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 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), Southwest Virginia PTV (15.2), Blue Ridge PBS Kids (15.3), Blue Ridge Create (15.4), and ECHO (15.5).

In addition, we have three online streaming channels: Blue Ridge Streaming, ECHO and Project Southwest.

In 2021, Blue Ridge PBS provided these vital local services:

- Connections locally and nationally 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
- A new channel, ECHO, focused on Education, Community, Health and Opportunity

Blue Ridge PBS' local services added more local content for and about the region on-air with Southwest Virginia PTV and ECHO as well as online with ECHO, Blue Ridge Streaming and Project Southwest. 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, was continued throughout the region with support made possible by a partnership from local cable and dish providers.

“We, as a family, love Blue Ridge PBS! As a parent, I appreciate the educational, worry-free content, and variety of the kid shows. Blue Ridge PBS is a great asset to our Valley and we are grateful for all that they do!”

-- The Wente Family
Roanoke
2021 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT
IN THE COMMUNITY

Connecting with the Community Locally and Nationally

In 2021, Blue Ridge PBS continued to make connections between national programming and the local community through special events and outreach.

American Portrait: The Story of Us

Blue Ridge PBS was chosen to be a part of the national storytelling project called PBS American Portrait where people across the country were asked to share their stories by responding to one of a number of thought-provoking prompts.

We took those prompts on the road to the 2021 Local Colors Festival. And what we found was that even though we’re all different, we have a LOT in common! A half hour program was compiled for broadcast & streaming featuring those interviews. In addition, we held a virtual screening and discussion.

CyberCHASE: Green It Up

In collaboration with Cyberchase, America’s longest-running math series, Blue Ridge PBS held a series of Green It Up Events in July 2021.

Green It Up is a hands-on program designed for children ages 6-8 to inspire a deep appreciation for nature, build STEM skills, and help students feel empowered to take action in their communities to care for the planet, just like their favorite characters from Cyberchase.

Blue Ridge PBS partnered with Center in the Square, Greenbriar Nurseries, and Roanoke County Public Library to hold hands-on workshops on environmental topics ranging from pollinators to gardens to composting and more.
Blue Ridge PBS Out and About!

As the weather warmed and the pandemic waned, Blue Ridge PBS was out again in the community at several events.

The first was Festival in the Park, a Roanoke tradition since 1969. Our PBS Kids’ character covered Thunderbird and our prize wheel with ECHO swag were big hits!

The ‘Bird and the prize wheel were back in action in Christiansburg, Virginia, for Touch a Truck. And again, both were big hits.

Another area tradition is Zoo Boo at Mill Mountain Zoo. Blue Ridge PBS’s very own Pippy Pinewood joined in the festivities with her young Dewdrops high atop Mill Mountain.

And when winter came again, to wrap the year, the parking lot at Blue Ridge PBS was turned into a free drive-through holiday light extravaganza with special guest appearances by Santa and Mrs. Claus and the Roanoke Grinch. Over a dozen nights thousands of people enjoyed the magic of the holidays as they visited Santa’s Winter Wonderland. These partners helped to make the event possible: EZ Rampz Mobility Solutions, Pine Creek Structures, First Citizens Bank, Christmas Décor, Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, the Chui Casas Family, Chick-fil-a, and Macados.

“Enjoyed the drive through lights. It was awesome. Thank you!”
--Mark & Ruth H.
BUSINESS MATTERS

Premiering in Spring 2021, Business Matters strives to explore that subject from a variety of viewpoints and scenarios - the big players, the up-and-coming, the look ahead; featuring interviews with the people helping to grow jobs, the economy, and the Blue Ridge region.

Series host Gene Marrano is an award-winning radio and print journalist, and the editor of Valley Business FRONT magazine.

WRITE AROUND THE CORNER

We wrapped up Season 4 of this popular series in spring with Season 5 going into production during the late summer. The new season is full of mystery, drama, romance, history, and more!

The program features a wide variety of writers who have connections to Virginia. Recorded on location, each half hour interview delves into the stories behind the stories. We also record bonus interviews with each guest which are made available online.

WHAT IT TAKES

Entering its third season in 2021, the series brings experts around the table to discuss timely educational issues affecting Southwest Virginians.

From safely opening schools and academic logistics, to culture, climate and curriculum, the experts share their insights and inform viewers on topics they care about. We are a "Community of Learners" supporting each other, and we remain committed to helping each student reach their full potential.
THE STORY OF THE NEW RIVER

Premiering in October 2021, Blue Ridge PBS' latest documentary was several years in the making.

The New River winds its way through three states, West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina, and countless communities who have depended on its bounty for generations. At 320 miles in length, the river is designated an American Heritage River and is part of the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Blue Ridge PBS partnered with the New River Conservancy to tell the story of this magnificent waterway via stunning videography, fascinating interviews, and engaging stories from many whose lives are rooted along the New. Why is this such an important river system, and why do we need to protect it? The answers and much more in THE STORY OF THE NEW RIVER.

“It was wonderful... want to watch this program again! Well done!”

--Susan R.

INTERSTITIALS

Information and entertainment went beyond the standard television format with short stories and segments that ran in our station breaks. A sampling includes:

**Local Colors** is a series that explores the multi-cultural diversity in Southwest Virginia and seeks to highlight the international peoples that call the region home with a look at the lifestyles, and traditions, that make each culture so unique.

**Journeys Through the New River Valley** takes viewers to all corners of the New River Valley, in search of the people, places, and events that make the NRV so unique. With stops in in Floyd, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski counties the search was on for stories to share.

**Eye on the Past**, with Roanoke author and historian, Nelson Harris continued to highlight the history and heritage of the people, places, and events in the region.

**On the Road Again** visits unique and interesting attractions and destinations that are just a short drive away.
From the tops of mountains and into the valleys, down twisting rivers and winding roads, across sprawling farmlands and into the deepest coal mines, southwest Virginia is rich with culture and history. It has a diverse ecosystem, provides endless outdoor adventures and is ripe with economic opportunity. Project Southwest, which launched in spring 2020, aims to not only share these features with outside viewers, but also to the people already living in the region.

Content produced for Project Southwest is aired digitally through its very own 24-hour streaming channel on YouTube. This channel is an outlet for anyone wanting to learn about southwest Virginia. Much of the content is also available on demand.

Partners in the project include Mountain Heritage Museum & Gallery, Southwest VA Cultural Center & Marketplace, UVA Wise, the VA Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, and more.

Throughout 2021, Project Southwest continued to seek out and tell the stories of the region through a variety of series including Out and About and Hometowns.

Out and About focuses on local food, culture and history spots. From Abingdon’s Donkey Lodge where you can stay in a 1957 Greyhound Bus and visit the residents of the donkey sanctuary to Buck’s Drive In, a Saltville institution for more than 60 years, to Axe Handle Distilling in Pennington Gap – this series is sure to make you want to explore!

Hometowns – Every town has its characters. The people who leave an indelible mark and truly give a community its unique feeling. This series seeks to profile the hometowns of southwest Virginia through the voices and stories of its residents and celebrates the beautiful towns across our corner of the Commonwealth.

Glad I found your channel - well done!
--Mike H.
PSW Viewer
Back to Our Education Roots with ECHO

In 1967, Blue Ridge PBS was founded to provide educational programming for southwestern Virginia. In those early years, programs were presented by studio teachers. The technology and presentation style of education content has changed a great deal over the decades.

In June 2021, Blue Ridge PBS launched ECHO, a channel designed to meet the needs of learners in all stages of life.

Reach in the Community:

ECHO provides accessible, educational programming that is both informative and entertaining by “being where others aren’t.” From early learners to those still learning from their life experiences, ECHO seeks to provide educational content that encourages everyone to learn something new every day.

Content topics include but are not limited to: STEM programs, local happenings, community events, teacher and student resources, public health awareness, and opportunities for both community members and the community at large.

Partnerships:

Library of Virginia, Grandin Theatre Film Lab, Virtual Virginia, Virginia Department of Education, Center in the Square, DePaul Community Resources

Impact and Community Feedback:

By providing a space that values education, community, health, and opportunity, ECHO encourages viewers to learn with us. Together, we strengthen our communities and its members to create a world where we never stop learning.

“...our new ECHO channel is a first of its kind approach to education media. It puts together the traditional delivery of television viewing with the computer technology of streaming video that most K-12 students are watching. Blue Ridge PBS is the first station in the country to develop this advancement in local public media education. This station, which can be seen on Television and other streaming platforms, combines Education, Community, Health, and Opportunity (ECHO) into one location that can be seen by everyone.”

– William Anderson
President and CEO of Blue Ridge PBS
Get Schooled: Field Trips – Produced in partnership with Center in the Square, these segments take students on a virtual field trip with explorer, Peyton Moledor. Adventures included learning about the life cycle of chickens, unboxing mystery boxes to reveal fossils, finding out coal is transported, and more.

Hands On Chemistry - This resource is designed for use in traditional, online, and blended high school Chemistry classrooms. McGlothlin Award Winner and Carroll County High School Chemistry teacher, Fred Mitchell, demonstrates and shares his expertise.

Pet Education - Pet Ed goes over a multitude of topics regarding the health and wellbeing of pets. Host Dayna Reynolds, from Angels of Assisi, gives helpful tips and educational advice on how to make sure your pet lives a fulfilling, healthy and happy life.

Pip’s Tips - Designed for primary or elementary school learning, this series follows Pippy Pinewood (aka Pip) as she shares tips for her young Dewdrops. The SOL correlated tips cover a wide variety of topics with a dash of fun added! Pip even learns a few things herself on the way.

Real Life with Susan Harf – Host & Coach Susan Harf, MSW shares tips and advice on how we can live our very best life and how to handle the difficult situations it can throw at us.

Taylor Thyme – This baking series features Taylor Pusha who was a competitor in the national Kids Baking Championship and is creator of Taylor Made Cakes & Creations. In each episode, Taylor shares sweet recipes geared for viewers and their families.

Did You Know: E-Bikes – E-Bike enthusiast, Dan Ullmer, explains everything there is to know about E-Bikes.

Field Notes - Field Notes is an occasional live performance series. The pilot program featured Palmyra, a trio playing old time and original Americana tunes.

Working Hands – These shorts explore the different programs that the Botetourt & Roanoke Technical Education Centers offer to high school students including aerospace, autobody, carpentry, culinary and more.
Blue Ridge PBS is Public Media serving Virginia’s Blue Ridge and Appalachia on air and online!

“...It is the BEST programming that we’ve seen on any PBS stations in the areas where we’ve lived &/or traveled. We are addicted!!!
Family friendly and so much that is informative and educational. There is no comparison between Blue Ridge PBS and regular commercial TV. Thanks for what you guys are doing to make it all possible!”

-- Elizabeth & Art B.
Blue Ridge PBS Viewers

“Thanks for all that you do to help educate/entertain our communities!”

-- Mike
Blue Ridge PBS Viewer

“It is wonderful to see you all highlighting all of the local artistic talent, be it writing, art, or all of your music programming. As someone with a lifelong passion for all of the arts, I am thankful to you all for introducing local artists to the community and providing programming that facilitates so many beneficial connections.”

Michael H.
Blue Ridge PBS Viewer

“I love the variety of programming. It is educational and entertaining.
In honor of my parents who inspired a love of Public Television in me that persists to this day.”

--Blue Ridge PBS Donor

“Thanks for offering such intriguing alternatives to your usual series of shows!!”

-- Alice F.
SWVA PTV Viewer

In 2021, Blue Ridge PBS continued to grow and expand its offerings to the region. From broadcast to streaming to video-on-demand, Blue Ridge PBS provides education and entertainment programming for viewers of all ages. We are the area’s community resource for lifelong learning!