

Vermont PBS
Local Content & Service Report, 2020-2021
Programming and Activities to Benefit Vermonters

(7/1/20 through 6/30/21)

All of us at Vermont PBS continue to find joy and enrichment in the stories we bring to our viewing audience and our efforts to celebrate our home in Vermont and our place in the wider world. This past year – the second to find us isolated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has clearly demonstrated how much the community relies on us to share the arts, news, education, culture, local storytelling, and most importantly—to create connections. In response, we have endeavored to amplify our efforts to reach and enrich our unserved and underserved audiences with new tools and tactics designed to create a robust community engagement calendar and initiatives that were inclusive both in terms of audience representation and content. Expanded programming, partnerships and activities engaged adults and kids alike on air, online and in communities across our viewing region.

While this report focuses on the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, it is important to note that effective July 1, 2021 Vermont PBS merged with our public media neighbors at Vermont Public Radio to become a unified public media organization. This merger will allow us to expand our offerings while continuing the services our existing supporters depend on every day. Together, both legacy organizations remain dedicated to community service and look forward to reaching out to new audiences and living into our vision of being a place for everyone.

CONNECTING WITH KIDS & FAMILIES

Ready to Learn - Vermont PBS has a history of partnering with the Champlain Valley Head Start (CVHS) program to help parents of economically disadvantaged circumstances learn and practice ways to engage with their preschool-age children at home in a series of events we call Parents + Preschool. This was our fourth year in partnership with CVHS. All of our in-person workshops (2017-2020) and now virtual events (2020) to date have reached 148 families sharing 148 PBS Playtime Pad+ Tablets and 488 new books for home. **In 2020, we received a Ready to Learn Training and Implementation Project Grant reaching 6 teachers, 46 families with 48 preschool children during the first few weeks of a hybrid-model preschool year.** The PBS Playtime + devices, a part of their RTL kits, have become incredibly important tools to the New American families who spoke 7 different languages and did not have access to technology or devices to participate in distanced learning days.

Later in July 2021, this same community was one of many summer programs to receive a PBS Kids Literacy and STEAM Summer Kit inspired and funded by the Agency of Education's Lexile and Quantile promotion. **The Agency of Education funded and delivered 3,000 PreK-Grade 2 and Grade 3 to Grade 5 kits to Summer programs which also operated as free lunch programs over the summer months.**

Vermont PBS worked with the Vermont Department of Libraries to share an additional **700 PBS Kids-inspired family kits that focused on Elinor Wonders Why, Cyberchase, STEAM, and Literacy topics.**

Testimonials

Carrie LaFond, Head Start Preschool Teacher Winooski School District
Champlain Valley Head Start
Winooski, Vermont

"Lesson 3 brought a ton of fun to everyone's houses. Shadows are something that I think everyone has experienced because it is a FREE toy brought to us by the sun! I could see the parents engaging and understanding this one a little bit more. The wordless book is a priceless addition to the lessons and allows families to talk about what they see."

From Cheryl Sloan, Youth Librarian Charlotte Library
Charlotte, Vermont

"Here is an example of the Junior Archeologist activity kit that I circulate. The PBS sites that I have added to this particular kit are:

Jr. Architect kit:

King Tut - www.pbs.org/video/d4k-archaeology-hc7lmc/

Time Team America - www.pbs.org/time-team/home/

*Scigirls- pbskids.org/scigirls/citizen-science
pbskids.org/video/scigirls/1425599764*

As I stated in the meeting I am getting positive feedback for the content of the kit and the online content as well. Feel free to share the material. It was fairly easy to put together."

From Julia Wayne, Mother of 3 and STEAM Kit recipient
Charlotte, Vermont

"I completed the survey, thank you for all your work on getting families involved in this project! We enjoyed it a lot. I'll try sharing some pics~ it's been a busy start to the school year and baby #3 is almost here! Boden, my kindergartener, especially enjoyed these activities."

Vermont PBS Online Teacher Workshops - Leading into 2020, Vermont PBS launched a series of online workshops set up to count for teacher professional development hours within our approved Vermont Early Educator Certification system. Our Education Consultant, a media literacy certified instructor, initially created the online workshop "Becoming a Media Mentor" for teachers and families to learn more about

developmentally appropriate use of technology for young children. At the peak of pandemic closures in Vermont, this workshop series became wildly popular with Early Educators trying to learn quickly how to provide a quality curriculum to preschoolers within a shifting school delivery model. Our free workshop continues to be the only local workshop offered and approved online that focuses on the safe use of technology with young children. Since 2020, we **have reached a total of 625 teachers. 44 new teacher users in this reporting period.**

During the project period in June 2021, GBH and Vermont PBS worked together to plan a Molly of Denali Webinar: Indigenous Cultural and Informational Text Resources virtual workshop which was held in September 2021 reaching 209 teachers.

PBS LearningMedia -There are more than 400,000 Standards-based resources for students pairing with offline activities and digital media. We have seen our PBS LearningMedia users increase this reporting period from **6,076 to 8,066. This is an increase of 1,990 during this reporting period.**

Our *Mister Chris and Friend's* Collection's top three clicks included our digital routine clips using User-Generated content, "Waking up," "Going to Bed," and "Cleaning up." We celebrated the PBS Kids CME promotion of our Season 2, *Mister Chris and Friends* "Frogs" episode which includes a connected preschool activity.

Testimonials

Sharon Tobyne, Vermont Early Educator

"It was very good training and sparked me to think about what happens during closure and how best to support my families if that happens.

I have enjoyed these classes and I am glad I found them! I like how there are different components, videos, reading, writing responses. I liked being able to read others' responses for this class! Gave me some other perspective. As far as suggestions, I don't think I had any. Seemed well thought out and the option to complete at my own pace was great."

COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Vermont PBS's Kids & Family work with the Vermont Agency of Education and Vermont. Department of Libraries

Vermont PBS is often a sole-source point to access high-quality educational and cultural programming. We are available for audiences of all ages to help people learn anywhere and at any time, whether digital or broadcast, we offer three different channels for our viewers including the Main channel, 24/7 Kids, and our Plus channels. Vermont PBS's educational focus pivoted in April 2020 to meet the complex needs of distance learning in our Preschool to Grade 12 community during this dynamic time in education.

In 2020 and into 2021 our partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education (VTAOE) and the Vermont Department of Libraries has continued. For the past year, we have met as a unified committee weekly to curate and promote PBS Kids and our local content reaching **26,000 families and teachers**. We have plans and secured funding to create a Teacher Ambassador program with teacher leaders and innovators to create new content and inspire new users for 2022.

Connecting with Community/VPR Partnership News & Public Affairs-

VPR – Vermont PBS Primary Debates

The VPR – Vermont PBS 2020 Debate series took place July 14, 16, 21 and 22 of 2020, with both Democratic and Republican candidate debates for the office of Governor and Lieutenant Governor. All debates were pre-recorded using Zoom and are now available to stream on our website. The public was invited to provide questions in advance via email, phone, or social media. To promote the debate broadcasts, we ran on-air promos, utilized paid media, posted on social media, pushed notifications with our app to mobile devices, featured ads in our weekly newsletters and on our homepage, and sent a dedicated e-blast to approximately 50,000 subscribers. We also put out a joint press release with VPR and posted day-of media advisories for each debate. Fall debates for the general election took place September 28 and October 6, 13, and 20 of 2020. Vermont Votes page was repurposed for gubernatorial debates and received over 11,000 views in a week. <https://www.vermontpbs.org/vermontvotes/>

VPR – Vermont PBS Primary Poll

The VPR – Vermont PBS Primary Poll was released on August 4, 2020. Vermont PBS promoted with on-air promo spots, a media alert in advance and a press release day-of, social media posts, newsletter ads in The Lift and This Week, each to ~50,000 viewers, and homepage features on the website. A third and final poll with VPR for the 2020 election cycle took place in October

(Un)Fractured: Covering Race and Racial Injustice Issues in Our Communities



To mark the one-year anniversary of George Floyd’s death, Vermont PBS and VPR partnered on a Community Conversation titled, “(Un)Fractured: Covering Race and Racial Injustice Issues in Our Communities.”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mister Chris & Friends - Mister Chris and Friends has been celebrating childhood since 2017 by creating 12 gently paced episodes and 11 digital educational short clips that reinforce playful learning with a focus on routine and self-care.

Vermont PBS looks ahead to create another inspiring season of *Mister Chris and Friends* which will include developmentally appropriate approaches to learning about inclusion, community, equity, and cultural traditions. *Mister Chris and Friends* continues to develop 5 additional short clips and the third season in 2021-2022. Production continues to use safe user-generated content with interactive experiences and activities. Live and virtual events have reached 100 families during a safe outdoor Halloween event. PBS LearningMedia continues to be an evolving platform for these clips and activities.

Testimonials User-Generated Short Clips (American Sign Language) *Mister Chris and Friends*

Thank you, Chris! I did just share with my friends and the larger Vermont Deaf community about your ambitions of including signs and exposure to them on the show. One of my colleagues lives just 5 minutes from your farm and visits often. He's even been involved with the CSA. As a Deaf person, he had great things to say about you and your wife, and the farm, and he also mentioned that MCAF has won awards! Again, thanks so much!

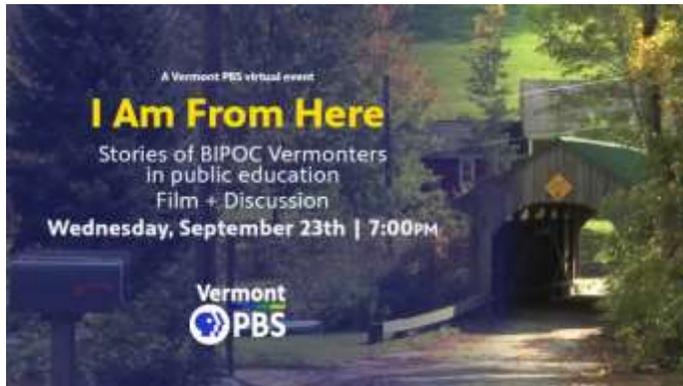
Virtual Events-

With the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic and stringent policies around live events in place, all station events over the past year were virtual, utilizing the CPB OVEE (Online Viewing and Engagement Experience) platform with the intention of creating opportunities for meaningful conversation with community partners. OVEE has allowed us to create and host online screenings and live video conversations in a virtual theater. Participants can ask questions of our special guests via a chat function. With OVEE, we are engaging our audience with online programming that: fosters civic engagement, promotes dialogue, mobilizes geographically-dispersed audiences, expands learning opportunities, and provides access to experts and thought leaders. There has been a good responses to the live events, but we've also found that the conversations can have a second life on our YouTube channel. One of the benefits of virtual events is the ability host a guest from anywhere in the world. We were honored to screen films from our PBS documentary partners, highlighting the stories of new and diverse voices with a focus on the local, Vermont experience.

Highlights included:

I Am From Here: Film + Discussion

9/23/20



I Am From Here features BIPOC educators and students sharing their personal stories of living in and going to school in Vermont. It was produced by Bess O'Brien and commissioned by the Vermont NEA.

Celebrating the Black Community: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day/Black History Month



We put a significant focus on celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Black History Month. In January, we promoted the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day special American Masters: How It Feels To Be Free with social posts, including boosted Facebook posts, and

features in our newsletters and homepage.

In February, we built out a month-long “Celebrate Black History Month with Vermont PBS” campaign, linking back to a [dedicated webpage](#) housing all Black History content for the month. We placed digital ad buys, promoted the content in all of our own newsletters, on our homepage, and in all staffs’ email signatures. Individually, we promoted American Experience: Goin’ Back to T-Town; Independent Lens: Women in Blue; American Experience: Voice of Freedom; The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song; and Independent Lens: Mr. SOUL! For these, we featured across social media platforms, including some boosted Facebook posts, and in newsletter programming selections. In addition, we supported PBS’ main focus, The Black Church, with a suite of paid media.



9to5: The Story of a Movement

January 28, 2021 Over 100 community members attended this sneak preview of 9to5: The Story of a Movement, a film from Independent Lens. We discussed the fight for equal rights for women then and now with Janet Selcer, Co-Founder, 9to5 Boston; Cary Brown, ED, Vermont Commission on Women;

and Rhoni Basden, ED, Vermont Works for Women. Watch the recording here: https://youtu.be/Wg_wa_9jEbw



An Evening with Dr. Francois Clemmons

We were honored to host Vermonter, Dr. Francois Clemmons with this in-depth interview, book reading and virtual book signing of *Officer Clemmons: A Memoir*. An American icon, he made history as Officer Clemmons on the award-winning PBS television series Mister

Rogers' Neighborhood. Herald as the first African American actor to have a recurring role on a U.S. television program, his many accomplishments make him a Renaissance man of the highest order. Watch the conversation recording here:

<https://youtu.be/lHS5Wj-AtjM>

Video Retrospective: https://youtu.be/_frEhJ10Cjs

Mister SOUL! Film + Artist Discussion



Local Vermont artists of color, joined us for a screening of Mr. SOUL!, the public television variety show that offered viewers in the 60s and 70s an unfiltered, uncompromising celebration of Black literature, poetry, music, and politics, capturing a critical moment in culture whose impact continues to resonate today.

Following the film, join us for a live

chat with these Vermont artists: [Cristal Brown](#), [Will Kasso Condry](#), [Rajni Eddins](#) and [Craig Mitchell](#). Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/l8ayfJXBhtU>

Coded Bias *Film + Discussion* April 1, 2021



Joseph Near, assistant professor of computer science at the University of Vermont and Falko Schilling, Advocacy Director with ACLU of Vermont took questions about bias in technology from the virtual audience who joined us for a screening of Coded Bias.

Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/7JTN6f15klg>

Philly D.A. *Film + Discussion*



Following a sneak preview of the first episode of Philly D.A., we hosted a discussion with the film's director, Ted Passon; Jessica Brown, Esq, Supervising Attorney in the Chittenden County Public Defender Office; Skyler Nash, a public policy and research analyst for the City of Burlington Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee. Hosted by Sarah George, Chittenden

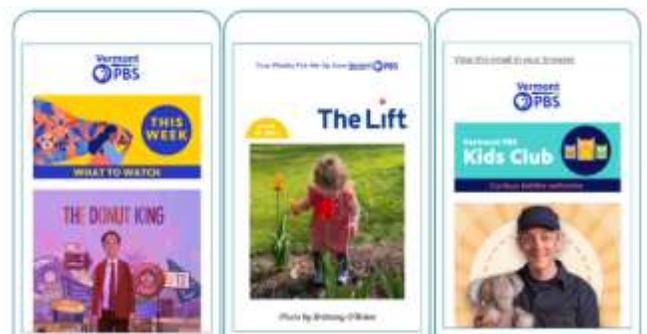
County State's Attorney.

Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/0sf-Sq9bOOc>

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

E-mail newsletters

We continued to engage our audiences with three electronic newsletters which enjoy an industry high open rate of over 20 percent. We've made a concerted effort over the past year to be more intentional about diverse and inclusive content, featuring local voices and experiences from all walks of life.



Social Media

Our social media followers continue to grow thanks to organic, boosted (paid) posts and digital advertising. We like to keep our feed interesting with a mix of local and national programming announcements; posts that are fun or funny (when appropriate); by keeping up with breaking news from The NewsHour; posts promoting Passport or

membership; and, finally, we've found that sharing items from our weekly e-newsletter, The Lift, is a wonderful way to keep local Vermont content front and center on our social channels. We use Facebook to promote our virtual events and the small investment in boosting the event helps to draw attention and attendance to our events and gain new followers in the process.

Some Important Facts

- Mister Chris and Friends (MCAF), Vermont's own live-action children's program, in its third year of production features Vermont farmer and educator Chris Dorman. MCAF won a New England Emmy Award this year in the Children/Youth category presented by the Boston/New England Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.
- Vermont teachers, homeschoolers, and students have free access to more than 400,000 curriculum-aligned digital resources through PBS Learning Media. More than **26,000** families and teachers have visited our Kids and Family, At-Home Learning and Distance Learning page where we shifted broadcast and resource in rapid response to meet home, school, hybrid, and remote learning needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As Vermont's visual storyteller, all of us at Vermont PBS will continue to amplify our community engagement activities and deepen our presence in and around the region to live into our mission to "connect neighbors through stories that change lives."