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CPB LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICES REPORT

FY 2024



New England Public Media enriches people's lives in western Massachusetts and beyond by nurturing curiosity, inspiring community engagement, and reflecting the unique joys of living here. NEPM is the region's source for PBS and NPR programs and for locally produced news, video and music content. We are located in Springfield, Massachusetts.



Local value

We're an independent public media organization serving all of western Massachusetts, from small rural towns to large urban centers. We bring together a diverse mix of PBS and NPR content, alongside locally produced shows, specials, and documentaries, all designed to spark conversation and connect our community.

Key services

- TV and radio broadcast
- Local reporting
- Music, arts and culture
- Community engagement

Local impact

+50%
of households in western Mass. watch NEPM TV every month

32,400
stream NEPM's radio stations each month

41,000
visit nepm.org every month

165,300+
people listen to NEPM's radio stations

55,500
watch PBS shows on NEPM Passport each month

1 in 15
households in western Mass. are members of NEPM

4 awards received for local reporting from the NEPM newsroom

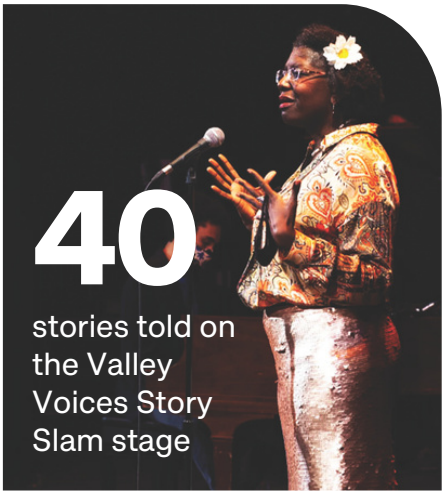


950 guests on "The Fabulous 413"

40 journalists and commentators from 10 local media outlets on "The Rundown"

1,000+ hours of locally produced jazz and world music every year

63 high school students participated in NEPM Media Lab programs



40 stories told on the Valley Voices Story Slam stage



150 students and teachers participated in the 63rd season of "As Schools Match Wits."

105 cities and towns served in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden counties

75 local newscasts every week on 88.5 NEPM

6 stations in the Classical NEPM network

8,000 attendees at the NEPM Asparagus Festival

In the community

Local journalism and news reporting in western Mass.

In FY24, NEPM brought listeners coverage of major international, national and regional stories with our partners at NPR, GBH and the New England News Collaborative. And, our award-winning local news department covered our community in western Massachusetts.

NEPM News produced 75 newscasts every week, along with features, interviews and commentaries. We closely tracked the Massachusetts political scene, with major coverage of the often overlapping issues facing our region, including workforce and housing shortages, food insecurity, agricultural preservation, the impact of extreme weather events, immigration and refugee resettlement, the Housatonic River cleanup, reproductive health, racial and socioeconomic disparities, campus protests and arrests, and more.

Nearly every week, we aired conversations with State House News Service reporter Chris Lisinski about the Massachusetts political and legislative scene in a "Morning Edition" segment called "Beacon Hill In 5," which is also distributed as a weekly podcast. It's a must-listen five minutes for anyone wanting to stay on top of the big news in Massachusetts government and elections.

NEPM is also a founding member of the New England News Collaborative, a partnership among 10 public media stations to coordinate radio and digital news coverage, share reporting, and advance best practices in all aspects of journalism. This partnership allows NEPM to broadcast more news relevant to our audience, and to share our content with other stations in the region.

Community voices on 88.5 NEPM

NEPM News also continued its coverage of arts and culture, highlighting musicians, artists and authors from across our region. And, our award-winning commentary unit offered insights into some important issues in our community. In FY24, regional commentators included writer and educator Nicole M. Young-Martin (pictured here); retired journalist Robert Chipkin; writer and university lecturer Susan Johnson; author Roland Merullo; writer and musician Tinky Weisblat; professor Christoper White; Dr. Andrew Lam; the Rev. Christopher Carlisle; veterans' leader John Paradis; and writer Madelaine Zadik.



In the community



Hunger Awareness Week 2023

The news team came together to contribute to a station-wide effort, Hunger Awareness Week, to tell stories about food insecurity in our region. The goal was to better understand this crisis, the impact it has on our community, and what's being done to combat it. From an innovative grocery store in Chicopee to gathering excess foods on western Massachusetts farm fields to an interview with a legendary food pantry operator in Pittsfield, NEPM News shed light on this important issue.

'Short-Staffed: How western Mass. is tackling workforce shortages'



In FY24, NEPM News also produced a special reporting series on the workforce challenges in western Massachusetts. For this series, "Short-Staffed: How western Mass. is tackling workforce shortages," our reporters spoke with jobseekers, employers, researchers and local employment agencies. The series included seven extended radio segments, a call-out to our listeners to send in their stories, and videos shared on social media.

In the community

Music and cultural programming for our community

NEPM continues to offer a broad range of music including classical, jazz, opera, world and Latin music. NEPM'S flagship radio station, 88.5 FM continued to provide over 1,000 hours annually of jazz, world and Latin music. The format change on 88.5 enabled the station to create a full-time classical music service on Classical NEPM, a five-station network of regional FM stations plus WFCR HD2 and streaming via nepm.org and an all-classical app. In addition to offering both national and over 1,350 of locally-hosted classical programming, the station continues to promote the region's vibrant music scene including broadcasting approximately sixty performances by the Boston Symphony Orchestra from both Symphony Hall and Tanglewood.

NEPM collaborated with the Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts (MIFA) to present two projects: "Because I Could Not Stop: An Encounter with Emily Dickinson" featuring the noted Amherst poet's words accompanied by the music of Amy Beach performed by The Victory Players, an ensemble of some of the finest young musicians from around-the-country. NEPM also worked with MIFA on "Sí Se Puede (Yes We Can)," a project featuring six new works by Latino composers exploring the experience and imagination of our Mexican and Mexican-American neighbors. New music was explored further on "Oblivion, Angelus: The Music of John Aylward," a profile of the local composer and two recent productions.



"Jazz à la Mode" which airs weeknights on 88.5 NEPM, presents the finest in mainstream jazz and highlights jazz events in the region. On Nov. 3, 2023, local jazz great Avery Sharpe joined the roster of "Jazz à la Mode" hosts. Sharpe is a world-renowned bassist, composer and educator with deep roots in western Massachusetts. Along with Wynton and Branford Marsalis, he was one of the Young Lions of Jazz who came to prominence in the 1980s. Sharpe worked with McCoy Tyner for many years and has recorded and performed with numerous jazz luminaries including Dizzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, Archie Shepp and others.

Stories of impact

'The Fabulous 413'

"The Fabulous 413," is a live one-hour radio show that airs weekdays on 88.5 NEPM. Co-hosted by longtime local radio personality Monte Belmonte and Kaliis Smith, the show focuses on the unique voices and stories of western Massachusetts. Listeners learn about the people, culture and history of our region with a focus on arts and agriculture, cuisine and colleges, history, happenings and whatever the people of the 413 are talking about today.



Recurring segments include Mr. Universe with Hampshire College astronomer Salman Hameed; Word Nerd with resident wordster Emily Brewster from Merriam-Webster Dictionary; McGoverning with McGovern, a weekly political discussion with U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern; CISA Local Hero Spotlight, showcasing local farmers and agriculture; and others. The show includes segments produced in the Fabulous 413 studio in Springfield and field pieces. Specials during FY24 included "Live from the Green River Festival," "Live from the Norman Rockwell Museum," "Live from Tanglewood," "Live from Solid Sound," and "Live from the FreshGrass Festival."

'The Rundown with Carrie Saldo'



NEPM launched "The Rundown with Carrie Saldo" on 88.5 NEPM on Feb. 2, 2024. Airing every Friday at 9 a.m., immediately following NPR's "Morning Edition," the show convenes reporters from newsrooms across western Massachusetts for a lively discussion on local news and events that shaped the week.

While providing analysis, context, insights, and varying perspectives to listeners, it also strengthens the local news ecosystem by giving journalists from four counties the chance to get together to talk about issues that they've reported on. During FY24, NEPM produced 22 episodes of "The Rundown" and welcomed over 40 journalists and commentators from 10 local media outlets.

Stories of impact

'At Swords Point'

Occasionally, NEPM broadcasts stand-alone radio documentaries that illuminate local history or culture on 88.5 NEPM. "At Sword's Point" aired on May 5, 2024. Produced by Ian Coss and hosted by local public historian Tom Goldscheider, this one-hour program delved into the labor conflicts in Greenfield, Massachusetts, during the early 1950s — a time when American organized labor faced significant challenges amidst the fervor of Sen. Joe McCarthy's Red Scare. Unlike many stories of capitulation to overwhelming pressure, this documentary showcases how Greenfield's labor leaders stood their ground and fought back.





'The Secrets We Keep'

"The Secrets We Keep," a five-part limited series which premiered on April 24, 2024, employed a mix of storytelling, psychological insight, and societal commentary to examine the stories we don't tell, what they say about our world, and what they do to our minds.

Hosted by veteran NEPM reporter Karen Brown, "The Secrets We Keep" explored societal taboos and stigmas around sexual orientation, abortion, genetic origins, family scandals, and money — through the voices of secret-keepers, and those kept in the dark.

The podcast took a deep-dive into understanding secrecy, including why people choose to keep secrets, what toll it takes to keep a big one, what happens when the truth is revealed, and the ultimate costs of secrets. While the themes are universal, Brown focused on a number of western Massachusetts characters sharing first-person accounts of keeping and learning secrets, and delved into secrets kept in her own family.

Episodes of "The Secrets We Keep" were downloaded 214,721 times between its premiere and the end of FY24 by over 150,000 unique listeners across the country.

Stories of impact

NEPM Media Lab: Engaging local students in western Mass.



The NEPM Media Lab program provides paid internships for high school students as part of the NEPM's workforce development initiative. The eight week summer Media Lab cohort of students learned audio and video journalism and storytelling skills, publishing their own projects on social media and working on projects in partnership with other NEPM departments. In addition, paid interns from local colleges assist staff instructors and serve as mentors for high school students.

This year, the Media Lab students worked with NEPM News on its “Books for Young People” series. Media Lab students interviewed local authors of children’s books, with their finished features airing on 88.5 NEPM and published online at nepm.org. In “Connect with the Outdoors,” Youth Producers created social media videos where they show how they connect with the outdoors and the environment in their community.

Other projects included profiling local entrepreneurs, providing video production support at an NEPM Valley Voices Story Slam and interviewing guests about reparations at NEPM’s screening of the PBS documentary “The Cost of Inheritance” at Springfield College, where the Media Lab set up a mobile recording studio and interviewed guests on what reparations meant to them as well as recorded b-roll video to use for a spot.

The NEPM Media Lab also organized one-day media bootcamps with partner organizations such as MassHire Holyoke and Parent Villages, and worked with nearby colleges to host interactive station tours. During these learning events at NEPM, youth are encouraged to make use of the radio and television studios to create content.

Stories of impact

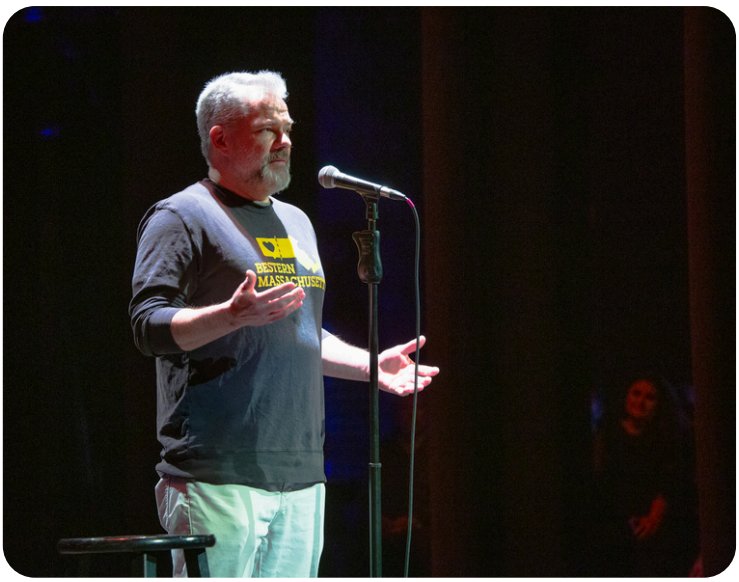
'As Schools Match Wits'



"As Schools Match Wits" (ASMW) is an academic quiz show for high school students from schools across western New England. The program celebrated its historic 63rd season this year. Over 150 students and teachers from 36 schools participated, and 25 matches were broadcast on NEPM TV from January through June 2024.

ASMW is produced by both NEPM and Westfield State University (WSU), which provides the production facilities and student production crew. ASMW offers a real-world learning environment for the television production students in WSU's Department of Communication. Questions for "As Schools Match Wits" are written in accordance with Massachusetts and Connecticut state high school curriculum guidelines. The show was nominated for a 2023 New England Emmy for outstanding education/schools program.

Valley Voices Story Slam



NEPM's Valley Voices invites people to perform live at story slams in comfy venues throughout the region. The audience hears outrageous, funny and heartwarming stories all told in under five minutes, and then votes for their favorite. The winners of each slam go on to compete at the Best of Valley Voices show at the Academy of Music in Northampton. Season 9 slams were held at the Marigold Theater in Easthampton, Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center in Greenfield, The Drake in Amherst, and NEPM's Studio A in Springfield. Stories captured at Valley Voices Story Slams are presented in the program's accompanying podcast and video shorts hosted on YouTube.

Stories of impact

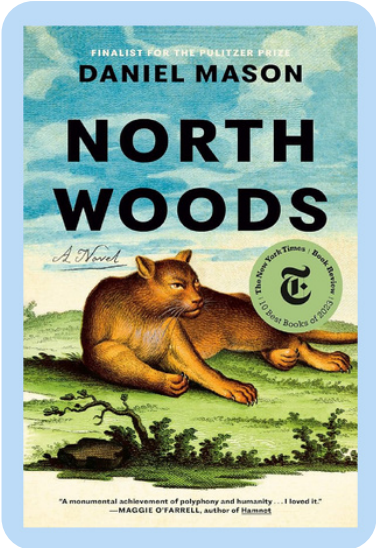


NEPM Presents: 'The Cost of Inheritance,' A Screening and Panel Discussion

"The Cost of Inheritance," an important documentary in PBS's winter line up, aired on NEPM TV on Monday, Jan. 8. The film traced the nation's legacy of systemic inequities to modern-day America, introducing audiences to descendants of enslaved persons and slave owners, profiling their complex intertwined histories, and detailing how their quest to bridge divides galvanized them to seek reparations together.

NEPM partnered with the Springfield College Division of Inclusion and Community Engagement, the Western Massachusetts Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, and the Greater Springfield (MA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated to present a screening of the documentary on Thursday, Feb. 15. The screening was followed by a panel discussion with two of the film's subjects, Briayna Cuffie and Lotte Lieb Dula; local experts Jallicia Jolly and Stefan M. Bradley, Black studies professors at Amherst College; and Michele Miller, chair of Amherst's African Heritage Reparation Assembly. Yemisi Oloruntola-Coates, GBH's chief inclusion and equity officer, served as moderator.

Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno issued a proclamation declaring "The Cost of Inheritance" Day in the city of Springfield, honoring the event and the importance of the film. The event drew over 200 attendees.



The NEPM Book Club

The NEPM Book Club is a quarterly virtual meet-up dedicated to bringing NEPM friends together to chat about new, diverse and interesting fiction — some new, some old. In July 2023, the group tackled the first book in the new Sister Holiday mysteries, "Scorched Grace," by western Massachusetts' Margot Douaihy, who was a special guest at the NEPM Book Club meeting. Other books included "The House of the Spirits" by Chilean author Isabel Allende; "Tom Lake," Pulitzer Prize finalist Ann Patchett's meditation on youthful love, married love, and the lives parents have led before their children were born; and "North Woods" by Pulitzer Prize finalist Daniel Mason.

Stories of impact

NEPM Asparagus Festival



Once known as "the asparagus capital of the world," western Massachusetts is still home to hundreds of working farms and many more locally-owned restaurants and breweries. The popular NEPM Asparagus Festival returned to the Hadley Town Common on a beautiful June day to celebrate the region's legacy of agriculture and community. Over 8,000 people attended to enjoy asparagus dishes, local craft beer brewers, music, entertainment, a maker's market, agricultural displays, kids games, a performance by Carrie Ferguson and the Grumpytime Club, and visits with PBS Kids characters.

This year, we acquired sponsorship for a significantly larger performance space and dubbed it "The Fabulous 413" Stage. This allowed for better presentation of appearances of local elected officials including the Wally Hibbard Memorial Asparagus Bunching Contest with Ashley Randle, commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and state Sen. Jo Comerford, as well as an interview with U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern. Hundreds of festival attendees gathered in front of the stage to hear live music from western Mass. singer-songwriters Lexi Weege & JJ Slater, the cultural sonic fusion of TapRoots, New Orleans jazz and soul artist Glen David Andrews, and the blues of the Diego Mongue Band. Interviews, contests and music were taped for inclusion in "The Fabulous 413" radio show in following days.





Stories of impact

Audio storytelling project with Mass Humanities and PRX

In October 2023, Mass Humanities, PRX and NEPM joined forces to help local teams create pilots of audio documentaries that tell stories that resonate with communities throughout western Massachusetts. The program has equipped four teams with four months of training in aspects of creative story development and audio production, while providing recording space and equipment at NEPM's state-of-the-art facilities and a stipend to help produce their pilots.

The teams are:
Local Access to Valley Arts, a community arts space, arts incubator, and black box theater in downtown Greenfield. Local Access to Valley Arts is focused on providing a space where all artists' voices are heard.
Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association is a vibrant organization reflecting the history of New England while preserving and communicating the multi-cultural history of the Connecticut and Deerfield River Valleys.
Doctorbird is producing "Faces of Medicine," a documentary series centered on the paths of Black female physicians in the United States.
Erika Slocumb is a scholar who continues to collect, archive, and share the stories of communities in cities and towns including Holyoke, Hadley, and Northampton.

A strategic shift in radio programming

This year NEPM set out to rebuild radio audiences through strategic changes to the programming line-ups across its network of stations. In September 2023, news programming replaced classical music during middays on 88.5 FM and the station was rebranded as NPR News and Local Perspective for western Mass. The former NEPM News Network became Classical NEPM, offering classical music 24/7. Classical NEPM also received its own mobile app so listeners anywhere could enjoy the music. The NEPM app was updated to provide a more robust experience for news audiences while still offering users access to the classical, PBS, and PBS Kids streams. Results were immediate on 88.5 NEPM, with the station exceeding its initial audience goals. Two local news/discussion programs, "The Fabulous 413" and "The Rundown," were strong performers. Streaming audiences to 88.5 NEPM were also up. Former listeners to classical on 88.5 FM successfully found their way to the new Classical NEPM radio service and the news Classical NEPM app, both of which finished the year with strong audiences.



Grants and awards

At the April 2024 Health Journalism Conference hosted by the Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ) in New York City, NEPM reporter Karen Brown was honored with second place in the public health category for her compelling three-part series, "Safe Bet: Is Mass. fulfilling its problem-gambling mandate?"

The NEPM newsroom received accolades from the Public Media Journalists Association (PMJA). The PMJA awards recognize the best in public media journalism produced in one year from across the country. Stations competed against others with similar-sized newsrooms. NEPM competed in Division A representing stations with 8–15 full-time staff.
NEPM reporters Dusty Christensen and Nirvani Williams both won PMJA awards. Christensen's investigative piece, "Records obtained under new Mass. law show Holyoke police dismiss nearly all civilian complaints," secured second place in the digital writing category; while Williams' feature, "New law takes effect, but still not easy for undocumented immigrants to get Mass. driver's licenses," earned a first place distinction in the government and democracy feature category.

In May 2024, reporter Nancy Eve Cohen's outstanding work on clergy sexual abuse was recognized by the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) with a regional Edward R. Murrow Award in the hard news category. Her story, "I don't know who is stopping this': Advocates urge Mass. AG to issue report on clergy sexual abuse," on the apparent delay in an attorney general report on what had occurred at the Springfield, Worcester and Fall River dioceses, was honored. Cohen followed her award-winning work with "'Another level of coverup': How a Mass. law prevents clergy abuse survivors from getting justice" and "Western Mass. actor depicts clergy abuse survivor who rejects church settlement — like he did."



The regional Murrow Award winners are chosen from all stories in a designated region. Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont are part of Region 10.

New England Public Media (NEPM) plays a vital role in serving the communities of western Massachusetts by providing access to high-quality news, educational programming, and cultural content for all, for free. For residents in rural western Massachusetts, where access to major media outlets can be limited, NEPM offers a crucial link to regional, national, and global events. It fosters community engagement through local reporting on topics that directly impact rural life, such as agriculture, local governance, and environmental issues. NEPM's programming helps bridge the information gap, ensuring that rural voices are heard and that all residents, regardless of their location, can stay informed and connected to the broader world.



Watch

With four digital television channels, streaming and video on demand, NEPM brings quality public television programs to audiences across western Massachusetts, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS Kids helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. NEPM's locally-produced academic quiz show "As Schools Match Wits" is one of the longest-running shows of its kind in the nation.

Listen

NEPM provides a trusted voice for the region through local reporting and locally-produced music programming, and connects the region to the world through its partnership with NPR and other public media organizations. Its flagship station, 88.5 NEPM presents news, talk and jazz, and classical music has its own six-station network, Classical NEPM, where music is available 24/7.

Engage

Recognizing its essential role in fostering a strong, informed, and connected public, NEPM prioritizes meaningful engagement with the people of western Mass., ensuring that local voices, stories, and concerns are heard and represented. Through events like the NEPM Asparagus Festival, Valley Voices Story Slam, film screenings and community conversations, we creates opportunities for community members to come together, celebrate local culture, and engage with important issues. By focusing on local issues and cultivating relationships with community members, NEPM upholds its mission to serve as a trusted, accessible, and inclusive resource for all in the region.