



2023 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



*"Thank you for all the ways in
which you enrich our lives."*

-- Karen J.

Donor from Lambsburg, VA

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 2023, 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 a partnership from local cable and dish providers.

Blue Ridge PBS Out and About!



Staff and volunteers were busy throughout the year at 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 Read Across America Day 2023. She read books to excited groups of students at Preston Park Elementary School in Roanoke.

ECHO & Blue Ridge Pbs Kids Night at the Salem Red Sox

A big highlight of the year was our visit to Salem Memorial Stadium for a baseball game. The event featured a visit from Donkey Hodie, Curious George, and Pippy Pinewood along with a lot of exciting activities!



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.

Other events during the year included visits to Big Lick Comic Con in Roanoke, Touch a Truck in Christiansburg, and more.

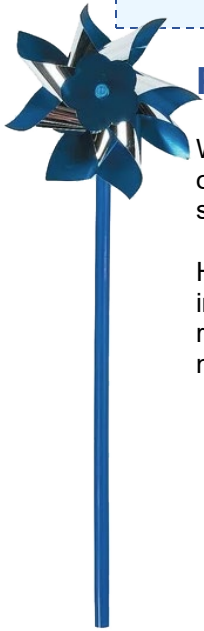


To wrap the year, the parking lot at Blue Ridge PBS once again became a free, drive-through holiday light extravaganza with special guest appearances by Santa & Mrs. Claus, the Roanoke Grinch and Clifford the Big Red Dog. In its fourth year, thousands of people enjoyed the magic of the holidays as they visited Santa's Winter Wonderland 2023.

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, Lionberger Construction, First Citizens Bank, Pete's RV Center, Build Smart Institute, Grand Home Furnishings, Bass Transmissions & Automotive Repair, and the Chiu Casas Family.



Community Partnerships and Saying Thank You



Pinwheels

We took a moment, in April, to acknowledge the work carried out by CASA of Children's Trust, Court Appointed Special Advocates, to defend and support children impacted by abuse and neglect.

Here at Blue Ridge PBS, we were proud to show our support for this important cause by displaying a garden of blue pinwheels. Each pinwheel represented a child who suffered abuse and served as a reminder that we must protect our most vulnerable community members.



Community Celebration

Joining with the community to *Stand Together Against Child Abuse*, Blue Ridge PBS participated in an event hosted by Children's Trust and Kingdom Community Health Services at Mount Zion AME Church.

Thank you so much for attending our Community Celebration. It was such a great day and we appreciate Blue Ridge PBS, Pip, and volunteers who helped make it such a huge success! Again thank you for being part of our event! It was a great way to wrap up Child Abuse Prevention Month!

Sammi



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 2023 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 2023, Blue Ridge PBS continued popular programs and added more locally produced content to the lineup.

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 2 topics included: Mental Health Challenges of College Students, November 2023 Post-election Wrap-up, Book Controversies in Public Libraries, and The State of Cannabis Sales and Use in Virginia.

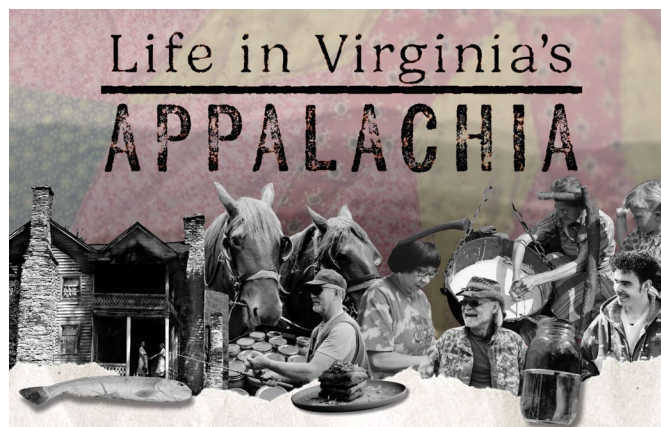


Life in Virginia's Appalachia

Bridging the past to present, this new six-part 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 first three episodes premiered in Fall of 2023. The series kicked off with a look at moonshine followed by an episode on Appalachian cooking and logging with horses.

The series continues in early 2024 by exploring the topics of quilting and canning then wrapping up with a look at fishing & hunting.



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.

Season 2 topics included: Dealing with Narcissists, I'm Overwhelmed with Too Much To Do!, My Spouse Is Driving Me Crazy!, The Relatives Aren't Listening, and more.

The show has been picked up by other Public Media stations across the country including stations in Salt Lake City, Utah; Spokane, Washington; Toledo, Ohio; Syracuse, New York; and San Francisco, California.



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The Life of a Musician

Launched in 2022, this series continued into 2023 broadcasting new episodes. Work also began on season two. Recorded on location in Danville, Virginia, each episode was filmed in very unique locations, including historical homes, hotels, and even an old gas station.

Hosted by singer/songwriter/musician Brandon Lee Adams, each episode featured fascinating conversations and music from well-known international artists.



What It Takes...

In its 5th season, the award winning *What It Takes...* continued to feature 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 6 of this popular series wrapped up in spring with episode 75! There was a diverse line up of guests including Barbara Kingsolver, Jeannette Walls, Don Reid, Beth Macy, Jean Meltzer, Constance Sayers, and more. Work also began on Season 7.

Each season, the program features a wide variety of writers who have connections to Virginia from first time writers to international best sellers. Recorded on location, the half hour interviews delve into the stories behind the stories. We also record bonus interviews with each guest which are made available online.



I wanted to let you know how very much I enjoy your "Write Around the Corner" show. We recently retired and for the first time in my life, I'm finding time to read books. ... The authors on your shows are very unique and creative people and I enjoy your questions and interactions with them. ... Keep up the great shows!

--Janet G.
Boones Mill, VA

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One Week in October

October of 1983. US Military personnel served as peacekeepers in Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War, and as rescuers on the Caribbean Island of Grenada. Two very different conflicts with two very different results. Two countries, hundreds of lives lost, many heroes made, and countless lives forever changed.

In observance of the 40th Anniversary of that week in October, Blue Ridge PBS and the Virginia War Memorial teamed up to produce a documentary about these all but forgotten military engagements. Combined with archival photos and footage, Virginia veterans shared their personal, emotional, tragic, and heroic stories. In addition, a Blue Ridge PBS crew visited Grenada to make a record of what life is like there today.



Revisiting The New River

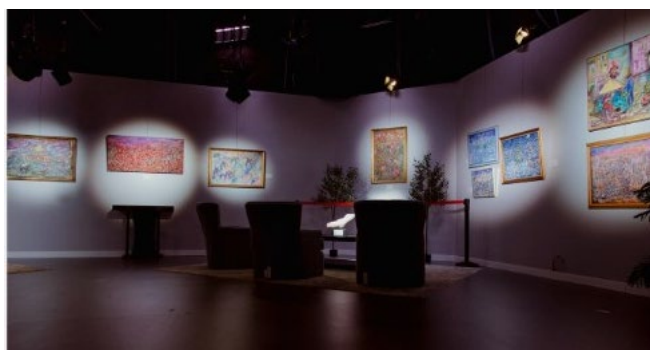
As the region's storyteller, Blue Ridge PBS helped celebrate our frontier history by being a part of the Mary Draper Ingles Festival with a screening of our 2021 documentary, *The Story of the New River*.

The documentary has also been requested for use in classrooms across multiple states.

Interstitials

As in years past, information and entertainment went beyond the standard television format with short stories and segments that ran in our station breaks.

Eye on the Past highlights the history and heritage of the people, places, and events in the region.



Artistic Encounters is an on-going series of segments focusing on the fine arts of our region. In addition to highlighting area artists on television, this series added an in-person component called *Meet the Artist*. Visitors to the TV station can enjoy exhibits by featured artists. They can also meet and get to know each artist at a free reception.

Education. Community. Health. Opportunity.

One of our more unique offerings is ECHO (Education. Community. Health. Opportunity.). 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.” But whether it’s ECHO or one of our standard broadcast channels, we’re always mindful of our founding mission to educate.



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.

Hi Pip,

My name is Barret & I'm 5yrs old, I asked my mom to help me with this email. My question is; is there any tips for making new friends & dealing with bullies? I had a kid recently call me mean names & it really hurt my feelings. I really want to make new friends. I love you so much and I love watching you on PBS every day.

--Love, Barret

Get Schooled: Field Trips

Produced in partnership with Center in the Square, these segments take students on virtual field trips. Our 2023 adventures included learning about soil in Charlotte County and dams in Botetourt County. This successful partnership is extending into 2024 for 14 more new trips!

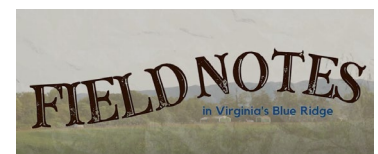


What Parents Need to Know

The Blue Ridge PBS Education Services Department produced video and interactive resources in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education at the direction of the Virginia Legislature. Designed to educate parents about dangers facing today’s youth, the resources focused on three key areas: vaping, problem gambling, and opioids.

Field Notes/Hoot & Holler

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



Cardinal News

We partnered with Cardinal News, a Virginia based non-profit news organization whose goal is to fill in the gaps left by retreating legacy media organizations, to present several programs on ECHO. Topics included Virginia Migration Trends, Working Through the Opioid Epidemic, and more.



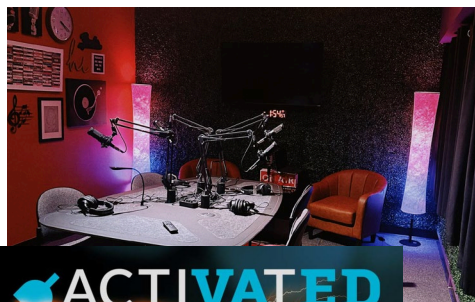
Utilizing Technology and Expanding Reach

To expand our offerings, we are harnessing a variety of technologies to reach more viewers (and listeners) with the sights, sounds and stories of our region.

Podcasts

In addition to the traditional television studio, Blue Ridge PBS built a podcast studio with video capabilities. A portable podcast kit was also put together for recording on location.

Working with community partners we are creating a variety of programs. One example is *ActiVatED Learning* which began production in autumn 2023. This new podcast 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.



A New Channel

On Saturday, June 10, 2023, PBS Appalachia Virginia (PBSA) officially launched as the nation's first all-digital public television station dedicated to Southwest Virginia. Rather than using the traditional broadcast antenna, distribution is delivered by a linear stream where viewers can watch the new station through local cable providers or enjoy livestreaming via the website or the mobile app. Additionally, viewers around the world can access our locally produced programs on-demand online or through the mobile app.



Dedicated to serving far Southwestern Virginia, PBSA serves 14 counties & 3 cities in one of the only areas of the country not currently served by a PBS station. Along with local content, the station delivers the full PBS schedule including *PBS Kids*, *PBS NewsHour*, *Masterpiece*, *Nature*, and *NOVA*.

The station's mission is to paint a clearer picture of Southwest Virginia, debunk stereotypes, and celebrate the forward progress of Central Appalachia, and share that authentic voice with the world via the PBS platform. Two signature shows help to tell that story with more on the way.

Hometowns – This series takes you on a trip off the beaten path to explore communities in Southwest Virginia. Hear personal stories only locals know about and learn about what makes each town unique. A genuine look at Central Appalachia, through the eyes of those who know it best.



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. Field and Stream with John Gurley. Wine with Thomas Fraley. Recipes with warmth & humor by Chef Missy.

Blue Ridge PBS is Public Media serving Virginia's Blue Ridge and Appalachia on air and online!



"I am so thankful for PBS. Your programming is so important to me. Thanks for your great service!"

--Pam U.
Donor from Wytheville, VA

"I'm very appreciative of you taking the time out from your busy schedule to give me a nice tour of your facility, and how our community based Blue Ridge PBS operates.

You made me feel proud of my membership in BRPBS and want to support BRPBS even more. Further, you made me proud and appreciative of you and the BRPBS family whom we can trust to continue quality work for our community. Now I, too, am a bona fide BRPBS family, and not just a member!"

--Ann Y.
Station Visitor & Donor

"We continue to enjoy the variety of programs that are available on PBS Passport. We also enjoy the PBS Newshour and various local productions on Blue Ridge PBS. Thank you for your work."

--Blue Ridge PBS Donor

"What an incredible job you all do in providing such quality programs. Thank you so much!"

--Terri & Goerge
Donors from Nelson County



In 2023, Blue Ridge PBS continued to provide education and entertainment programming for viewers of all ages. From broadcast to streaming to video-on-demand, Blue Ridge PBS is the region's community resource for lifelong learning!