

# Village Spotlight

The Village Spotlight highlights organizations and/or businesses that have served the South Orange community for a number of years. If you have a recommendation for next quarters' Village Spotlight, email us at [crc@southorange.org](mailto:crc@southorange.org).

## SOMAtv: South Orange Maplewood Community Television

Highlighted: Summer 2021. Vol: VS-02



**SOMAtv** is our local public access television station that serves the communities of South Orange and Maplewood. Founded in the mid-1990s as a station for local public access, government, and educational programming, SOMAtv produces shows that focus on many subjects, including careers, pets, books, education, and nostalgia.

In addition to original programming, SOMAtv also covers a number of community events, including South Orange Play Day, Newcomer's Day, the 24-Hour Music Festival, Maker Madness at Columbia High School as well as local election debates, Town Council and Board of Education meetings.

Over the years SOMAtv has made significant changes to expand its impact, which includes promoting Dustin Dumas to Station Manager in 2018. Ms. Dumas was initially brought on as a featured producer of her show Dustin's Kaleidoscope. In 2019, she successfully leveraged the station's professional membership with Jersey Access Group (JAG) to get original SOMAtv shows syndicated. As a result, SOMAtv shows have been picked up over 153 times by television stations across the United States. SOMAtv shows air on 36 stations in 12 U.S. states, a testament to the high-quality content and production of these programs.

As with many other organizations, SOMAtv had to adjust in light of the COVID-19 pandemic since the television studio is located at Columbia High School. Although the school was closed for most of 2020 and into 2021, SOMAtv did not slow down; the station continued producing content via Zoom.

To help get out the vote in the 2020 election, SOMAtv solicited video submissions from residents encouraging their fellow community members to vote. Videos were submitted by over twenty individuals from our diverse community in Spanish, American Sign Language, Nepali, French, and English. These public service announcements (PSAs) were not specific to any political party or special interest group.

In addition, SOMAtv contacted the mayors of Maplewood and South Orange as well as the County Clerk's office to do a special show on voting this year. Mayor Frank McGehee and County Clerk Chris Durkin participated in a program to help people understand the mail-in ballot process and explain what voters could expect during this pandemic election cycle. Topics discussed included early voting, ballot boxes, mail-in ballots, and curing. The special show was well-received by the community and within a few days, there were over two hundred views on YouTube.

SOMAtv is a member of Jersey Access Group (JAG), a professional organization for the public, educational, and government (PEG) stations where best practices and standards for stations are shared.