

**press release**

**NEAL SHAPIRO ASSUMES POST AS CEO OF NATION'S MOST-WATCHED PUBLIC TELEVISION STATIONS**

Shapiro Leading Transformation of Educational Broadcasting Corporation, Parent Company of Thirteen/WNET and WLIW21

**January 30, 2008 – New York, NY** – On February 4, Neal Shapiro assumes the post of CEO of the Educational Broadcasting Corporation (EBC—the licensee of Thirteen/WNET and WLIW New York) and moves into the next phase of his leadership of the organization's transformation. Dr. William F. Baker, the previous chief executive and former president, becomes president emeritus.

Shapiro joined Thirteen/WNET and WLIW21 as president in February 2007 and has been developing a plan for the future, including the growth of new programming, the creation of innovative participatory online and on-air programs, and the re-examination of funding dynamics. This transformation will be a model and a catalyst for change in public broadcasting nationwide.

EBC is one of New York's largest cultural organizations, with an annual operating budget of more than \$175 million and over 300,000 members. Thirteen/WNET is the most-watched public television station in the country and WLIW21 is the third-most watched station. Together they reach hundreds of millions of people a year through on-air programming, online initiatives, educational resources, and a range of digital multicast resources and services. They are also two of the nation's major producers for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which has consistently ranked in Roper Polls as the nation's most trusted source for news and public affairs programs, as well as one of America's most trusted institutions. A significant portion of the programming that has earned PBS this reputation originates from Thirteen and WLIW.

“We must capitalize on what distinguishes Thirteen and WLIW: fearless experimentation, keen intelligence, unparalleled production quality, and a passion for leading the way forward,” said Shapiro. “Thirteen and WLIW have conceived, produced, and aired some of the most influential and powerful television ever presented. That is thanks to Bill Baker and the extraordinary role he has played here over the last two decades. Now we are evolving as the learning habits and expectations of the public change. I believe that by dramatically increasing our capacity to produce innovative programming and by using new tools to deliver information we can make a truly tangible positive difference in people’s lives.”

“Our mission is to develop programming that is both responsive to its audience and impeccably independent and credible – and that has never been more important than it is now,” said James S. Tisch, chairman of EBC’s Board of Trustees. “In a time that has seen an explosion of sources of information, people are increasingly seeking out perspectives that are trustworthy and relevant to their lives. Under Neal’s leadership, we are expanding our essential role in exploring ideas important to us as a nation and as individuals. We are making the next enormous leap in transforming public broadcasting.”

Early projects spearheaded by Shapiro signal his vision and goals for the future.

- **Increasing production of high-quality interactive and participatory programming**  
In conjunction with the national broadcast of Ken Burns’ documentary *The War*, Thirteen and WLIW invited New Yorkers to create videos and tell personal stories about their families’ experiences during World War II. Two documentaries drawing from these materials—*New York War Stories* and *New York Goes to War*—were produced by WLIW, an approach that had never been attempted before. Both programs were among the highest-rated local productions ever broadcast by WNET and WLIW. The project has an ongoing life on Thirteen.org, where the videos can be accessed and additional material is being added.

As part of the recently launched project *Reel 13*, aspiring and professional filmmakers submit short films to Thirteen, viewers then screen them online at [www.reel13.org](http://www.reel13.org) and vote for the film they believe should be broadcast. Every Saturday night, the short film selected by the public airs on Thirteen after a classic feature film and before an independent feature from a major film festival. *Reel 13* is creating a new outlet for the film community with an online forum for commentary, dialogue, exposure for new filmmakers, public involvement, and participation by established filmmakers.

- **Opening new distribution models**

*New York Goes To War* was edited into a one-hour film that was offered to PBS to distribute to its affiliates and was picked up in several markets across the country. The documentaries *New York War Stories* and *New York Goes To War* were also offered directly to all public television stations in New York State, rather than delivered through the traditional model of distribution by PBS or American Public Television. Additional new models, both in terms of program distribution and sources for programming, are being explored.
- **Increasing programming that speaks to urgent issues facing our communities and nation**

By leading the exploration of the questions of our day, Thirteen and WLIW can help frame and inform the national discussion of issues and explore solutions for new challenges. A new program about the increasing number of young, disaffected males in our society who end up turning to violence—with the working title *A Cry for Help*—is in production. The program will look at what causes young men to see violence as the only possible resolution for the conflicts in their lives, and how parents, schools, and communities are seeking to understand and reverse this trend.
- **Developing new funding models**

New funding structures can allow for an entirely new programming and planning process. As one example, to produce *A Cry for Help*, Shapiro appealed directly to members for funding. Members responded with donations of more than \$175,000, making it possible to put the program into production immediately. This and other new funding models will provide the ability to examine urgent issues and breaking news with both depth and timeliness.
- **Creating programming rooted in New York**

Earlier this month, the WLIW-produced *The Jews of New York* aired in the Tri-State area in conjunction with national PBS documentary *The Jewish Americans*. The local production focuses on Jewish families and institutions that have shaped the culture and character of New York City and the City's special role in the history of America. As with *New York Goes to War* and *New York War Stories*, the station used the premiere of a major documentary as an opportunity to look at the national experience through the eyes of New Yorkers.
- **Bringing the best of New York to the Tri-State area and the nation**

Thirteen is deepening its commitment to bringing the work of New York's emerging and established playwrights, artists, actors, dancers, musicians, composers and performers to audiences in the Tri-State area and the country. This March, Thirteen will launch *SundayArts* a new program that will showcase the best of the City's cultural offerings – from The Metropolitan Opera to Off-Off-Broadway – each Sunday afternoon.

“Thirteen and WLIW are known as a place where culture and the arts flourish, children can grow and learn, and current events are discussed with insight, intelligence and depth. But there is more to do. We are expanding our digital and interactive programming not because that is the

next fad, but because those tools can provide substantive new ways to engage our audience. By using the latest technologies and developing new types of programming we can create deeper connections with our audiences and enable the public to become partners in our work. We can not only inform people and touch them emotionally, we can stir them to do something meaningful in their lives, their community, and the world.”

### **Neal Shapiro**

Shapiro’s 25-year career spans print, broadcast, cable, and Internet media. As President of NBC News from June 2001 to September 2005, he oversaw the global operations of NBC Universal’s top-ranked news division. He led the number-one rated news programs in each segment of the day: *Today* in the morning, *NBC Nightly News* in the evening and *Meet the Press* on Sunday morning.

From 1993 to 2001 Shapiro was executive producer of *Dateline NBC*, which would become the most honored newsmagazine on television, with awards including 32 Emmys, 31 Edward R. Murrow Awards, three George Foster Peabody Awards, and numerous other awards.

On cable, Shapiro oversaw the news operations of MSNBC and developed *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* and *Scarborough Country with Joe Scarborough*. He leveraged cross-platform news division resources to benefit MSNBC, CNBC, NBC’s Spanish-language network, Telemundo, and the NBC owned and operated stations. He also created NBC News Productions, which produces programming for many cable channels, including A&E, Bravo, Court TV, Discovery, History, and Lifetime.

On the Web, Shapiro spearheaded a number of changes that helped make MSNBC.com the nation’s number one Internet news and information site. He expanded NBC News Radio, and began podcasts and cell phone reports.

Shapiro began his broadcast career in 1980 at ABC News, where he worked for 13 years. While at ABC, he received a George Polk Award, two Emmy awards and an Investigative Reporter and Editors award. He has taught journalism at Tufts and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism.

### **About Educational Broadcasting Corporation**

Educational Broadcasting Corporation, headquartered in New York City, is the parent company of public broadcasters Thirteen/WNET and WLIW21 New York. Thirteen is America’s most-watched public television station and WLIW21 has the third-largest public television audience in the nation. Both stations are major producers of programming for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) seen on public television stations across the country. In addition to its well-known analog channels, EBC is the provider of a number of digital public television services, including Thirteen HD, Thirteen World, Kids Thirteen, WLIW Create, Thirteen On Demand, and Thirteen Kids On Demand. EBC also creates, manages, and distributes a wide range of educational outreach and online programs, projects and services that extend the power and relevance of public television programming at the local, national and international levels. More information can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org) and [www.wliw.org](http://www.wliw.org).

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