

# Storyteller Saldo in new TV host role

By Jeffrey Borak  
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SPRINGFIELD — Carrie Saldo loves to tell stories. That's what drove her into a career in journalism 10 years ago when she signed on as Williamstown reporter for the North Adams Transcript.

Beginning Monday, Saldo will be telling stories galore five nights a week as host/producer of "Connecting Point," a new half-hour magazine-style show airing Monday through Thursday evenings at 7:30 on Springfield's Public Broadcasting Service station, WGBY (Channel 12). On Friday nights, "Connecting Point" will be part of "The State We're In," a popular public-affairs show produced and hosted by Jim Madigan.

"Connecting Point" replaces a nightly strip of WGBY-produced programming comprising "Making It Here" Monday nights, "Doctors on Call" Tuesdays, WGBY Showcase Wednesdays and "Reflections Through Watercolors" Thursdays.

"We've had essentially the same lineup of local shows since 2002," said WGBY vice president and general manager, Russ Peotter, during a joint interview with Saldo, Madigan and assistant local production manager David Fraser at

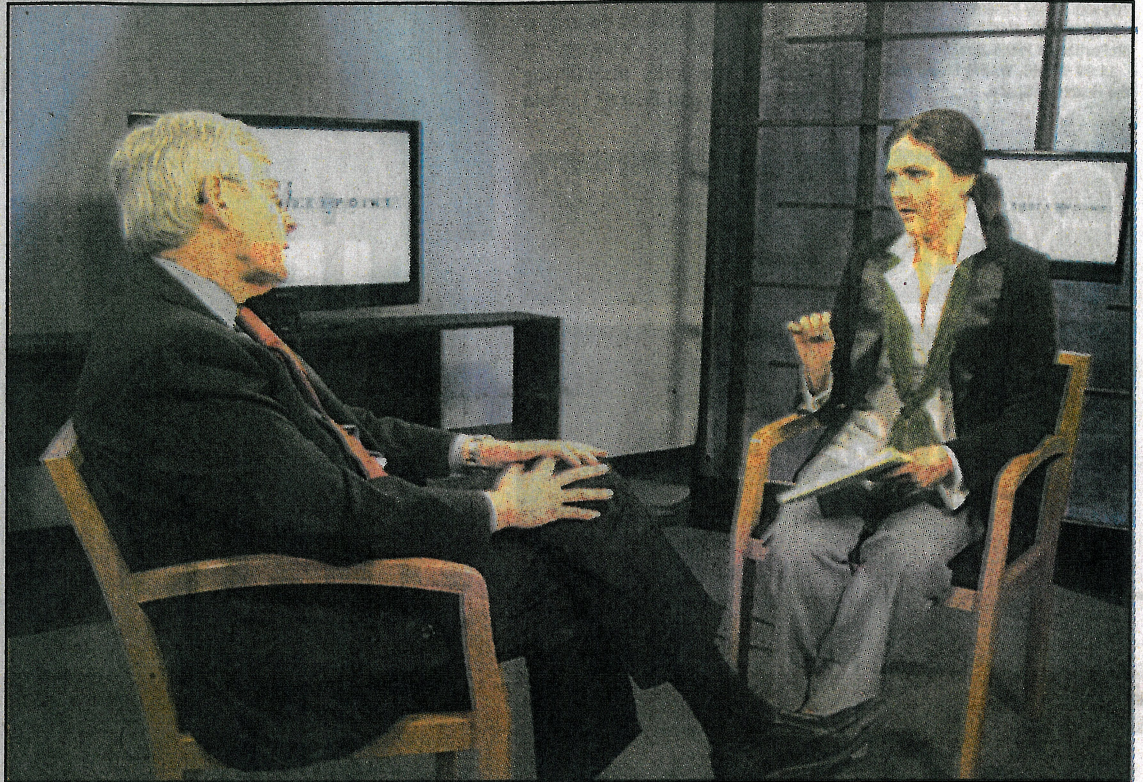


Photo courtesy WGBY

'Connecting Point' host and producer Carrie Saldo appears with Timothy W. Brennan, executive director of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, on an upcoming segment of WGBY's new half-hour magazine-style show.

SALDO, continued on E3

## Host to act as surrogate for audience

SALDO from E1

WGBY's downtown studios.

"We felt it was time to create something new, something with a flexible format that would incorporate and expand on those shows; a single program with a host people would come to recognize. We didn't want to copy the local news."

Some of the segments will be produced in the field; most, Fraser said, will be taped in the studio. Arts and culture will be part of the mix. So will public affairs.

### First week topics

The show's first week will examine the economy in 2011, Springfield's 375th anniversary, Haiti one year after the earthquake, earthquake preparedness in Western Massachusetts, and rail travel in the so-called Knowledge Corridor.

Each show will open with the headlines of the day but it won't stop there.

"We want to go beyond the headlines, deep into a story in the hope of sparking viewer interest in what's happening around them,"

Saldo said.

"We also want to work with a variety of contributors; newspaper people, bloggers."

"I think the show reflects a sense of curiosity about the world that you find in PBS viewers and NPR listeners," Peotter said

"As host, Carrie acts as a kind of surrogate for the viewer. She gets to ask questions on behalf of our audience."

That audience, Saldo said, will be encouraged to speak for themselves through Facebook, Twitter and the Web.

### Want feedback

"We want feedback," Saldo said. "We want to spark public discourse within the broader community. We want to know what people want to hear on the show."

The point of "Connecting Point," Peotter said, is to make viewers aware of a broader community around them that stretches west to east from the New York line to Sturbridge and south to north from North Haven, Conn. to Brattleboro, Vt.

Saldo connected with Peotter's team in November while Fraser

and a "Making It Here" crew were in the Berkshires taping a segment.

"I contacted [Dave] and asked if they were looking for a co-host for 'Making It Here,'" Saldo explained.

"Dave said they weren't but they were looking for someone for a new show they were starting. I sent him (some video and audio material)."

"We auditioned eight or 10 people for the job, most of them with acting experience," Fraser explained. "Carrie came to us with a background in journalism, which is what we were looking for. We liked that she lives in the Berkshires."

"Most important was her on-screen presence; her ability to conduct an interview, to formulate the right questions. She was the most polished on camera."

"Both her natural curiosity and attentiveness to the comments of the interviewee were remarkable," Peotter said. "Those are important traits and when added to her technical skills and physical presence, made her our first choice."

As host and producer Saldo

writes, brainstorms story ideas with Fraser and Madigan, helps choose guests and is the face and voice of "Connecting Point." It's a level of engagement she never had as a reporter. She's grateful for the opportunity, she says.

### St. Joe's graduate

Born in Stamford, Vt., Saldo, 31, graduated St. Joseph's High School in Pittsfield. She was four months out of college — Manhattanville in Purchase, N.Y., where she double-majored in theater and English — when she returned to the Berkshires and found her calling.

In those four months, Saldo had been living in Brooklyn, working as a waitress in two restaurants while trying to make her way as a professional actress.

"Despite the fact that New York was exhilarating and a place I enjoyed immensely," Saldo said by e-mail. "I was frustrated with the financial struggle."

Then 9/11 happened. "The tragedies of that day compounded my grief," she wrote in the e-mail.

She came back to the Berkshire and began looking for a job.

"I asked myself 'what do I love?' The answer was writing and telling stories. It occurred to me the journalism could afford me that opportunity."

The North Adams Transcript took her in as a stringer and the hired her as a full-time staff member.

From The Transcript, Saldo went to The Berkshire Eagle as South County reporter and the WAMC Northeast Public Radio in Albany, N.Y., where she worked for The Associated Press and the Edward R. Murrow Foundation. She's spent the last two years in public relations.

"I needed a break from journalism," she said, explaining her public relations stints during the interview at WGBY.

"But I realized I was missing journalism. ('Connecting Points' is a format I enjoy. I didn't want to be a nightly television news reporter. This is the perfect opportunity at the perfect time."