THE HOMETOWN PROJECT

2021
IMPACT REPORT

2021 STORIES, VOICES, VOTES

2021 IMPACT REPORT

Artists hailing from Virginia, including Wanda Sykes, Mark Ruffalo, Connie Britton, and Patton Oswalt, created videos in support of progressive candidates running in the 2021 Virginia election to represent these artists' hometown communities in the Virginia House of Delegates. The Hometown Project, returning to Virginia for the third time, partnered with advocacy organization Clean Virginia to support a slate of incumbents and new candidates dedicated to good governance reform and a transition to affordable, clean energy.

As a part of the 2021 initiatives, The Hometown Project designed and conducted a Randomized Control Trial study across key districts in the state.

WHAT WE DO

WE EDUCATE & MOTIVATE VOTERS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS BY CONNECTING CULTURAL LEADERS TO THEIR HOMETOWNS

OUR STORY

The Hometown Project is a political advocacy organization founded in 2017. We help elect progressive leaders at the local level by connecting well known actors, musicians & athletes (we call them Hometown Energizers) to voters in their hometowns. Our efforts bring attention to local candidates, campaigns and issues important to the community.

Since 2017, The Hometown Project has supported 140 local candidates and GOTV campaigns in 18 states. Over 80 influential Hometown Energizers, including Mark Ruffalo in Wisconsin, Connie Britton and Selena Gomez in Texas, Billy Crudup in Florida, Sarah Jessica Parker in Ohio, and Wanda Sykes and Patton Oswalt in Virginia have appeared in geo-targeted video messages to help elect progressive candidates in their hometowns or promote statewide GOTV efforts in their home state.
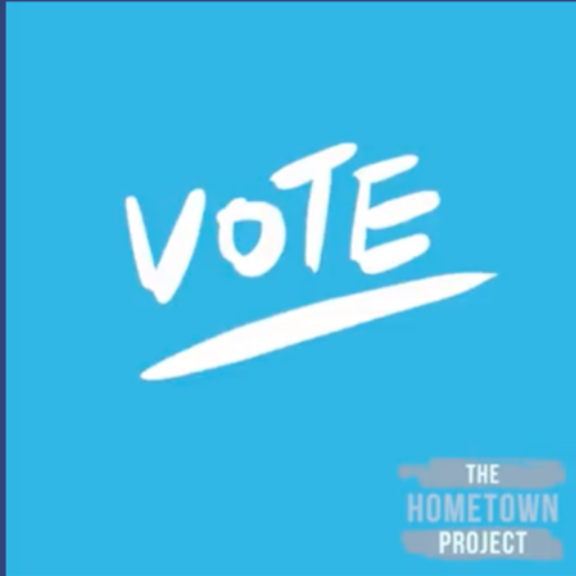
HOW IT WORKS

We partner with local organizations to support progressive candidates in competitive races. This year our partner was Clean Virginia where we supported 21 of their candidates.

Recruit influential actors, athletes & musicians that hail from the state and facilitated their engagement in campaigns.

Introduce Hometown Energizers to local progressive candidates running for office in their hometowns.

Produce and distribute creative content to inspire, motivate and educate the electorate.

OUR "ENERGIZER" STRATEGY

Motivate voter turnout

Bring visibility to local elections

Support the next generation of leaders

CLEAR BENEFITS TO LOCAL CAMPAIGNS & CANDIDATES

- Generate awareness about candidates
- Drive traffic to website and social media pages
- Reach key demographics and "unreachable voters" in a new way
- Boost morale among campaign volunteers and staff
- Provide a creative and fun way for voters to learn more about candidates' goals as a community leader
- Energize voters and motivate voter turnout

""It was great to see someone from Loudoun County reaching back out to his hometown to encourage others to vote and engage with state-level politics. State government makes such a difference in people's lives--thank you for raising your voice to highlight that.

My race was an extremely close one, and I know that all of those who pitched in to help my campaign contributed to our victory. Thank you so very much for your part in helping our campaign win reelection"

Delegate Wendy Gooditis
Virginia House of Delegates

"It's no surprise that such an amazing talent is from Richmond. From great towns come great people!

Thank you, @AimeeMann and @HometownVoices!"

Delegate Dawn Adams
Virginia House of Delegates

"Connecting with voters in new and meaningful ways on the platforms that they use most is more important than ever. Engaging hometown celebrities to connect with voters on these platforms is effective, authentic, and so exciting! It is always a pleasure to work with the folks at the Hometown Project who supported our campaign in 2019 and 2021 and I look forward to supporting their efforts in the future!"

Delegate Nancy Guy
Virginia House of Delegates

2021

2021 CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS

In the 2021 election cycle, we produced **29+ voter facing videos** and 30+banner ads concentrated in Virginia.

11+ Energizers supported 21+ local candidates in crucial races in their hometowns. By developing, producing, and fielding geo-targeted videos and banners from our hometown artists and influencers, we brought these progressive candidates valuable name recognition and support.

9 of those candidates were also supported by 6 additional Energizers that *do not* hail from Virginia. This portion of our 2021 program was part of the research study we conducted in this year.

Energizers also helped **Get Out the Vote with a compilation video showing** their hometown pride and rallying voters to cast their ballots.

2021 VIRGINIA

Northern Virginia! Richmond! Virginia Beach! Hampton Roads! Chesterfield County!!

11 well-known Virginians supported **21 different candidates** running in key House of Delegates districts across the state, with the goal of increasing voter participation and measuring turnout.

Energizers are well known cultural leaders (artists, actors, athletes) who volunteer their time to participate in local politics and initiatives in their Hometown. Whether in person at a community event or online through heightened visibility on social media, we provide a larger platform for local voices to be heard and inspire a more active, engaged, educated electorate.
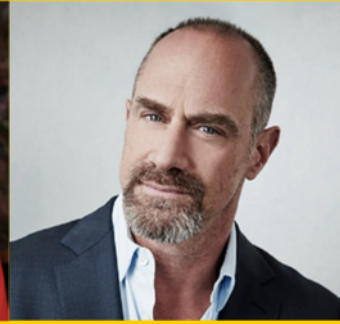
HOMETOWN ENERGIZERS

Connie Britton
Lynchburg, VA

Cocoa Brown
Newport News, VA

Chris Meloni

Wanda Sykes

Mark Ruffalo
Virginia Beach, VA

Patton Oswalt
Portsmouth, VA

The Gregory Brothers
Radford, VA

Aimee Mann
Richmond, VA

Jason George
Virginia Beach, VA

Leslie Bibb
Richmond,, VA

Boris Kodjoe
Richmond, VA

2021 CANDIDATES

The Hometown Project and our electoral partners support and give voice to progressive, diverse candidates who are connected to their communities and have a proven record of constructive, positive work within their districts. Artists are promoting candidates who share their values and who will work on behalf of their community to seek solutions to help all of their constituents, and not to serve the interests of national organizations and agendas. We make a dedicated effort to ensure diversity of our candidates from many perspectives including gender, age, and ethnicity. Our goal is to ensure that our candidates are informed, balanced representatives and reflections of the community they serve.

DAWN ADAMS
HD, 68

ALEX ASKEW
HD, 85

ELIZABETH BENNETT PARKER
HD, 45

NADARIUS CLARK
HD, 79

JOSHUA COLE
HD, 28

DR MARK DOWNEY
HD, 96

DR JEFFREY FELD
HD, 81

KELLY FOWLER
HD, 21

DEBRA GARDNER
HD, 27

WENDY GOODITIS
HD, 10

NANCY GUY
HD, 83

DAN HELMER
HD, 40

CHRIS HURST
HD, 12

DR BEN MOSES
HD, 55

MARTHA MUGLER
HD, 91

LASHRECSE AIRD
HD, 63

FINALE NORTON
HD, 100

KATIE SPONSLER
HD, 66

KATHY TRAN
HD, 42

SCHUYLER VAN VALKENBURG
HD, 72

RODNEY WILLETT
HD, 73

2021

CREATIVE CONTENT

With new ideas, creative voices, and a new look to our content, Energizers had fun with "unboxing," drink tutorial, and "tell me without telling me" candidate videos. In study districts, "Too Much to List" videos highlighted candidates' goals. Motion graphics enhanced the message of all of our videos.

We added a still image campaign with banner ads to complement our videos. Banner ads broadened our reach and were successful at driving voters to candidate websites.

Jason George,
from Virginia Beach, VA

Connie Britton,
from Lynchburg, VA

DISTRIBUTION OVERVIEW

To reach the right voters in the right places, we used a combination of voter-file targeting and geographic (district) targeting.

Combining programmatic video and banner advertising along with Facebook ads, this let us reach those voters across a broad swath of the web, connecting with people where they "live" online.

We sustained voter engagement over the two weeks before the election, reaching people repeatedly up to Election Day.

WE FACILITATED THE INVOLVEMENT OF 18 ENERGIZERS

39%
WOMEN ENERGIZERS

39%
ENERGIZERS OF COLOR

WE SUPPORTED 21 CANDIDATES ACROSS VIRGINIA

52%
WOMEN CANDIDATES

38%
CANDIDATES OF COLOR

2021 MARGINS: OUR RACES AND THEIR DETERMINING VOTES

10 RACES
< 2,000 VOTES

4 RACES
< 525 VOTES

7 RACES
< 1,000 VOTES

2 RACES
< 150 VOTES

2021

ELECTORAL PROGRAM

and

DATA STUDY

MAIN ELECTORAL PROGRAM

TARGET UNIVERSE

In 2021, we partnered with Clean Virginia to run campaigns in 12 high priority House of Delegates districts in Virginia, the criteria for the voter universe targeted active and inactive voters and excluded likely Republican voters, totaling approximately 40k voters in each of these 12 districts.

HOMETOWN CELEBRITY

Targeted voters in the district were served a video featuring a Hometown Energizer who hailed from that district.

RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL | EXPERIMENT DESIGN

In addition to our regular program, with the support of a grant through OpenLabs, we designed and conducted a randomized control trial study.
The voter universe was segmented into 9 sample House of Delegates districts in Virginia.
Two Red districts that were~ 65% R, three Blue Districts that were ~65% D, and four Purple Districts that were ~50/50. Districts had similar voter turnout rates for non-presidential election years.

CONTROL	HOMETOWN CELEBRITY	HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITY
24% of Individuals per district were not contacted	38% of Individuals per district were served up a video featuring a famous person who hails from that state/area/district	38% of Individuals per district were served up a video featuring a famous person who does not have a connection to the state/area/district

Energizers were comparable (age, race, gender). Voter universe size was on average ~40k per district, isolating approx. 9,600-12,000 per district in control group.

WHY AN RCT?

The Randomized Control Test study offers the opportunity to empirically investigate the magnitude of our theory of change through rigorous data analysis. No study to date has been able to test the impact of not only Hollywood support for candidates, but LOCAL celebrity support for LOCAL candidates in a live field experiment, which offers the highest standards of external validity, that is, can actually matter for the real world electoral environment. This experiment offers new insight into how those who capture public attention can direct this power towards lesser known progressive candidates across the country.

TESTING THE HOMETOWN EFFECT

1. The Hometown Energizer and Hollywood Energizer in each treatment group were comparable in terms of gender, race, age, and notoriety.
2. Each digital video had the same scripting, graphics, and format to best isolate the impact of the treatment (Hometown Energizer emphasizes connection to the location and candidate) on voter turnout.
3. Each digital video and banner ad campaign received the same amount of impressions within each treatment group.
4. Testing in three different electoral environments (Strong Republican, Swing, and Strong Democratic) offers richer and deeper understanding of potential impact.
5. VA House of Delegate candidate name was on the screen the entire video advertisement to increase candidate name recognition, one of the greatest obstacles for local candidates running for office.

RCT DISTRICTS

ELIZABETH BENNETT PARKER
HD, 45

NADARIUS CLARK
HD, 79

LASHRECSE AIRD
HD, 63

DAN HELMER
HD, 40

KATHY TRAN
HD, 42

DAWN ADAMS
HD, 68

DR JEFFREY FELD
HD, 81

DR BEN MOSES
HD, 55

DR MARK DOWNEY
HD, 96

HOMETOWN

Chris Meloni
Northern VA

Wanda Sykes
Hampton Roads, VA

Boris Kodjoe
Chesterfield County, VA

Chris Meloni
Northern VA

Patton Oswalt
Sterling, VA

Aimee Mann
Richmond, VA

Mark Ruffalo
Virginia Beach, VA

Connie Britton
Lynchburg, VA

Cocoa Brown
Newport News, VA

HOLLYWOOD

Billy Crudup

Yvette Nicole Brown

Ernie Hudson

Billy Crudup

Joe LoTruglio

Piper Perabo

Edward Norton

Piper Perabo

Yvette Nicole Brown

VIRGINIA PRIORITY DISTRICTS
UNIQUE, CREATIVE & PERSONAL ADS

Candidate videos ran as digital ads targeted in the district and also organically on Twitter and Facebook and Programmatically across various platforms.

Nancy Guy

Wanda Sykes | TW | IG | FB

Alex Askew

Jason George | TW | IG | FB

Finale Norton | TW | IG | FB

Kelly Convirs-Fowler

Mark Ruffalo | TW | IG | FB

Katie Sponsler

Boris Kodjoe | TW | IG | FB

Rodney Willett

Leslie Bibb | TW | IG | FB

Schuyler VanValkenburg

Aimee Mann | TW | IG | FB

Debra Gardner

Boris Kodjoe | TW | IG | FB

Joshua Cole

Connie Britton | TW | IG | FB

Chris Hurst

The Gregory Brothers | TW | IG | FB

Wendy Gooditis

Patton Oswalt | TW | IG | FB

Martha Mugler

Cocoa Brown | TW | IG | FB

VIRGINIA TEST DISTRICTS
UNIQUE, CREATIVE & PERSONAL ADS

Candidate videos ran as digital ads targeted in the district and also organically on Twitter and Facebook and Programmatically across various platforms.

Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

Christopher Meloni | TW | IG | FB

Billy Crudup | TW | IG | FB

Nadarius Clark

Wanda Sykes | TW | IG | FB

Yvette Nicole Brown | TW | IG | FB

Lashrecse Aird

Boris Kodjoe | TW | IG | FB

Ernie Hudson | TW | IG | FB

Dan Helmer

Christopher Meloni | TW | IG | FB

Billy Crudup | TW | IG | FB

Kathy Tran

Patton Oswalt | TW | IG | FB

Joe Lo Truglio | TW | IG | FB

Dawn Adams

Aimee Mann | TW | IG | FB

Piper Perabo | TW | IG | FB

Dr. Jeffrey Feld

Mark Ruffalo | TW | IG | FB

Edward Norton | TW | IG | FB

Dr. Ben Moses

Connie Britton | TW | IG | FB

Piper Perabo | TW | IG | FB

Mark Downey

Cocoa Brown | TW | IG | FB

Yvette Nicole Brown | TW | IG | FB

BIG PICTURE AD STATS

Reached an estimated **475,000 voters** in **21 key districts**

Reached between **21,000** and **29,000 voters per district**, depending on the size of the target universe
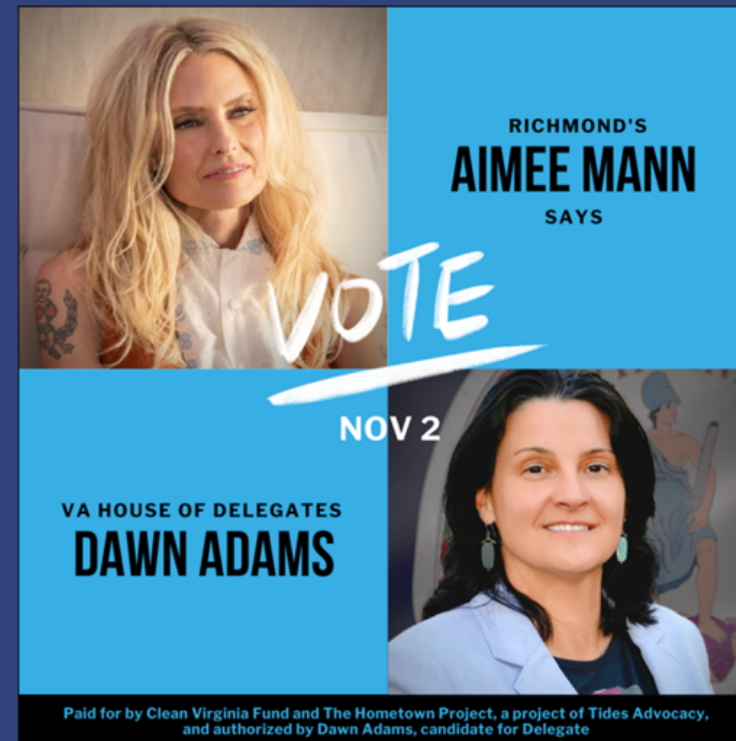
Served **4.6 million ad impressions**

Spent roughly **11 cents to reach a single voter**

Spent roughly **1.25 cents per voter contact/ad impression**

More than **12,600 clicks to candidate websites**

Reached voters between 7-12 times across multiple channels over the course of the campaign

DIGITAL STRATEGY

We believe that our videos can reach beyond the "usual suspects", the relatively small slice of the electorate that Democratic campaigns frequently micro-target.

We adopted a broad targeting strategy: Progressives, Democrat-leaners and many voters on the conservative side of the middle.

More than 70% of our ad spend budget went to programmatic ads, and combining programmatic along with Facebook gave us the best chance of contacting our target voters in the two weeks before the election.

Combining video ads and programmatic banners helped us reach voters with different digital media consumption habits.

LESSONS

Broad targeting paid off – we were able to reach voters repeatedly, efficiently and at scale in every district we targeted

Programmatic video and banner ads reached more people more cost-effectively, but Facebook allowed us to reach Facebook-only internet users.

Facebook voter-file matching is a challenge due to their low match rates. Next time we'll return to geotargeting Facebook videos if possible but still emphasize programmatic ads.

For 2022 & beyond, we will keep watching where the voters spend their digital time and look at new influencer-outreach opportunities across platforms.
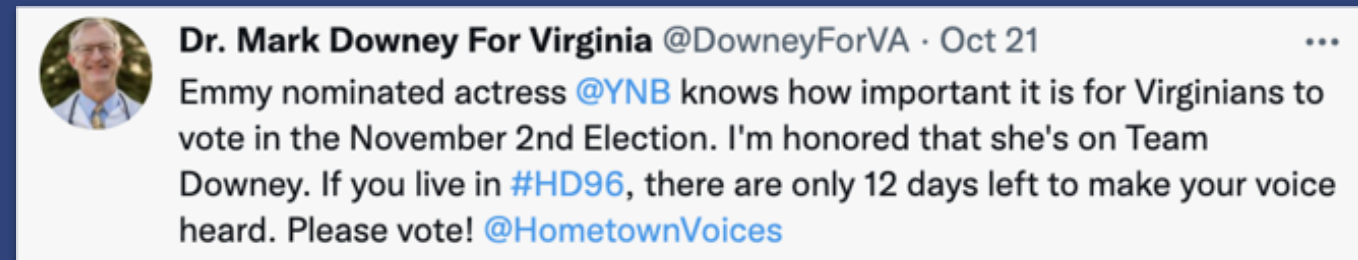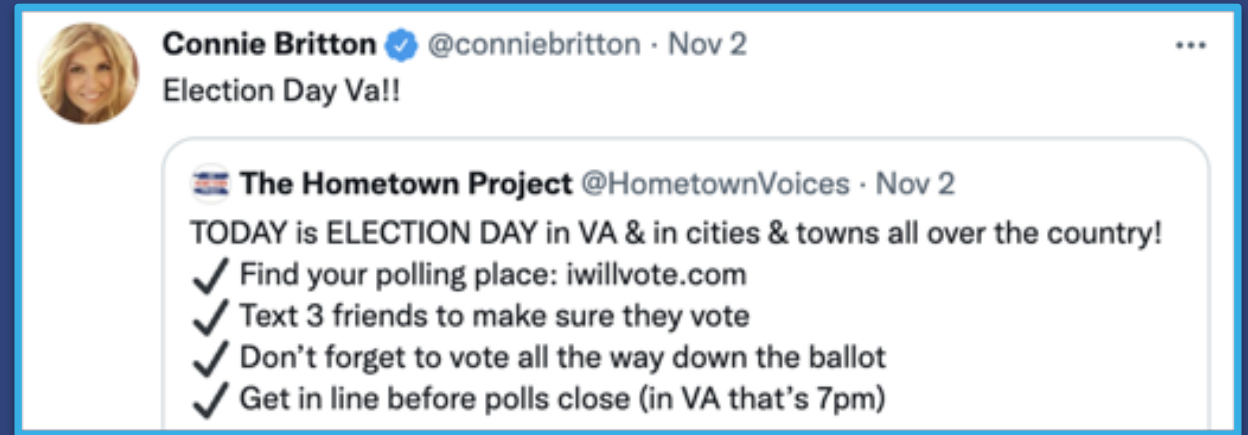
ORGANIC SOCIAL DISTRIBUTION

While our main distribution strategy involves geographic voter targeting, organic posting brings additional benefits that enhance impact including generating excitement among campaign staff and volunteers.

Partnering with influential voices with large followings also enables us to underscore the critical importance of local elections at national level.

Coordinating with local organizations and the candidates themselves allows our social messaging to organically reach a highly relevant audience.

- 19 of our 21 candidates shared Hometown content.
- Hometown tweets earned 2.7M impressions over the cycle.
- Videos generated over 500k organic views across platforms

TOTAL

4.6 MILLION

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS

475,000

VOTERS REACHED IN 21 DISTRICTS

$.0125 PER VOTER CONTACT

$.11 TO REACH A SINGLE VOTER

THE HOMETOWN PROJECT TEAM

Founder & Chair of Advisory Board
Peter Salett

Executive Director
Erin Frederick

Program Director
Amy DiPrima Forste

Program Intern
Zainab Jaffa

Content Producer
Marla Ratner

Head Writer
Grace Critchfield

Creative Consulting Producer
Justin Casselle

Digital Distribution Lead
Colin Delany

Research Lead & Analyst
Sara Angevine

Development & Fundraising
Malinda Logan

Communications & Media Strategist
Shaw Bowman

Art Director/Illustrator
Tiffany Pai

Motion Graphics
Tamao Kiser

Graphic Designer
Ben Tostado

Lead Editor
James Taylor

Assistant Editor
Sabrina Thompson

2021 WRITERS AND CREATIVES

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ADVISORY BOARD

Connie Britton
Actor, Producer & Activist

Josh Charles
Actor & Activist

Billy Crudup
Actor

Laura Dawn
Art Not War

Joel de la Fuente
Actor & Activist

Kelly Convirs-Fowler
Virginia Delegate

Jason George
Actor, Producer & Activist

Colin Greer
President of New World Foundation

Chris Lu
Political Strategist

Whit Jones
Lead Locally

Paul Kogan
Tech Entrepreneur, ex-CEO

Edward Norton
Actor, Filmmaker & Activist

Piper Perabo
Actor & Activist

Mark Ruffalo
Actor & Activist

Chris Sampson
EVP Programming at Superfly

Tracey Scott-Wilson
Film & TV Producer & Writer

OUR ROAD AHEAD

2022

We look to the coming year with bold determination moving into a challenging midterm year. We are planning an extensive electoral program in multiple states as well as GOTV initiatives to mobilize voters in swing states.

We are excited to analyze the data from our randomized control trial and apply those learnings to our multi-state campaign this coming year.

We look forward to partnering with grassroots organizations to amply their messages and support their candidates.

As an organization moving into our sixth election cycle, we are also looking forward to capacity building to meet the need and further grow our programs in future years.