance. The first screening included a range of familial stories with themes of childhood, beloved pets, and voting for the first time. Films from the

second screening focused on immigration and COVID-19 experiences. During the screenings it was evident that a big takeaway for all the participants was the personal connections they had developed throughout the process. Sincere offers of thanks and

invitations to keep in touch were exchanged between the young filmmakers and their interviewees.

The completed projects as well as the recorded virtual screenings are now available to view on BIG's Youtube channel. Thanks to the ongoing support from the Brookline Community Foundation and The Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation and partnerships with Steps to Success and the Brookline Senior Center this program will continue to be facilitated by BIG.



"It's profound that BIG is allowing people to have access to this technology that's becoming very important." — Sarah Wolozin

"I always enjoyed my time at BIG. I learned how to create visual stories, and turn them into films. It was a place where I could do whatever I wanted in terms of creativity. I felt respected for my creativity, imagination and abilities." — Gareth Jones, 16

My son Gareth has participated in programming at the Brookline Interactive Group since he was seven. Back then, he was a complicated child. Standard extra-curricular activities and sports were challenging for him, and he was often marginalized. But BIG was different.

In 2016 he and a friend received an award for *Star Voyager*, their intergalactic suspense film made in a BIG after school program. My son's friend is a person on the autism spectrum, and Gareth was displaying significant behavioral issues at school in those days, but at BIG, they both shined bright. Not only did they learn how to use a green screen, make special effects, and act for film, but they were rewarded for their creativity and abilities. At a nighttime awards ceremony, they received a standing ovation and gave an Oscar-worthy speech. Their pride and sense of self-worth were expansive that night.

At BIG their imaginations were ignited, they were respected as young craftspeople and collaborators, and they rose beyond the limited expectations some other people held for them. BIG was an experience of pride for both of them, and we are forever grateful for the patience, humor, and talent that the educational instructors always bring to BIG's participants no matter their age, level of experience, or disability.

Gareth has shared the experience of BIG with his family. He brought his grandparents to Virtual Reality night, and we watched them - both in their 80's - experience the magic of VR for the first time as they swam with virtual whales. We've celebrated Gareth's birthdays in BIG's theater. He and I have participated in BIG's filmmaking

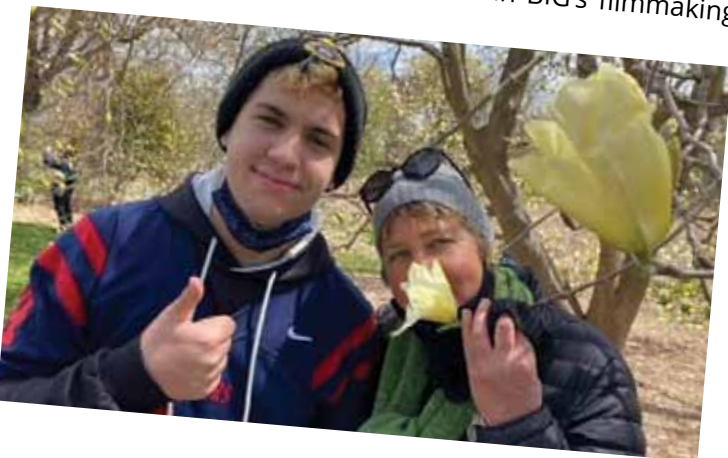
competitions and we contributed to this year's often hilarious community sourced version of *Castaway*.

Five years ago, when Gareth was 11, I wrote a sort of love letter in the form of a digital story during a class at BIG. We had traveled to the edges of the world together, and in the video, I describe how I know that, one day, I'll no longer be his chosen travel companion. I've continued to create a number of digital stories since then; one will be exhibited in Paris in June, 2021.

BIG has worked on projects addressing inequity, immigration, disability, and dozens of other critical issues impacting our town and the larger world. Through the pandemic, BIG has worked with the schools and other organizations to ensure excellent virtual viewing experiences, something we experienced first-hand when Gareth was in the high school musical. BIG is everywhere in our town, working hard, often behind the scenes and overtime.

BIG is true and pure gold. They offer our community unique opportunities (where else can you borrow a 360-degree camera!?), but they've been perpetually under-resourced and are often forced to work harder at fundraising than at programming. Unfortunately, most people in Brookline probably only know of BIG as the place that live-streams town meetings and school committee sessions. They are So. Much. More.

If BIG loses funding, the loss will be across the entire town. We all benefit from the stories that BIG helps our community tell. — Beth Jones, Brookline



# INTERNSHIPS AT BIG

## INTERNS CREATE WORK THAT DIRECTLY BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY

Interns at Brookline Interactive Group take on projects that require them to either create, gather and/or distribute content across different media platforms. By working on these projects, BIG's interns often felt that they were directly helping and/or improving the Brookline community.

"It was motivating and engaging to get familiar with BIG's content while creating new content," said Kelly, a programming intern at BIG. Kelly helped organize watch parties on social media so that content from BIG's cable channels was accessible to a wider audience. "These watch parties consisted of school committee meetings, select board meetings, and more," she said, "which I felt helped circulate more information for the Brookline community."

Nicole, a marketing intern, started a partnership between BIG and the American Parkinson Disease Association's Massachusetts Chapter. "We worked together to get programming designed for Brookline's senior community on BIG's platforms," Nicole said. She hoped that these programs, as well as the partnership, leave a positive impact on Brookline's senior community.

"My favorite project to work on has definitely been Creative Brookline," said David, a production intern. Since starting at BIG, David loved being able to "assist in every aspect of the podcast from start to finish." David also created the COVID Killer Series, which consisted of video tutorials covering various hobbies that individuals could acquire during their time in quarantine. He felt that this project and Creative Brookline helped Brookline citizens in either sharing their own stories or maintaining healthy lifestyles.

"My favorite project that I worked on was Crowdsourced," said Megan, a public relations intern. She promoted the community film project through social media and press releases in order to garner more participants. "Writing for a wide variety of platforms also taught me the appropriate writing tones to use when trying to deliver the same information to different kinds of audiences."

Megan also worked with the Brookline Chamber to develop a video, titled "We're Open," promoting local businesses that reopened during the Coronavirus pandemic. Gabi, a marketing intern, said this was her favorite project from her time with BIG.

"Getting to go out to all the businesses in Brookline and shooting the people there, as well as footage of Brookline as a whole, was very fun," said Gabi. The video notified the community of reopening shops and helped them regain business. "I realized while watching the video that my ideas and the work I was producing was actually helping and benefitting local Brookline business owners," said Megan.

"I love helping people tell their stories by combining music, audio, and technology," said Aletta, a virtual reality intern. By integrating Wise with the Unity project and designing a system of audio interaction, Aletta developed a novel system that guides players using sound to direct storytelling in VR. "Through ArrivalVR," she said, "Brookline Interactive Group will provide a platform for voices in the community to be heard."

"I learned key skills and techniques that I know I will use as I move forward into the world of work." — Kelly

## BIG'S INTERNSHIPS PROVIDE VALUABLE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

BIG's interns develop and improve upon valuable skills by working directly on BIG's community and client projects. These skills and experiences will help guide them as they transition into the workforce.

Kelly said BIG gave her opportunities to work directly in social media marketing. She added that her supervisors were always open to hearing her ideas for promoting content. "I learned key skills and techniques that I know I will use as I move forward into the world of work."

Gabi and Nicole specifically mentioned how they learned the importance of sticking to a business'

“I think that it is necessary as a young professional to be able to self motivate and set achievable goals. I think through this internship I have learned how to analyze a project, break it up into smaller tasks, and to execute them.” — Aletta

mission and branding and will be sure to keep those principles in mind throughout their careers. “I also learned how to use applications that I had never used before [and] I know these skills will help me in my career path,” Gabi added.

Aletta sent a paper to the International Conference for Interactive Digital Storytelling explaining her audio-VR research and the significant implications of ArrivalVR. This opportunity allowed the intern to gain more confidence in her ability to work independently. “I think that it is necessary as a young professional to be able to self motivate and set achievable goals,” said Aletta. “I think through this internship I have learned how to analyze a project, break it up into smaller tasks, and to execute them.”

As an aspiring broadcast journalist, David said BIG allowed him to work on his interviewing skills and hosting personality. “These are skills that I take with me as I pursue future endeavors in the field,” he said. David’s internship also has allowed him to hone in on his project management and technical editing skills.

Megan said her internship taught her the importance of clear communication as well as “how crucial organization is when collaborating with multiple people on one project.” Megan also said her internship made her a stronger writer. “I drafted several press releases, newsletters, and pitches and with the help of my mentors,” she stated. “I had immediate feedback and constructive criticism, which was very helpful to me in learning my writing strengths and weaknesses.”



## REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES ALLOW BIG INTERNS TO GROW

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Brookline Interactive Group was forced to work remotely. This posed an opportunity for interns to encounter unique challenges associated with remote working while also gaining skills to address specific situations.

“From working on projects in Premiere through the server to not having immediate communication with supervisors, I have found my work to take a bit longer to complete,” David said. However, David’s experience allowed him to grow as an independent worker and develop skills that helped him tackle certain setbacks.

“At first it was challenging for me to communicate with the rest of the team.” Aletta, who was living in South Africa at the time, felt that her supervisor created a welcoming community for all interns that fostered collaboration. Aletta said this was very helpful and motivating.

While Nicole and Gabi were unsure about what their remote experience would resemble, they both found fulfillment in their internships. “Through effective communication and regular meetings, I feel like I got super close to my coworkers and the BIG staff,” said Nicole. “Anything I had a question or problem everyone was understanding or accommodating,” said Gabi.

Kelly also said her counterparts at BIG were extremely considerate when it came to troubleshooting and were willing to help her think of new creative solutions. “Having a remote internship was a brand new path for me and I am so glad it was with BIG,” Kelly added.

“Almost all of my projects were team-based and I really felt like that allowed me to improve my communication and leadership skills.” — Nicole



# CROWDSOURCED BOSTON

Crowdsourced Boston is a public art project in which the community collaboratively remakes a famous film. BIG leads this projection eastern Mass in conjunction with Crowdsourced Cinema, which originated and is shared with BIG by the team at Northampton Open Media for the past seven years.

For this project, volunteer creators are assigned a scene from the film to interpret creatively - it could be filmed with live action, animation, remix, puppetry, and other visual styles. Brookliners film and submit their own scene, the BIG screens the entire edited film at the Coolidge Corner Theatre to an enthusiastic audience of media-makers!

In 2020 we collectively recreated *Cast Away*, a film about a FedEx employee's struggle for survival after his plane crashes on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific. Since social distancing made many of us feel as though we are inhabiting our own isolated islands, the film felt like an appropriate choice for 2020!



In 2021 Crowdsourced Boston will recreate the 1993 Steven Spielberg classic, *Jurassic Park*! We encourage creators to have fun, look at the film with new cultural eyes, which may mean revising swears in the script or rethinking

cultural norms. Visit [crowdsourcedboston.com](https://crowdsourcedboston.com) to sign up and to learn more about this fun and creative collaboration!

# HOW TO BECOME A BIG MEMBER

BIG is here to facilitate media access and training to residents and community groups!

BIG's members can use high-end audio/visual equipment, training programs, and media resources to create any media content and air it on our community cable channels and via our social media platforms. Our nonprofit members can create their own or hire BIG's team to make promotional, fundraising and programmatic videos, podcasts, graphics, web sites, and even clay-mation/stop motion!

While during COVID BIG was closed to indoor activities in order to protect staff and members, we're looking forward to seeing our members and residents again soon. However, throughout these COVID times, we have responded to a huge communal need, especially for civic services and municipal coverage, as outlined in this report. We have also continued to support our members remotely, with new Zoom kits and curbside equipment checkouts, virtual classes and training sessions, and live Zoom shows.



Check out our website to learn info about what it means to become a member of BIG, and the resources individual and non-profit organizational members can access: [brooklineinteractive.org/membership](https://brooklineinteractive.org/membership)

*To complete your BIG Membership, please do the following steps:*

1. Please fill out the **Membership form** on the page linked above.
2. If you haven't already, you can pay for the membership by check, **Paypal** or **Venmo**.
3. To complete the registration of your account, please register and complete the **Account Form** via our Equipment Reservation System, called RueShare.

You can also **watch this video** to learn about How to Make a Show at BIG and check out these other videos about what membership at BIG means: **New Member Video Playlist**

## MEDIA ARTS & COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOPS AT BIG

BIG teaches all types of media arts; video and audio production, graphics and web design, storytelling, studio and field production, online and mobile video filmmaking, and many other classes and workshops for adults, seniors, kids and youth. While most of our 2020 classes were youth media programs and training for Zoom and live streaming, BIG also taught a summer Digital Storytelling class focused on Covid Times—participants processed experiences during the pandemic, employing creative writing and prompts, recording and editing short stories using video, art, still photography and audio in a supportive community with technical assistance. Look for our Fall Digital Storytelling and production classes this fall!

Caught off-guard by an important Zoom call? Need to edit your latest lip-sync video? BIG has got you covered! Members can check out Zoom Conferencing Kits and Editing Kits.

We want to make sure our community is able to keep creating while keeping a distance! Through the pandemic, members are able to reserve production equipment through RueShare and schedule curbside pickup.

### ZOOM CONFERENCING KITS INCLUDE:

- Laptop
- USB Webcam
- Microphone
- Headphones
- USB-C Hub
- Light with Tripod

### EDITING KITS INCLUDE:

- Windows or Mac laptop equipped with multimedia editing software



# MEMBER PROFILES

## Tommy Vitolo

State Representative Tommy Vitolo has made it clear that a pandemic isn't enough to slow him down! He remains a steadfast and active member who consistently creates content to inform Brookliners about current events and to explain complex political concepts in an easily digestible way. In his program, Weekly Update with Tommy Vitolo (a.k.a. TV on TV), Vitolo discusses both national and local news and interviews fellow Brookline citizens, including representatives from local nonprofit organizations and candidates running for local office, among others.



Vitolo also served as the host of BIG's live 2021 Brookline Town Election coverage, during which he explained the dynamics around the competitive races and announced the results as they were confirmed.



## Deborah Brown

Deborah Brown understands that local politics can be complicated, she is after all a Town Meeting Member herself! In an effort to help demystify local town government and empower her fellow community members to become more involved, she launched Town Meeting Talk, a program she co-hosts alongside Scott Ananian. In the program, the pair explain the structure of Town Meeting, the different types of Warrant Articles, and how laws are passed, among other topics.



## Matt Weiss

As the host of Age Friendly Cities, Matt Weiss discusses the merits of Brookline as an Age Friendly Community, a designation the city received in 2012 from the World Health Organization. Through interviews, Weiss explores topics of interest to Brookline's older adults with knowledgeable community members. Recent topics have included the COVID vaccine, Town Meeting, and BIG's own age-friendly programming!





## NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIPS

*Some of the key partnerships BIG supported or grew in 2020 were the:*

- Town of Brookline's Select Board, School Committee, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, and Town Clerk's Office
- Chamber of Commerce's First Light special and monthly Town Halls for Small Businesses and Nonprofits
- League of Women Voters' election forums and civic engagement webinars
- Brookline for Racial Justice and Equity several local and district-wide election forums
- Weekly coverage of St. Mary's masses and Shabbat services for Temple Sinai and Temple Ohabei Shalom
- Weekly shows from the Public Library of Brookline including crafting, yoga and storytime
- Our very own State Representative Tommy Vitolo started doing a weekly show during COVID which include interviews with notable locals and a weekly update
- BrooklineCAN and the Council on Aging's webinars, senior-friendly business postings, and TV specials
- BA&CE online class promos, lecture series and Bread Baking specials
- Coverage of live events for groups such as Climate Action Brookline, BAAFN, and Mutual Aid Brookline
- We have received regular submissions from American Parkinson's Disease Association (APDA), ROLA Languages Adult and Children's Spanish classes, Three Chord Thursdays Ukulele classes, and Spraycasso art classes

## BIG'S PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION SERVICES

BIG captures and airs hundreds of hours of public events as a free community service for our non-commercial community cable channels. However, there are some events that extend beyond our free services or do not meet our non-commercial mission. To accommodate these community needs we offer affordable, professional-quality media services. Please contact Corbin Riedel at [info@brooklineinteractive.org](mailto:info@brooklineinteractive.org) to receive a quote for BIG's media services which include: web, graphic design, video, photography, and audio productions in addition to A/V support services.

## PRODUCTION SERVICES

- Production of non-commercial or commercial promotional films and short videos
- Providing high-quality still photographs, video and audio recordings for events, films, websites, or marketing materials
- Coordinating corporate webcasts and streaming services
- AV assistance and webinars
- Creating storytelling videos and DVDs for social media, family heirlooms, private or public functions
- Designing graphics and logos for organizations and businesses
- Developing websites for local organizations, government committees, and school groups

# WHAT IS BIG?

Founded 35 years ago, **Brookline Interactive Group (BIG)**, formerly known as **BATV**, is an **independent, non-profit organization** serving the community media needs of the Brookline community. BIG operates two traditional community cable channels via Comcast and RCN and multiple live cable streams online, as well as on Facebook and YouTube. BIG's Civic (government and educational) channels are Comcast 23 and RCN 15; Community (public access) channels are Comcast 3 and RCN 3 & 613.

The largest portion of BIG's budget currently comes from cable revenue, which is declining 12-14% annually as more and more households opt to

utilize streaming services in lieu of traditional cable subscriptions. In light of these circumstances, two Town Meeting members who are also BIG board members, Dan Salzman and Bonnie Bastien, have introduced Town Meeting Resolution 40, a resolution to be voted on during the Spring 2021 Town Meeting session. If passed, a Community Media Working Group, which will include key community stakeholders, will be formed in order to explore and develop a



Brookline Interactive Group ensures a place for all Brookline residents to access media-making technology, amplify their voices and tell their stories, develop media literacy and new skills, and sustain a vibrant and transparent democracy. \*

(\*current mission statement working group draft)

sustainable funding plan that is not dependent on cable subscription fees.

BIG is the only source of hyperlocal, broadcasted community content, amplifying the voices of all residents, offering public access to media making equipment, and providing classes for low-income residents, job training programs for youth, and comprehensive tech training for seniors. Throughout 2020, our services have repeatedly been called essential by our community partners.

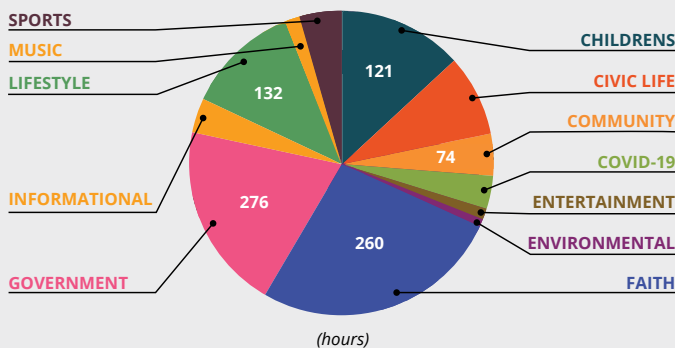


## Small ways to show BIG support:

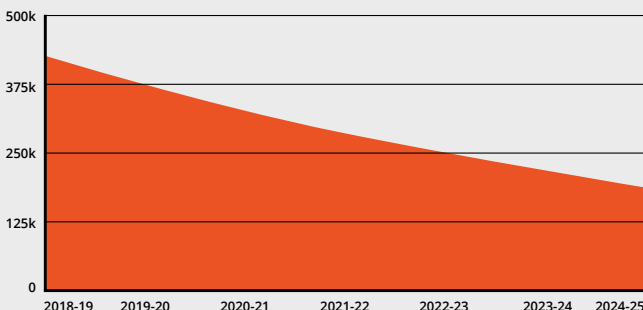
- **Contact your Town Meeting Member and ask them to support Town Meeting Resolution 40.**
- **Become a BIG member** by visiting our [membership page](#).
- Select "Brookline Cable Community Trust, Inc" as your preferred nonprofit organization to donate to when shopping with [smile.amazon.com](#).
- Participate in our "I ♥ BIG" public awareness campaign. Download digital assets and share the love online using hashtag [#iheartBIG](#)
- Become a recurring donor by supporting [our campaign on Patreon.com](#). We think giving up one latte/ coffee drink a week is worth it! = \$20-25/mo to support BIG!
- Make a **tax-deductible donation via PayPal or Venmo**. Contributions over \$50 include a BIG membership and contributions **over \$100 include a "I ♥ BIG" t-shirt!**
- **Volunteer with BIG or make your own TV or YouTube show** at BIG as a member!



### BIG'S PROGRAMMING IN 2020



### BIG'S FUNDING FROM CABLE FEES IS IN DECLINE



Use this QR code to access shortcuts to our donation platforms. Support us through PayPal, Venmo, or Patreon!

...at Town Hall Meeting for Brookline's Small Business and Nonprofits • Town School  
...ship Committee Meetings • Policing Reform and Reimagining Policing Meetings • Fri  
...abbat Services from Temple Ohabei Shalom and Temple Sinai • St. Mary's Catho  
...urch Mass • Governor Charlie Baker COVID-19 Updates • MA House of Representati  
...ssions • Tommy Vitolo's Weekly Update • Craftalong with the Brookline Library • Ger  
...ga at the Public Library of Brookline • Brookline Library Children's Story Time • Brookl  
...es Sewing and Crafting • The Safety Net • Rotary Lunch Meetings • Grandstanders Liv  
...ence Club for Girls • Age Friendly Cities • Arc of Justice • Supreme Master TV • APDA  
...20 Virtual Optimism Walk • Three Chord Thursdays • Spraycasso Spray Paint Tutoria  
...CE Speaker Series • Bread Baking Made Easy with Jeff • Senator Cindy Creem • Ihsso  
...Key COVID Conversation

...e 2020 • COVID-19 Virt  
...e History with Ken I  
... Council of Public  
...mmunity hosted  
...nter • An Uner  
...e Mask Sew-l  
... Yom HaShc  
...ld): Experier  
...owplace • C  
...ande and Bl  
...cial Equity  
...ne in Quar  
...ct 11 Virtual  
...tion, Childc  
...wnwide Hou  
...VID-19 • BH  
...mmy Vitolo  
...orge Floyd •  
...nual Brookl  
...gh School C  
...-in Protest  
...VID-19 • Mi  
...andidate Forum on racial justice • League of women Voters Fourth Congressional D  
...ct Candidate Forum • 4th Congressional District Candidates Forum • Complete Guide  
...ting in Brookline 2020 • An Honest Conversation • Expanding the Supply of Senior Ho  
...g in Brookline: A Virtual Forum • 9/11 Remembrance Event • Puppet Showplace Theat  
...ack Puppeteer Community Sharing • The League of Women Voters 100th Anniversary  
...ite for the Food Pantry Event • Mutual Aid Brookline Town Hall • Brother Outsider: M  
...ebration Committee of the Town of Brookline • Brookline Strong The HeartBeat • Bro  
...e Public Health Forum on COVID-19 • Brookline Public Housing Forum • Milford TV 2  
...VE Congressional Debate • Fourth Congressional District Candidate Forum on Rac  
...stice • League of Women Voters Fourth Congressional District Candidate Forum •

# i ❤️ BIG!

... Patient - Stay  
... • Brookline P  
...ussion on E  
...toyHomeFe  
...y in the Age  
...age hosted  
... • BHS Vigil  
...7 Pandemic • 1  
...Forum • Brookl  
...nize Black Voices.  
... Public Health Forum  
...ourth Congressional Dist