

# Blue Ridge



# PBS

## 2024 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



The mission of Blue Ridge PBS is to enrich people's lives by providing educational, informational, and cultural programming that fills a unique role as a positive and lifelong resource for the communities we serve.



Blue Ridge PBS, based in Roanoke, is a valuable part of central, southside, and southwestern Virginia's advancement, providing a variety of quality programming across multiple channels and platforms.

Blue Ridge PBS is comprised of five broadcast channels: WBRA-TV (15.1), Blue Ridge PBS 2 (15.2), Blue Ridge PBS Kids (15.3), Blue Ridge Create (15.4), and ECHO (15.5).

In addition, we have the digital channel, PBS Appalachia plus two online streaming channels: Blue Ridge Streaming and ECHO.

In 2024, Blue Ridge PBS provided these vital local services:

- Connections in the community through special events and projects
- Educational programming for learners of all ages with emphasis on locally produced content
- Locally produced content about a wide variety of topics along with a stellar selection of national content
- ECHO, a locally generated streaming to broadcast channel, dedicated to Education, Community, Health and Opportunity

Blue Ridge PBS' local services added more local content for and about the region on-air with Blue Ridge PBS 2 and ECHO as well as online with ECHO and Blue Ridge Streaming. The Blue Ridge PBS Kid's channel continued to fill the need for children's programming around the clock. Local and PBS programming on our main channel, 15.1 and PBS Appalachia was spread throughout the region with support made possible by partnerships with local cable and dish providers as well as a variety of streaming providers.

## Blue Ridge PBS Out and About!

Staff and volunteers were busy throughout the year with a wide variety of community events as well as busy creating our own.

### Read Across America Day

To spread her love of reading, Blue Ridge PBS' own Pippy Pinewood participated in multiple Read Across America Day 2024 events reading books to excited groups of elementary school students in Roanoke.



### CommUnity Celebration

In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, we joined with the community to *Stand Together Against Child Abuse*. Blue Ridge PBS participated the CommUnity Celebration, an event hosted by Children's Trust and Kingdom Community Health Services and Mount Zion AME Church.



Blue Ridge PBS' prize wheel, The Big Bird T-Bird and more were a hit at the annual 2024 *New River Valley Touch a Truck*. This event allows children to become familiar with building industry and public service careers by offering an educational opportunity to explore trucks, tractors, heavy machinery and to interact with the people who build, protect, and serve the NRV.



Blue Ridge PBS participated in a fiesta like no other, *Taco Fest*, in Downtown Roanoke's Elmwood Park. The event is hosted by Huddle Up Moms, a local nonprofit dedicated to the education, support, and connection of local moms and families building a stronger, more connected community.

### Olde Salem Days

As summer turned to autumn, Blue Ridge PBS could be found at the popular annual event, Olde Salem Days. Visitors checked out the Big Bird T-bird and participated in fun activities.



**Community Partnerships and Saying Thank You**



As fall turned to winter, the parking lot at Blue Ridge PBS once again became a free, drive-through holiday light extravaganza with special guest appearances by Santa & Mrs. Claus, Clifford the Big Red Dog, the Roanoke Grinch, and more. Despite the inclement weather on a few nights, more than 1,500 cars rolled through the display. In its fifth year, thousands of people enjoyed the magic of the holidays as they visited Santa's Winter Wonderland 2024.

The event would not have been possible without the help of our wonderful volunteers and helper elves. We're also grateful for the event sponsors and partners: EZ Mobility Solutions, Leonard Buildings, First Citizens Bank, Pete's RV Center, Build Smart Institute, Bass Transmissions & Automotive Repair, and the Chiu Casas Family.



*"This is a gem! The kind of holiday event that immediately becomes an annual family tradition. Thank you so much for this fantastic event."*

--Santa's Winter Wonderland Visitor



**Neighborhood Pop In**



Blue Ridge PBS truly appreciates the hard-working organizations and people in our community. In the spirit of Daniel Tiger, to say thank you, we partnered again in 2024 with Krispy Kreme to spread some sweet treats.

Throughout the year, we hit the road and delivered dozens of doughnuts along with our thanks for being a "Tiger-rific Neighbor!!!"



In 2024, Blue Ridge PBS created a variety of local content to appeal to a wide cross-section of viewers.

## Programs produced by Blue Ridge PBS

### *Conversations with Bob Denton*

Host, Bob Denton, seeks to engage guests in conversation and dialogue about various issues and social concerns affecting Virginians. The goal of the show is to share and understand rather than oppose and debate.

Season 3 episodes included: Free Speech in America, AI and Misinformation, The Evolving Role of Community Colleges, Veteran Suicides, The State of Cancer Research, and more.



### *Life in Virginia's Appalachia*

Bridging the past to present, this popular mini-series celebrates the rich culture and history of Virginia's Appalachia by seeing how treasured traditions are kept alive and are thriving today. The inaugural season in 2024 wrapped with episodes on quilting, canning and fishing & hunting. Season two launches in 2025 with episodes on folklore, music, coal, and more.



### *Real Life with Susan Harf*

This series is hosted by Rose Martin and features Life Coach Susan Harf. As a trained personal and professional life coach, Susan offers solutions for everyday problems we all face in our relationships at home and at work. Production on season three began in 2024 with a planned 2025 season premiere and national distribution.



*"I watched your "Real Life" program ... It was like being in a totally black room, no light, and you turned on the flood light! ... As soon as that program was over, I thanked God for your wisdom and that I was blessed to see you that evening. You have brought peace to my heart."*

--Viewer

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## Programs produced by Blue Ridge PBS

### *What It Takes...*

Now in its 6th season and winner of multiple awards from the Virginia Association of Broadcasters, *What it Takes* features experts and committed citizens to our studio to discuss timely issues affecting Southwest Virginians.

Hosted by BRPBS Director of Educational Innovation Tom Landon, WIT embodies the spirit of our ECHO Channel, featuring topics on Education, Community, Health and Opportunity.



### *Write Around the Corner*

Season 7 of this popular series wrapped up in spring. There was a diverse line up of guests including Kathleen Grissom, Roland Lazenby, Elle Cosimano, Ellen Crosby, Angie Kim, and more. Recorded on location, this season found us in a variety of locations including a 1920s speakeasy, a historic church, a winery, a library, and more.

Each season, the program gives viewers the opportunity to get to know writers who have connections to Virginia from first time writers to international best sellers. The half hour interviews delve into the stories behind the stories. We also record bonus interviews with each guest which are made available online. Work has begun on Season 8.



### *Norfolk & Western Railway: Steam, Steel, and Storylines*

Produced in partnership with the Norfolk and Western Historical Society, this much anticipated documentary explores the rise of the Norfolk and Western Railway, its innovative steam engines, and its lasting impact on Roanoke and Southwest Virginia. From its role as a major employer to its transformation during the diesel era, the N&W's story remains a captivating chapter in 20th-century railroading.



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**Programs Reaching Beyond the Screen**

**Artistic Encounters**

This is an ongoing interstitial series focusing on the fine arts of our region. In 2024 we profiled an array of artists including photographers, water colorists, a bird house maker, and more.

In addition to highlighting area artists on television and online, this series has an in-person component called *Meet the Artist*. Visitors to the TV station can enjoy exhibits by the featured artists. They can also meet and get to know each artist at a free reception. One of our more memorable events was with artist P. Buckley Moss when we shared a retrospective of her work and celebrated her 91st birthday.



*“Somehow saying it was wonderful just doesn’t convey the emotions I felt there. I have always enjoyed partnering with public television because I believe in the product they offer. Over the years of working together we’ve become friends. The Artistic Encounters reception was a blending of friends, a sharing of artwork and stories, catching up with families, and of course, more birthday cake. ... Thank you for such a heartwarming evening and celebration.”*  
 --P. Buckley Moss

**Hurricane Helene**

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene slammed into southwest Virginia devastating communities in the region. We visited the town of Damascus in the aftermath to record their story and share it with our viewers. We also returned months later for an update to see how residents were fairing as the town worked to rebuild.

Plus, in partnership with PBS Appalachia and Go Virginia, we created a web portal to aid small businesses in their recovery efforts.



*“Thank you on behalf of our agency for your team’s outstanding contribution of photos and videos for Hurricane Helene. The footage provided ... ensured that the damage was captured accurately (both before and after the storm), and in a way that showed the impact (both emotionally and physically) of the hurricane in SWVA, specifically to the Creeper Trail. We sincerely appreciate your partnership during this historic event.”*  
 --Dillon Taylor,  
 Va. Dept. of Emergency Management

**Education. Community. Health. Opportunity.**

One of our more unique offerings is ECHO (Education. Community. Health. Opportunity.) which originally launched in 2021. ECHO combines streaming with traditional television to meet the needs of learners in all stages of life to provide accessible, educational programming by “being where others aren’t.” In 2024, subscriptions to the channel grew by 146% with a watch time of 55,400 hours, an increase of 121%. But whether it’s ECHO or one of our standard broadcast channels, we’re always mindful of our founding mission to educate by providing a wide array of content.

**Pip’s Tips**

Designed for primary and elementary school learning, this series follows Pippy Pinewood (aka Pip) as she shares tips for her young Dewdrops. The tips cover a wide variety of topics with a dash of fun added! Pip also makes appearances at events.

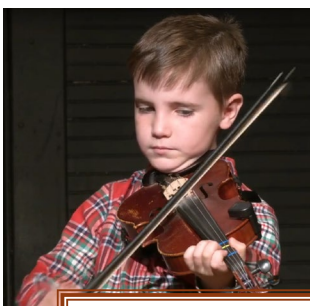
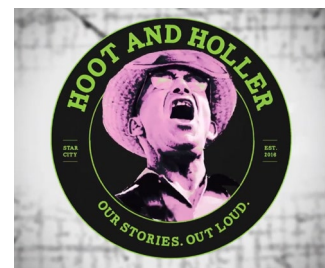


**Get Schooled: Field Trips**

Produced in partnership with Center in the Square, these segments take students on virtual field trips. Our 2024 adventures included learning about the water cycle in Luray Caverns, hydroelectricity at Smith Mountain Dam, coal at the Pocohontas Coal Mine, and more. This successful partnership is continuing into 2025 for more new trips.

**Field Notes/Hoot & Holler**

*Field Notes* is an occasional live performance series. Included is *Hoot and Holler* which is geared towards our adult audience. Recorded at Roanoke’s historic Grandin Theatre, *Hoot and Holler* is story telling at its best with each performance built around a theme.



**Virginia Roots: A Journey Into Appalachian Music**

This series is co-production of Blue Ridge PBS, PBS Appalachia, and the Virginia Department of Education. The goal is to help music educators find a place for traditional Appalachian music in the school curriculum, and to help everyone understand the place of mountain music in the broader culture.

Episodes include: Appalachian Instruments and Playing Technique, Anatomy of an Appalachian Tune, The Bristol Sessions: Recording History, Percussive Dance, and Anatomy of a Jam Session. Each episode has SOL correlated lesson

*“I am so excited to implement this into my classes. My students are not often exposed to this type of music. I grew up in Appalachia and love the opportunity to share this with my students. I love the resources.”*  
 --Virginia Teacher

## Harnessing Technology and Expanding Coverage

to reach more viewers (and listeners) with the sights, sounds and stories of our region.

### Podcasts

Blue Ridge PBS has the capability to create podcasts remotely or in our podcast studio. Working with community partners, we are creating a variety of programs.

The *ActiVAtED Learning* podcast, which premiered in 2024, is produced in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education and in collaboration with the Virginia Society for Technology in Education. In each episode, host Tom Landon, talks to leading educators about what gets them energized and excited as well as stories of using technology to inspire student engagement. The podcasts are available on ECHO, Spotify and Amazon Music.

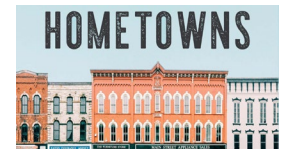


### All-Digital TV Station



Our sister station, PBS Appalachia Virginia (PBSA), is the nation's first all-digital public television station and is dedicated to far southwestern Virginia. Rather than using a traditional broadcast antenna, distribution is delivered by a linear stream where viewers can watch the station through local cable providers or livestreaming via the website or mobile app. Like Blue Ridge PBS, the station delivers the full PBS schedule including *PBS Kids*, *PBS News*, *Masterpiece*, *Nature*, and *NOVA* along with locally produced content.

**Hometowns** – This PBSA flagship series takes viewers on a cinematic journey off the beaten path visiting small towns and areas that are often overlooked by big-city life.



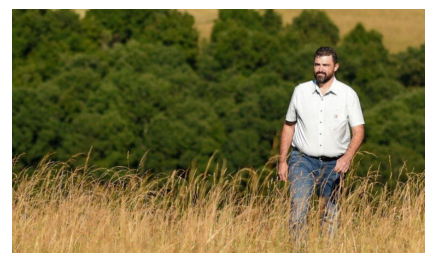
**French Magnolia Cooks** is an inspirational, savory and educational epicurean journey through Southwest Virginia. Chef Missy takes viewers from hunt & farm to chef & wine to the table.

**The Life of a Musician** is a stripped down “real” acoustic interview and performance with some of the best musicians in the country.



**Heroes Caring for Heroes** - a meaningful discussion about caring for our brothers and sisters in active duty and veteran service. Guests of the hour-long special courageously share their caregiving journeys for both the seen and unseen scars of military life and war.

**The Prairie Preacher** is a documentary that follows Dr. Dwayne Estes, a botanist who earned his nickname for his passionate advocacy of grassland conservation. Through the Southeastern Grasslands Institute (SGI), he works tirelessly to protect and restore these vital landscapes. Companion educational materials we created for the program as well.





## Blue Ridge PBS is Public Media serving Virginia's Blue Ridge and Appalachia on air, online and out in the region!

In 2024, Blue Ridge PBS continued to be the community resource for lifelong learning by providing education and entertainment content for viewers of all ages.

More great events and programs are coming in 2025 including the opening of a state-of-the-art studio in Bristol, VA. Also, in production, is the new documentary, *Resolved to Live and Die: The Revolutionary Roots of Southwest Virginia*, which will premiere in November.



*"Thanks for your news programming, Frontline, and documentaries."*

-- Linda O.  
Donor from Blacksburg, VA

*"Thank you for outstanding programming. Blue Ridge PBS is a great asset to the area."*

-- Donors from Christiansburg, VA

*"WBRA's family of channels are our most watched and enjoyed stations. There are so many excellent programs that it is difficult to say which are our most favorite. We wish you well and look forward to your continuing to offer television of quality."*

-- Frank and Carolyn  
Donors from Roanoke, VA

*"Thank you for all of your programming that I enjoy very much."*

--Ellen J.  
Donor from Martinsville, VA