

'Good Morning Midland Park' celebrates 1,500th episode

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MIDLAND PARK – The glowing "on air" light meant more than a live broadcast to the 16 students enrolled in Midland Park Junior/ Senior High School's Broadcasting II class. On May 29, it signaled the 1,500th episode of the student-produced news program "Good Morning Midland Park."

To commemorate the milestone, the show was broadcast in front of a live studio audience in the high school media center instead of in the television studio.

"We invited alumni of the show to be here to celebrate this milestone," said Brian Ersalesi, a broadcasting and English teacher. "They shared some of their memories producing the show."

The school has had a television studio since 1983.

Now a media technician at the school, Jay Esposito was a student at the high school when the studio opened and remembers how 10 towns in Bergen County shared it.

"We would have to sign up for a time slot and everything was taped," said Esposito. "Our show aired on closed-circuit televisions in the classroom."

"Good Morning Midland Park" launched in the 2004-2005 school year, and airs from 7:30 to 8 a.m. school days on public access channels Verizon FIOS 47 and Cablevision 77.

Students interested in working on the program must first complete a Broadcasting I class offered to sophomores and juniors. Students arrive at the school each morning at 7 a.m. to prepare for that day's broadcast.

"We have a set rundown that includes local, national and international news, weather, sports, health and nutrition and entertainment news," said Ersalesi. "We even offer traffic conditions on the local roads like Route 208 and 17."

Senior Ben Monsma admits to being a "little nervous" broadcasting the show in front of a live audience. His colleague, entertainment reporter Scott Goodheart, attributes his lack of butterflies to his acting experience in school plays.



PHOTO BY LYNN BRUGGEMANN

Ryan Panagia, Kimberly Rabeiro, Kelly Duane, Erin Allen and Anna Caputo supervise the control room.

Ersalesi says he believes the class and experience of producing a news program helps students with public speaking, boosts self-confidence and teaches them how to analyze news.

"I ask them, can you tell us a story in 45 seconds? They must evaluate the importance of the information and decide what stays and what goes," said Ersalesi.

Show host Victoria Bell said taking the class has helped her appreciate all the time and research that goes into creating a news program.

"It is a team effort to make the show happen," said Bell, who hopes to join her college's radio station in the fall.

That team effort also involves students behind the camera, including tech adviser Kim Rabeiro.

"I like all the behind-the-scenes activity like switching backgrounds for different segments and changing cameras," said Rabeiro. "I am an organized person and I think that helps to keep the show running smoothly."

Some of the new technology Ersalesi purchased this year came from a \$5,000 grant he received from Cablevision/Lightpath that has helped students produce segments more efficiently.

"With the addition of six iPads and Apple TV, students can now write their story, incorporate images, graphics and even sound bites to their news and feature segments," said Ersalesi. "They can go to a softball game and conduct an interview. I can remember how they used to lug around big VHS cameras for interviews."

Ersalesi said he continues to search for grants to enhance the television studio, including the ability to stream the show on the Internet, as well as archiving and accessing the show on demand on a "YouTube" type website.

"For now you have to catch it live since it is not rebroadcast any other place," said Ersalesi.

Ersalesi said some alumni of the show have careers in broadcast media outlets including with the "People's Court," News 12 New Jersey and the NFL network.

Class of 2008 alum Kaitly Keene said she was inspired by her experience as host of "Good Morning Midland Park" to pursue a career in the field.

"After we came back from the broadcasting trip to Disney World, Mr. Ersalesi told my mom and I that I seemed to really love the work I was doing getting the show on the air and should consider a career in the field," said Keene.

She followed his advice and is currently employed in studio operations by MLB Advanced Media.