

Programming and Activities to Benefit Vermonters

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. During 2018, we continued to explore our steadfast commitment to bringing Vermonters together to discover, discuss and celebrate our shared experiences. We amplified our efforts to reach and enrich our unserved and underserved audiences through 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.

Understanding Our Viewers - Audience Segmentation Study & Focus Groups

This past December saw the completion of a comprehensive audience research initiative. The study showed us how folks in and around our viewing region are engaging with media and, in particular, with public broadcasting in Vermont. More importantly, the study served to develop Viewer Segment Profiles with context for attitudinal and behavioral drivers relevant to media consumption. In all, a total of 1200 existing and potential Vermont PBS viewers were surveyed, leading to recommendations to Vermont PBS for audience targeting as well as broader guidelines for brand strategy and member conversion opportunities. In support of the study, the station additionally hosted seven focus groups to learn not only *what* viewers watch but also *how* they access their favorite programs. We invited viewers and members to participate in intimate focus groups which were held across the Vermont PBS viewing region, including St. Albans (Oct 4), Burlington (Oct 11), Brattleboro (Oct 23), Montpelier (Oct 25), Norwich/Hanover (Nov 19), Rutland (Nov 20) and with our Canadian viewers north of the border in Montreal (Nov 29). Going forward, the collective findings will inform the strategic decisions made about both the content and platforms we employ to communicate with and engage our viewership.

Community Collaborations

News & Public Affairs

VPR & VT Digger – In a first-ever collaborative undertaking, Vermont PBS partnered with Vermont Public Radio to co-create and brand the **VPR - Vermont PBS Polls**, two public opinion polls conducted in the 2018 election season. Vermont PBS shared the results in a series of minute-long video news clips and still graphics on social media over the course of two weeks. Earned media included local and national news coverage of both poll results. Vermont PBS also co-created and branded the **VPR – Vermont PBS Debates** in partnership with Vermont Public

Radio to stream, on web and social media, four candidate debates for statewide office in advance of the 2018 general election.

Vermont PBS partners separately with VT Digger, an online news organization, and Vermont Public Radio, to produce and share weekly, via social media, one-minute news bulletins.

Vermont PBS also streamed live on web and social media its 2018 gubernatorial primary debate, as well as both the Governor's Inaugural Address and annual Budget Address in 2019.

Kids & Families

ECHO Center for Lake Champlain – As part of our ongoing partnership with the ECHO Center for Lake Champlain, Vermont PBS sponsored the popular, hands-on exhibit, *How People Make Things*, which ran from May 19th through September 3rd and saw attendance of over 55,000 guests. The exhibit, inspired by the Mister Rogers' Factory Tours, reinforces our station's commitment to helping teach some of our youngest learners (and their families) the importance of a STEM-based education in fun and engaging ways. During the run of the exhibit, we hosted several Vermont PBS Days at the ECHO center with our own host of interactive games, activity stations and even a live musical performance by Vermont's beloved children's musician, Chris Dorman.

Make-A-Wish Vermont – Vermont PBS again partnered with the nonprofit organization, Make A Wish Vermont, to promote and produce their *Witches, Wizards & Wishes* event. Vermont PBS volunteers joined Make A Wish Vermont and other organizations to welcome over 1,000 children and their caregivers from around the state in day-long activities, raising funds and awareness for Vermont children who have overcome illness and adversity.

Poetry Out Loud – This past March, Vermont PBS once again collaborated with The Vermont Humanities Council to bring *Poetry Out Loud*, Vermont's premiere student poetry competition, to schools and public audiences across Vermont. Each year, The Vermont Humanities Council organizes Vermont's regional competition for this national initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. Ten finalists from across the state compete to be the state champion, with the winner going on to the national competition. 2018 marked the event's 12th year, and Vermont PBS provided promotion and production assistance, and presented a live stream of the Vermont state finals. The national recitation contest teaches high school students the art of memorizing and reciting great works of poetry. *Poetry Out Loud* has engaged more than 3 million students and 50,000 teachers from 10,000 schools in every state, Washington, DC, the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Sesame Street Workshop at Shelburne Museum – In May, Vermont PBS partnered with the Shelburne Museum to sponsor a free educator's workshop called *Sesame Street in Communities: Building Literacy Skills and Beyond*. The workshop provided educators and service providers with a wealth of free resources designed to engage families in everyday activities and to enhance educators work with children, particularly around language and literacy.

Integrating National Content/Tent Pole Initiatives

Great American Read – Vermont PBS put its own unique spin on the wildly popular *Great American Read* initiative by offering readers across the state the chance to win a complete set of the GAR top 100 books for themselves as well as a set their local library. The winner, Helen R. of Stratton, Vt., was thrilled to share the books with her granddaughter who recently discovered the joy of reading.

Victoria – Both 2018 and early 2019 saw us enjoying a wonderful community engagement event with our Victoria Season Premiere Parties in downtown Burlington. Almost 200 attendees, many of them fabulously dressed in period costumes, came to help us kick off the new season of the beloved Masterpiece series. The sneak peek event included a tasteful photo-op with the Queen (standees provided by National PBS), a fun raffle of prizes from the Queen's personal collection, and a very special presentation on Victorian fashions by Andrea Rosen, Curator at University of Vermont's Fleming Museum of Art.

BritClub Teas – Vermont lovers of British programming share their passion each spring at our annual Britclub Tea & Screening events. It's a great opportunity for like-minded folks to feel a sense of community around something they love – and to give us their input regarding upcoming programming choices on their public television station. These popular and well-attended events around our viewing region provide a great opportunity to engage with some of our most loyal supporters.

Connecting with Kids

Mister Chris and Friends – *Mister Chris and Friends*, Vermont PBS's new, locally produced children's show, was developed to be gentle media for neuro-diverse children and families. Aimed at children age 3-6, the show integrates early math, literacy and science concepts in a sensory sensitive way, using music and song to guide adventure and lead kids on a fun learning experience.

Vermont PBS created six unique Learning Activities to go along with each episode in Season One: Honeybee, Water, Seed, New Song, and Stars. These standards-based early education activities focus on whole-child access and invite families to play along. These activities and episodes have been printed and shared with partners, teachers and families locally at ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, Evolution Yoga and Champlain Valley Head Start. They can be found on www.vermontpbs.org/kids/learn and will be included in the national PBS Learning Media offerings in 2019. PBS Learning Media offers teacher access to trusted content to supplement their curriculum for any grade level. Mister Chris was involved in many Vermont PBS family events in 2018, including the STEM Celebration with Champlain Valley Head Start and ECHO collaborations.

Bringing Childhood Learning into the Community

One of Vermont PBS's most ambitious and important undertakings has been to partner with the Champlain Valley Head Start Program to help parents from economically disadvantaged

circumstances learn and practice ways to engage with their preschool-aged children in school readiness activities at home. We were fortunate to identify and appoint Education consultant, Heather Duhamel, to manage the creation and execution of a strategic plan to further our work with our youngest viewers and to promote PBS Learning Media and Ready To Learn materials.

In 2017, the Vermont PBS Parents + Preschool Program held three parent workshops for 27 families whose preschool-age children participate in the Head Start Program. In 2018, we continued working with some of the same families and extended our reach to the classroom teachers offering five unique digital literacy classroom backpacks filled with Ready to Learn activities, books for home and a PBS Playtime Safe Tablet. These backpacks reached 45 preschool children and families, granting easy access to digital literacy activities, safe technology and 225 new books for home use.

The families were from three different Vermont Counties – Chittenden, Franklin and Addison – representing the Champlain Valley Head Start’s large geographic service area and the diverse, community-specific demographic characteristics of each region.

Later in 2018, Vermont PBS was invited to be a guest at two Head Start In-service meetings, presenting new *Mister Chris and Friends* Standards Based Activities to 65 teachers representing four Vermont counties and more than 400 preschool-aged children and families in Chittenden, Addison, Grand Isle and Franklin Counties.

Finally, Vermont PBS, Head Start and our local science center, ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, collaborated on a STEM Celebration event which included leadership training, free museum admission, STEM activities and PBS-inspired Ready to Learn gifts for all participating Head Start families. The event reached 125 registered Head Start families and 845 community members. Mister Chris played a special concert to finish up the day!

The participating families had incomes at or below the federal poverty level, which is one of the eligibility criteria for participation in Head Start. In collaboration with Head Start, the Vermont PBS Parents + Preschool Program identified and met the following project goals:

- (1) successfully implemented a pilot school readiness enrichment program with a focus on literacy, math and science for preschoolers from economically disadvantaged families served by Head Start;
- (2) developed a custom curriculum that linked research-driven teaching strategies with engaging, readily available children’s learning resources (e.g., popular story books, PBS Read to Learn handouts with activities easy to implement at home, an electronic kid-friendly tablet pre-loaded with educational activities and games, and information and guidance on how PBS Kids programs can supplement all of the resources for increased learning);
- (3) held teacher-training workshops and participated in two in-service and one community event to support navigation of Ready to Learn and digital literacy concepts;

- (4) followed up with participant Head Start families and teachers through direct outreach, meetings, phone calls and surveys to gain evaluative feedback; and
- (5) began planning for the next phase of the project, to reach more families in partnership with Champlain Valley Head Start and including our science center partner, ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain, with a shared focus on early, hands-on science and technology education.

Some Important Facts

- Vermont PBS Kids programming is available to nearly all Vermont preschool children for free, over the air and online – no cable access, transportation, or teachers required. It's been shown that preschool children who utilize PBS programs are better prepared for school by 30% in reading comprehension and math readiness skills.
- Vermont teachers, homeschoolers and students have free access to more than 100,000 curriculum-aligned digital resources through PBS Learning Media.
- Tens of thousands of older Vermonters, many of whom can't afford to participate in, or can't physically reach the arts by any other means, depend on Vermont PBS for information, education and entertainment.
- Vermont PBS programming and community outreach help to provide a venue for civic discourse. Our live call-in programs provide Vermonters with direct access to legislators and decision makers, supporting the values inherent in a civil, informed electorate.
- PBS continues to be rated as the most trusted institution among nationally known organizations. Vermonters turn to Vermont PBS for quality, unbiased news, information and entertainment that they can't find anywhere else.

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 in an effort to live into our mission to "connect neighbors through stories that change lives."