

RESOLVE PHILLY

DECEMBER 2020

YEAR IN REVIEW



Prepared by
Jean Friedman-Rudovsky
& **Cassie Haynes**
Co - Executive Directors, Resolve Philly

To our friends, funders, colleagues, and supporters,

As a year marked by unprecedented challenge and collective sadness draws to a close, we at Resolve find ourselves reflecting on how we've fared. We are proud to have not only stayed grounded this year, but also to have broadened and deepened our work in the face of adversity. Below is a slice of our 2020 accomplishments, based on Resolve Philly's five strategic priorities, as well as where we are headed 2021.

Thank you for being a valued and vital part of our community and for your partnership and support this year. We look forward to continuing to build with you next year and to — one day soon — share space with you all once again.

With gratitude and love,

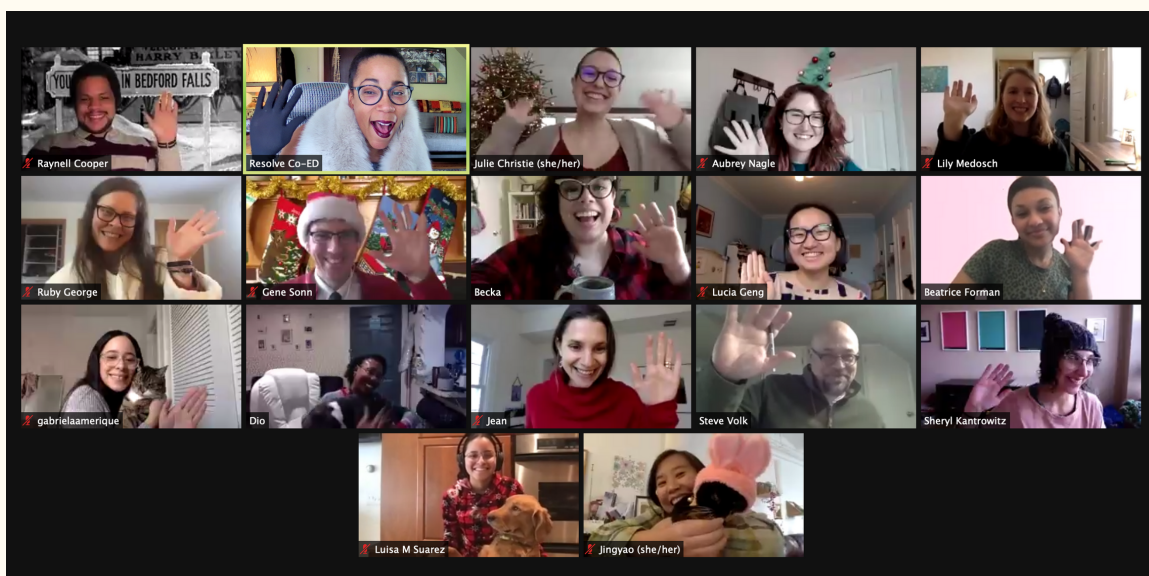
*Jean, Cassie, +
the Resolve Philly Team*

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF LEADERS

Resolve brought on a wealth of new talent over the last year. Our team has grown from seven to fifteen in the last 12 months. In January, we'll welcome two more folks: Kristine Villanueva, Equally Informed Philly's first Project Editor, and Sheryl Kantrowitz, who will be spending her 6 month sabbatical from Klein College of Media and Communications with Resolve as our Social Entrepreneur in Residence.

We see every hire as an opportunity to support a new leader. As we have grown, we have doubled-down on Resolve's foundation in equitable policies and practices and we are proud to be a company that values every individual as a leader within the organization and the wider world. We have built peer-facilitated support systems among the staff, as well as internal inclusive project vetting procedures to ensure that as we are presented with new opportunities, we don't overextend ourselves. Our Co-Operations Managers, Becka Gorelick and Ruby George, have taken the lead in developing their shared role as human resource coordinators so that the needs of our team are heard and put into action—from implementing a collective reset at a time of chaos and emotional pressure, or staff-wide trauma-informed training and ongoing psycho-education workshops.

Our internship program, under the direction of Julie Christie, Resolve's Data + Impact Editor (who started with Resolve as an intern), is another example of committing to our strategic priority of building a community of leaders. Our internship program provides three interns with an 8-month internship each academic year, and another three interns with a 4-month opportunity each summer. Both are paid opportunities (\$15/hour). Our "squads," as they've become nicknamed, have meaningful opportunities to take on individual projects, own whole initiatives, and access a continued support system through Resolve for mentorship and professional development.



Over the last year, Resolve took great strides in its work to transform how communities engage with news and information. The most salient example is Equally Informed Philly (EIP), Resolve's new initiative that bridges the information divide in Philadelphia. This work was seeded in April when Resolve received a \$1M grant from Independence Public Media Foundation, and we set out to make sure that those most impacted by the health, social and economic fall-out from COVID-19 had access to reliable, life-saving, household-sustaining and culturally-affirming news and information. The initiative's first phase was highlighted by several significant partnerships with artists as well as civic and city agencies to provide culturally relevant and accessible public health messaging. Tens of thousands of yard signs, wheat pasting, and posters reached people living in zip codes who are more likely to suffer the physical, social and economic impacts of the virus.

TRANSFORMING HOW COMMUNITIES ENGAGE WITH NEWS + INFORMATION

By the summer, we had matured the project to become an evergreen initiative in Resolve's portfolio that uses text- and place-based news and information delivery to circulate high-quality service journalism, resources and opportunities, as well as new narratives developed by and with the community. Resolve published two editions of a free Community Newsletter, with articles written by young people throughout the city. We distributed 119,950 copies in English, Spanish and Vietnamese in food distribution boxes, at neighborhood events, and through direct door delivery where we knew people's lives and livelihoods were being more directly impacted by COVID-19. Through a partnership with Parks and Recreation and Mural Arts, we supplied newsletters, informational public health artwork, and other supplies to Play Streets throughout the city.



The central component of EIP is our Equal Info line, a local journalism and community-powered news and information text service. Equal Info is a free bilingual (English and Spanish) question and answer service, through which area residents can text in any question on working and living in the time of COVID and our staffers Lily Medosch and Gabriela Rivera respond—personally. Lily or Gabriela's responses are well-researched, friendly and expeditious. Equal Info also proactively pushes out service journalism produced by Resolve's newsroom partners (the media outlets involved in Broke in Philly) and other vetted information we believe is valuable to those most impacted by economic insecurity in the city.

To date we have 1,330 subscribers (the vast majority through organic growth), have sent out 45 pieces of reporting through our weekly text-outs, answered 541 individual questions, and received 1,308 inbound messages. At its genesis, incoming questions and push-outs were largely related to COVID, but as the year progressed, we used the line as a means for voter support and to ensure Philly residents knew about eviction prevention opportunities, debt relief programs, and more. We also used the line as a way to further civic dialogue and engagement on important issues, such as the [open letter](#) that Resolve Philly wrote to Philadelphia's newly-appointed Managing Director. This letter was written with Play Street block supervisors around the city, each of whom shared what life is like on their block and what they'd like the city to know about it.

All of this work is grounded in the daily efforts of our five-person Community Engagement (CE) Team. Led by Derrick Cain, the team spends the majority of its time identifying value-aligned community based organizations and trusted neighborhood leaders while building relationships with them and their constituents. Using the deep knowledge of our team and the Social Progress Imperative's COVID-19 vulnerability index, which considers a host of health, economic, and social data and assesses a numerical score to each census tract indicating the level of COVID-19 vulnerability faced by those who live there, we identified priority communities at the start of this work. The overlap between communities whose needs are largely disregarded by mainstream news and information and those who are most vulnerable to the devastating physical and social impact of COVID-19 is not coincidental. Accordingly, in addition to a geographic strategy for prioritizing our Equally Informed engagement, Resolve has committed to work that bridges the information divide among these six specific Philadelphia communities: Black people, immigrant communities, those in unsafe/unstable housing, those in low-wage jobs, people with disabilities, and Latinx folks.

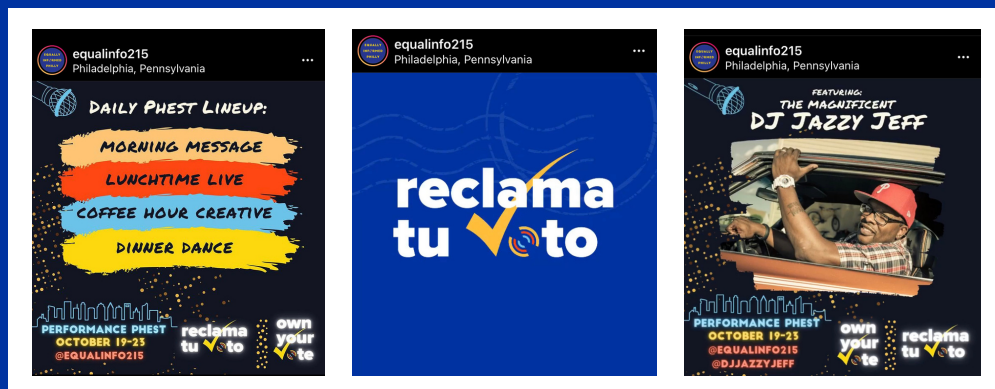
The team carries this out in a number of ways. First, through the Sound-Off series, Resolve's signature space for Philly residents to openly discuss issues in their neighborhoods with topics based on the needs and desires of community residents. Examples include student debt, voting, and reentry from prison, among others. In these conversations we gain a ground-level understanding of what's on people's minds and try to surface questions that local journalists could be covering and answering. Our CE team also builds relationships by showing up to community events, including as free food distribution points, voter registration events, community wash days, Play Street sites and more. We use these relationships to — first and foremost — have a better understanding of ongoing information needs. We are able to then use that insight to inform reporting among Broke in Philly partners—so that it is increasingly community responsive—as well as to ensure that the content of our Community Newsletter and Equal Info line text-outs addresses what people want and need to know. It's through our engagement work that we've grown the Equal Info line and distributed the Community Newsletter as well.

The CE team also continually looks for opportunities to elevate local voices and narratives. This comes in the form of Pass the Mic sessions—live interviews or

take-overs of our Instagram feeds—as well as introductions to partner newsrooms for the publication of opinion columns or personal stories, sponsored content openings, radio and video interviews and more.



A highlight of our innovative work to transform how communities engage with news and information, we leveraged the contacts (and contracts) we had with local artists for Behold, our April in-person extravaganza that was canceled due to the pandemic, to generate excitement around voting. Own Your Vote Week was a five-day voter engagement event coordinated in partnership with Stacey Wilson as the artist liaison. We worked with Philly-based artists to offer a selection of performances and visual art, as well as pre-recorded spots and standing interviews for broadcast via social media around the topic of voting. It was a rousing success: the artists were all eager and grateful to be involved, and there was robust participation and engagement from viewers throughout the week. The [#OwnYourVote metrics](#) tell the story of that success in numbers.



By disseminating truthful and helpful information to empower decisions; by maintaining a constant and humble presence in the communities they aim to know, and working to spread that presence; by being a great and active partner in strengthening the well-being of these communities through their strongest leaders, CE team members are major players in building much of the foundation of Resolve’s reputation. In 2021, the CE team will work closely with Kristine Villanueva, Editor of Equally Informed, to continue to grow and deepen that initiative. On the horizon is the development (or reimagining of) the Community Newsletter, more text-based news products that complement and spread the service journalism being done by the Philly local news ecosystem, and deepened relationships with Play Streets and Block captains as well as as new ways to build community among our text users as a means for bridging information divides.

Lastly, while EIP took center stage in our engagement work this year, the CE team is a critical component of all our work. Looking ahead, the CE Team will energize its connection to Broke in Philly by working with Sr. Collaborations Editor Gene Sonn to crystallize and document its replicable process for how individual newsrooms are connected to our CE team, and how Resolve’s engagement practices can be leveraged as capacity building for in-house newsroom engagement. Similarly, transforming how communities engage with news and information is at the heart of Reframe—our initiative which aims to help journalists more fairly and accurately report on historically misrepresented and underrepresented communities through authentic, humanizing language and respectful, equitable news frames. In early 2021, with the launch of the Reframe pilot, we will be working with a select group of newsrooms to find new ways to engage with their communities on language and framing. We are particularly excited about the development of our first Community Standards Panel, a group of community leaders who meet regularly with editorial leadership of partner newsrooms to discuss coverage concerns and provide feedback used in our language analysis tool.

Resolve Philly's longest-standing initiative, the Broke in Philly collaborative reporting project, emerged from the 2020 unprecedented news industry crisis as strong as ever. When the coronavirus hit, the stress and financial toll of the pandemic on media outlets could have torn the group apart, or the collaborative work could have faded, with folks putting it on the back burner until life gets back to normal. The opposite occurred: our newsroom partners doubled down on the collaborative spirit to amplify stories focused on the economic impact on the city and its residents. Even more gratifying was the fact that newsroom reps leaned into "The Collab" as a resource-rich safe space. Our Slack team and meetings became environments of refuge for support, positivity, and laughter during increasingly trying times.

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM



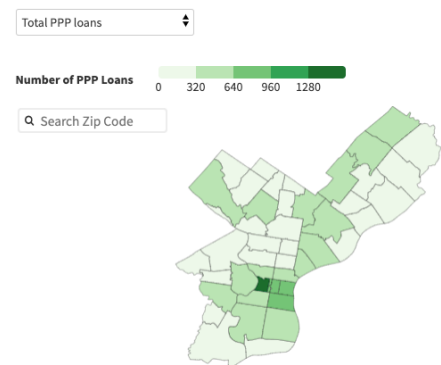
As of mid-December, Broke in Philly newsroom partners have produced 597 pieces on economic mobility and poverty in Philadelphia. A series of exceptional longform solutions journalism came to fruition after 18 months of work in [Zig Zag: The winding path to making ends meet in Philadelphia](#). Zig Zag is a series that focuses on how improving one facet of a person's life — from housing, to education, to business — can establish a stable foundation for economic mobility.

We also continued our experimentation with the power of shared human resources to enhance the output and impact of collaborative solutions journalism. Resolve's Data editor Julie Christie worked on several shared data journalism projects this year for Broke in Philly, including the collecting, cleaning and sharing of local Paycheck Protection Program data to be built into economic mobility stories or incorporated into other projects. She's currently knee-deep in two other data rich collaborative efforts with Broke in Philly partners including an analysis of Black wealth in Philadelphia, as well as a project that will analyze transcripts and data from 911 calls processed in Philly.

The other exciting element of Resolve's shared resources for Broke in Philly was the hiring of Steve Volk, Resolve's first Investigative Solutions Reporter. Steve leads Our Kids: The Challenge and Opportunity of Philadelphia's Child Welfare System and has so far published a dozen stories with Resolve's reporting partners, with two dozen more in the research and writing phase. Steve's project has already yielded impact. One story documented how the local child dependency courts had ceased key hearings at the pandemic's outset, which left Philly lagging behind Pittsburgh. Steve's sources were telling him there was no discussion of restarting hearings at the time, but those hearings were reopened just a couple of days after his piece ran. Looking ahead, his roster of stories are heavily informed by the profound degree to which race and poverty drive the system, and he is prioritizing investigative and solutions journalism that has the real possibility of making change.

What ZIP codes in Philly got the most Paycheck Protection Program loans?

Use the drop down bar to toggle between the number of loans that were more or less than \$150,000. You can also use the search bar to find a specific ZIP code.



BROKE IN PHILLY Source: U.S. Department of the Treasury • Last updated: July 8, 2020
By: Julie Christie, Resolve Philly

Steve has also worked hard to ensure that Our Kids is a project that's deeply and directly connected to the foster youth community. Steve has built strong relationships with young people who currently are or have been in the foster care system, consulting them as experts on everything from how to frame his reporting or which illustrator we should contract to contribute to his series. He has built strong connections with Broke in Philly reporting partner editors as well, with stories produced or in production with more than half of the collaborative to date. Our Kids will culminate at the end of 2021, with a podcast series on the foster care system and possibly an accompanying graphic novel.



Illustrations by Dylan B. Caleho, published with Steve Volk's article *In the Kensington Voice* on November 12, 2020 — *For families involved in Philly's child welfare system, this program is building a safety net.*

Finally, our work on advancing collaborative solutions journalism in Philadelphia got a boost through our hiring of Gene Sonn, a decade veteran News Director at WHYY, as Resolve's new Sr. Collaborations Editor. Gene is no stranger to Resolve, having been his past newsroom's representative to both the Reentry Project and Broke in Philly.

BROKE IN PHILLY

As we enter 2021 with him at the editorial helm of Broke, the collaborative will be focusing on the economic recovery from the pandemic with an accompanying spotlight on where disruption in our pre-pandemic economy can be harnessed for creating economic opportunity and mobility. The Broke partner newsrooms are also collectively deciding upon an exciting sub-project for 2021 that will offer the opportunity for renewed editorial energy, joint reporting, and community engagement as a foundation for the reporting.

PRACTICING ALLYSHIP

Throughout 2020, we continued to seek out opportunities to be active and energetic allies in Philadelphia and to others in our field across the country. One highlight of this work is the efforts of Resolve's Data and Impact editor Julie Christie. Julie has developed into a nationally recognized expert on Impact Tracking. This past year she gave a half dozen virtual presentations on this innovative system, which involves using AirTable to track impact both within an organization and of a reporting project. Her work is highlighted in a soon-to-be-published Impact Tracking for Collaborative playbook written by the Solutions Journalism Network and she has already been in communication with at least four organizations that are replicating our tracking framework.

Similarly, Julie is always looking for ways that her Philadelphia-based data journalism can be of use to others. This includes, for example, an arrangement to share her data analysis on Black wealth (which she is executing for a story with Technical.ly Philly) with Word In Black, a national news collaborative of Black solutions journalists that focuses on racial inequity in the U.S. She also recently created a dashboard that tracks hospital availability at a moment when local medical institutions are reaching capacity. Broke in Philly partners were able to publish [this dashboard](#) and Julie then wrote an explanatory piece on [Resolve's Medium blog](#) to share information how other collaboratives could build and publish one in their own area. The how-to now circulates among Solutions Journalism Network Collaboratives, Kaiser Health News and the Public Media Journalists Association.

Julie isn't the only one who's constantly looking for opportunities to practice allyship in the field. In mid-March, Reframe Project Editor Aubrey Nagle identified a gap in journalism resources that Reframe could fill through the creation of crucial guidelines for reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic with clear-eyed language and news frames. In the fall, the Reframe Election 2020 guide was launched with additional advice for journalists covering this most unusual of elections. Nearly 3,000 users have taken advantage of these guides since their publication. Additionally, with the help of the MIC Center at the University of Pennsylvania, the Reframe team began a deep content analysis of local news produced during the protests that took place in Philadelphia in May and June. This project will provide a critical bird's eye view of what stories were told to and about our communities during an historical moment, as well as provide a playbook for bringing streamlined but impactful content and source analyses to newsrooms in the new year. As one colleague commented on Twitter when we announced this effort: "accountability is an act of love."

Resolve's leadership had allyship in mind this Spring when drafting our proposal for the \$1M IMPF grant. We knew the pandemic was going to take an immediate financial toll on our newsroom partners, so we identified a way to quickly inject cash into local media organizations. We earmarked close to one third of our grant to be funneled directly to newsrooms through ad-buys, sponsored content and underwriting. We then developed an equitable allocation system that prioritized community- and BIPOC-led and serving newsrooms, enabling them to receive the largest percentage of the available dollars. We used our ad-buy placements to spread culturally affirming public health messaging, increase awareness about the Equal Info Line and to offer the opportunity for some of our community partners to write their own narratives to be published in local media.

SUSTAINABILITY

Resolve closes out 2020 in an exceptionally strong financial state. We have already secured \$2.5M in funding over the next three years, the majority of which comes in the form of general operating support. This funding provides the organization with a solid foundation from which we will both grow our philanthropic base, and also activate new lines of revenue generation.

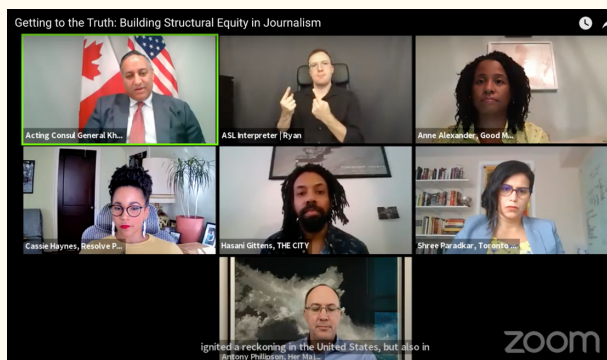
In 2020, Resolve took major steps towards the launch of Reframe and found important ways to work with our colleagues across the industry to apply the principles of humanizing language and equitable news framing to the breaking news of the year. Development of the Reframe text analysis tool, which will help journalists improve their word choices in real-time within their writing



environment, pushed forward in anticipation of our 2021 pilot, as did the creation of a new workshop that goes beyond vocabulary suggestions to educate journalists on the true impact their words have on our communities. We look forward to bringing these resources and more to more newsrooms in 2021 as we launch Reframe. Beginning in January, a small group of newsrooms will have early access to the Reframe tools and resources while we work to learn from their experiences and improve the tools. By the end of 2021, we anticipate introducing Reframe to select newsrooms across the country as Resolve explores new streams of revenue via content and source auditing services, consulting, and software licensing.

We have discovered a host of additional opportunities for consulting, harnessing the expertise we've developed over the past several years in tracking impact and building equitable partnerships, anti-racist organizational structures, and trusting relationships with community members. This past spring, Resolve partnered with Solutions Journalism Network to create a new guide to reporting on

economic mobility, based within the principles of Reframe and the experiences of the Broke in Philly partners. In 2021, Resolve will begin developing a set of consulting services and products that leverage the capacity and experience of our team to provide value to news media organizations and enhance the development and sustainability of equitable structures, partnerships, and community engagement.



This is an exciting space for Resolve to move into, and was epitomized by the invitation from the Consulates General of Canada and United Kingdom to co-host **Getting To the Truth: Building Structural Equity in Journalism**, a virtual discussion mediated by Cassie that featured a panel of journalists from the US, UK and Canada. The conversation focused on the systemic and institutional changes necessary to strengthen the integrity of the media and preserve its fundamental purpose of getting to the truth.

Back in the fall of 2019, we began dreaming with the folks at Distributed Media Lab about what decentralized distribution of collaborative, solutions-focused news and information could look like and how Broke in Philly's use of DML's proprietary digital platform could offer a revenue model for collaborative journalism. Now here we are, looking into 2021 with a plan to launch three experiments around sponsored content that would underwrite the Collaborative Pot (the funds available to the Broke in Philly partners to execute collaborative reporting projects), a portion of the Sr. Collaborations Editor's salary, and would also see \$75,000 distributed among the partners as sponsorship revenue for no additional effort or engagement on their part.

It's important to note that Resolve views sustainability as more than financial security. It's also about having the knowledge of whether and how our work is having the impact we're aiming for. Along those lines, we have contracted with ImpactableX and Good Company Ventures to provide an analysis of the social impact our work is projected to have. We have completed the analysis of Reframe, the goal of which is to analyze the impact that Reframe can generate to increase representation for underrepresented communities in Philadelphia journalism. In early 2021, we'll complete the analysis of Equally Informed Philly and in early spring, we'll begin the analysis of Broke in Philly.

How we tell our story as an organization, our public persona, and our ability to effectively navigate the challenges and opportunities presented to Resolve as it continues to grow, also plays a large role in our sustainability. While Resolve has invested heavily in building the substance of our work, we have not made similar investments in how we talk about our work. In 2021, we are changing this. We're excited to contract with Salthill Communications, our new, full-scale communications partner. Led by the outgoing Deputy Treasurer of Communications at the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury, Salthill Communications brings value alignment, a vast network of resources, and a large, organic Twitter audience to Resolve Philly, in addition to a host of other awesomeness.

Finally, leadership and governance is a critical part of sustainability. Jean and Cassie are in an exceptionally strong place in their shared leadership and look forward to continuing to grow Resolve's impressive board. In 2020, Glenn Bergman, longtime Philadelphian and former CEO of Philabundance, joined Resolve's Board of Directors as Treasurer. Glenn has helped level-up our development, supporting Resolve in cultivating its first major donor strategy with the help of a fundraising consultant recommended by Glenn. We're delighted that our entire board has committed to staying on with our leadership team through 2021 and we're all looking forward to adding 1-2 more rock star board members next year as the entire team — board, staff, and partners — carries Resolve Philly's strategy to the next phase.

Whether you made it all the way through or you've skimmed to the end, you have our *deepest* gratitude. It is through your support and the incredible power of collaboration that our work is possible.

Thank you!