

## **VERMONT PUBLIC TELEVISION PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW FOR FY 2014 STATE FUNDING REQUEST**

On the air, online and in the community, Vermont Public Television works to educate, inform, entertain and inspire Vermonters. With VPT,

- Civil discourse fosters democracy, community participation and understanding of one another
- Children prepare to succeed in school
- Lifelong learners discover and appreciate science, history and nature in Vermont and beyond
- Performances celebrate the arts and culture.

Through its support of Vermont Public Television, the State of Vermont supports the needs of Vermonters of all ages and backgrounds for education, information and inspiration.

### **VPT'S VALUE TO VERMONT**

Vermont Public Television turned 45 on Oct. 16, 2012. Over the years since the state of Vermont created VPT, it has developed into a **statewide public media organization** serving Vermonters in ways never imagined in 1967. Yet it remains an **independent, locally owned organization**, inviting **people of all ages, income levels, interests and backgrounds** to explore new ideas, discover new worlds and broaden their horizons.

As television has expanded beyond broadcasting, public television has expanded to deliver **outstanding content for children and adults in education, arts, science and public affairs** on computers, tablets and mobile devices.

Nowadays, VPT even serves Vermonters who don't use TVs or digital media by reaching them with engagement activities in their local communities statewide.

Public television is vital to a democratic society, offering information that the commercial marketplace, despite its hundreds of TV channels, does not. Public TV's focus is on the audience as citizens, not simply consumers. In this world of increasingly concentrated corporate ownership of media, VPT, a non-profit community licensee, is **owned by the people of Vermont**.

### **HOW THE STATE'S INVESTMENT IN VPT SERVES VERMONTERS**

Vermont Public Television is one of the stations that make PBS America's largest classroom, the nation's largest stage for the arts and a trusted window to the world. PBS's educational media help prepare children for success in school.

VPT is Vermont's source for the outstanding programs of PBS, including **53 hours a week of children's programs focusing on early education**, supplemented by the popular **PBS KIDS.org**. Online services **PBS LearningMedia**, **PBS Parents** and **PBS Teachers** give educators, parents and caregivers a wealth of online and digital resources for helping young learners.

VPT produces **local programs** to meet Vermonters' needs and interests. Signature productions include *Outdoor Journal*, *Vermont This Week*, *Emerging Science*, *Report From Washington*, *Report From Montpelier*, *Ask the Governor* and historical documentaries like the recent *Little Jerusalem*.

### VPT Is Online and On Demand

VPT streams live local programs from candidate debates to deer herd hearings on **VPT.org**. VPT's **video-on-demand service** offers a library of national and local programs, available for anyone anywhere to enjoy at their convenience. VPT also makes local and national productions available via Comcast's On Demand service.

### VPT.org

**Use of the website is increasing steadily**, as people view programs, check schedules, comment on programs and find resources. In 2012, vpt.org hit the milestone of **one million page views**.

### Social Media

VPT uses social media to keep up a lively exchange with viewers. VPT's **YouTube** channel gives educators and others access to locally produced videos. The free **VPT Weekly** email newsletter goes to 14,000 subscribers.

### Viewership, Generosity and Advocacy

According to a recent Nielsen survey, Vermont Public Television served **more than 140,000 U.S. viewers weekly** via its main broadcast channel. Thousands more use its Create and World channels, and on-demand programs. The value Vermonters place on VPT shows in the **high ratio of donors to viewers**. At 28%, it is the second-highest in a group of peer stations.

**Federal funding for public broadcasting** continues to be threatened. In 2011, Vermonters sent thousands of messages to Congress via **170millionamericans.org**. (170 million is the estimated number of people who watch programming on public television, listen to public radio, use online services, and attend and participate in station activities each month.) They were among the hundreds of thousands who persuaded Congress to preserve funding in the FY 12 federal budget. VPT and other public stations are asking for their advocacy again as Congress builds the federal budget for FY13.

### VPT in the Community -- With Our Partners

Community engagement is a way of life at VPT. To increase reach and relevance, VPT has developed a **wide array of community partners**. By pooling resources, partnerships let each organization do more, tap into expertise and spread information more effectively. VPT uses the power of its statewide platforms to work with about **100 local organizations** – including several **state agencies** -- each year, from AARP VT to Kids VT. **Community Cinema** is a growing partnership with venues in St. Johnsbury, Montpelier, Burlington, Brattleboro and Rutland that provide free screenings of PBS documentaries like *Half the Sky* on the worldwide oppression of women, followed by discussions.

VPT's newest episodes of ***The Governors***, featuring Governors Dean and Douglas, had screenings and discussions at Johnson State College, Castleton State College, The Big Picture Show in Waitsfield and Bennington Free Library.

### Research on Trust and the Value of Public Television

For the ninth consecutive year, a nationwide poll showed that **Americans rank PBS as the most trustworthy institution** -- at a higher level (26%) than courts of law (13%), commercial TV (8%), cable TV (6%), newspapers (6%), the federal government (5%) and Congress (4%). On a question about the **value for the dollar** of services funded using tax dollars, PBS ranked second (20%) to military defense (31%).

### Research on Children's Programming

With broadcasts and websites for kids, parents and educators, public television is the undisputed leader in children's programming. **Rich educational content** emphasizes reading, math, science and essential skills for pre-school through the early grades. Recent research verifies that broadcast and online content for *Super Why!*, *Martha Speaks* and *Sesame Street* help **close the literacy gap** for the most disadvantaged children.

A recent Common Sense Media study shows that **broadcast television is the most-used medium** among children up to age 8, especially those from lower-income families. Only half of these families subscribe to pay services. For thousands of children in Vermont, VPT is the only source for **free, high-quality, non-commercial educational content**.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF VERMONT PUBLIC TELEVISION'S SERVICES

### Programming and Services for Children, Parents and Educators

*My sons' favorite show is Wild Kratts ... they learn about one animal in detail. When they go to the PBS KIDS website, they learn more on different animals, the environment, math and many other fun activities. -- S. Burlington*

Vermont's children are at the heart of VPT's mission. **Non-violent, commercial-free TV programs and digital media** (video, games, mobile apps and more) inspire children to ask questions, solve problems, read books, understand others, explore science and appreciate nature in a safe broadcast and online environment.

As **America's largest classroom**, PBS is **available to all children** – including those who can't attend preschool – and offers educational media that help prepare children for success in school. PBS is the number one source of media content for preschool teachers and a leading place parents turn to for preschool video online.

Teachers can tap into a wide array of free **VPT online video content**, along with lesson plans and materials that are aligned with Vermont teaching standards, to enrich their classroom lessons. Schools use video and other resources from VPT programs such as *Emerging Science* and *Outdoor Journal*.

One of VPT's newest services, **PBS LearningMedia**, is a dynamic online library for educators of **pre-K through high school** students. It gives them the best in digital content, with extensive tools that foster classroom innovation. Unlike other digital learning services, its **tens of thousands of digital assets** are free.

VPT sponsors the annual **PBS KIDS GO! Writers Contest** locally to encourage the creativity of children in kindergarten through third grade. The winners' stories are featured on air and on VPT.org. All entrants are invited to read at story time events throughout the state. Entries average 200 a year -- a challenge for the judges, given the high quality of the work.

VPT partners with newspapers around the state on **Above the Fold**, a journalism contest now in its second year that promotes critical thinking and writing with **middle school students**.

VPT supports **Sen. Bernie Sanders' State of the Union Essay Contest**, where high school juniors and seniors write essays about how to solve the nation's biggest problems. VPT hosts the Senator and the winners for a roundtable discussion in the studio.

The **Dorothy Canfield Fisher awards** are an annual showcase for a Vermont writer and his or her young readers. VPT produced a video story about the 2012 award. In an effort for even younger readers, VPT applied for and received a grant from JetBlue and PBS

KIDS to donate 125 books to **Reach Out and Read – Vermont**. Pediatricians distribute the books, advising parents about the importance of reading aloud to their children.

VPT's *Emerging Science* series completed its fifth season in 2012. A key project goal is to encourage young people to seek **careers in science**. Adults and younger viewer see Vermonters doing cutting-edge scientific inquiry. Classroom materials and lesson plans aligned with the state's standards are available to high school and middle school teachers.

### Programming and Services That Foster Lifelong Learning and Enrichment

*You can either watch TV and when you turn it off you feel sillier and dumber -- and then you watch Vermont Public Television and you turn it off and you feel smarter. You just learned something.* -- Waterbury Center chef on air during a VPT production

Vermont Public Television knows that, as important as its educational services for children are, **learning never ends for Vermonters**. They turn to VPT for inspiration and information in **history, the arts, culture and science**. *Nova, Antiques Roadshow, Great Performances, Live From Lincoln Center, American Experience, American Masters, Charlie Rose* and Ken Burns' documentaries are among the most valued PBS shows. VPT's latest historical documentary, *Little Jerusalem*, tells the story of a thriving traditional Jewish community in Burlington.

Public television is America's largest stage. At a time when funding for music and arts in schools is being cut, PBS is helping to **keep the arts alive** today and for generations to come by ensuring that music, theater, dance and art remain available to all Americans, many of whom might never have had the opportunity to experience them otherwise.

*Emerging Science* premiered four on-air and online episodes in 2012. The VPT-produced program features Vermonters doing important work at UVM and other research centers, looking for ways to help people with traumatic brain injury and connective tissue disorders, and exploring how the Northeast can prepare for a warming world.

VPT's staff travel the state and light up the studio to produce content that reveals Vermont to Vermonters, to viewers in neighboring New York, New Hampshire and Canada -- and around the world via VPT.org.

### Programming and Services That Foster Engagement in Community Life

*My wife and I are watching the Governor's debate, and we're howling with laughter most of the time! "Only in Vermont" could such a debate take place, and we want to commend VPT for including all the candidates! Perhaps some of them are disruptive; perhaps some are strange or have strange views. But it shows the maturity of VPT that you're willing to expose us to such a range of opinions!* -- St. Johnsbury

Through a rich variety of local and national content, VPT fosters understanding of various points of view, **welcoming diverse voices and opinions**.

VPT offers Vermonters information and encouragement to **participate in national and local civic affairs**, with news, analysis and public affairs programming like *PBS NewsHour*, *BBC World News*, *Washington Week*, *Frontline* and *Moyers & Company*. With its own *Vermont This Week*, *Report From Washington*, *Report From Montpelier* and *Town Hall With the Governor*, VPT addresses issues that matter to Vermonters. Many programs include viewer calls, emails and studio audiences, so people throughout the state can be part of the conversation and share ideas.

In August 2012, VPT marked the anniversary of Tropical Storm Irene with renewed efforts to get word out that contributions for the recovery were still needed. During the month, under the banner *Impact Irene*, VPT produced programming and online content that included *Flood Bound* and *Mad River Rising* by Vermont filmmakers, our own '27 *Flood* and other material.

In election-year debates for statewide offices, VPT's tradition is to invite all candidates who appear on the ballot so that voters are better informed.

A recent innovation is a continuing series of **online reports** by "**Vermont Newsguy**" **Jon Margolis**, enhanced by video stories, on such topics as wilderness, transportation, the doctor shortage and renewable energy.

VPT **reaches into our communities**, engaging people at events like the 500 who attended **Family Days** at area museums and 350 at the popular **Britcom Teas**. VPT held its first Halloween party at the studio in 2012, where kids and their parents had fun and learned about TV special effects. Guests numbered 581. Over the past year, VPT has held "**meet and greet**" events at **concerts** around the region with performers seen on public television. With its partners, VPT hosts **Community Cinema** screenings and discussions of important PBS documentaries. Now in its fourth year, this series now has partners in Brattleboro, Burlington, St. Johnsbury, Montpelier and Rutland.

To strengthen local programming and services, VPT staff and board benefit from the advice, ideas and engagement of the **Community Council**, a diverse group of people from around Vermont.

During its year-end fundraising campaigns, Vermont Public Television partners with Northfield Savings Bank so that contributions to VPT leverage donations to the **Vermont Foodbank**. In the 2012 campaign, 27,708 meals were raised.

VPT provides **media sponsorships** for other non-profits such as the Flynn Center and the Burlington Book Festival.

### Programming and Services That Foster Appreciation for the Environment and Working Landscape

*I am a teacher at U-32 and recently saw your episode on *Outdoor Journal* about the Bicknell's thrush. We teach an elevation study every fall to the 7th grade and would be thrilled to be able to show it to students each year. Is it possible to get a recording? -- Montpelier*

VPT's popular, long-running ***Outdoor Journal*** marked its 10th anniversary of celebrating the state's traditions of recreation and conservation and has been honored with Emmy nominations, Outdoor Writers Assn. of America awards and Telly Awards. The **Vermont Dept. of Fish & Wildlife** provides production funding. Besides its on-location stories, *Outdoor Journal* presents live call-in shows such as a recent one about deer herd management.

In January 2013, *Outdoor Journal* had a booth at the Yankee Sportsman's Classic , where staff with well over 1,000 people who complimented VPT on the program and offered ideas for future stories.

Along with VPT's own outdoor programs, PBS programs like *Nature* and *Nova* have taught generations of viewers to respect and appreciate the natural world.

Encouraging appreciation for **local agriculture and local foods** are *VPT Cooks* programs with food producers such as sugarmakers and the Vermont Fresh Network.

### Transition to Digital Broadcasting and Production

*Having suffered mixed reception over the years, it is a pleasure to move to the channel 30 offerings from Mount Equinox. Excellent pictures and sound for say 95% of the day. -- Manchester*

VPT is in the final phase of its multi-million-dollar **digital conversion project**, funded by state and federal matching grants. One of the most visible benefits of the project for Vermonters is that they now have **three different program services** -- the **VPT main channel**, along with **VPT Create** and **VPT World**.

VPT completed its network of digital transmitters and master control facility, and its transition to all high-definition production. In 2012, VPT replaced its antiquated **studio lighting system** with an energy-efficient system. Using state and federal appropriations, VPT will replace its mobile production facilities.

## Public Safety and Other Services

The state's investment in VPT touches Vermonters every day, in many different ways. As a statewide network, VPT can offer such **public safety information** as weather advisories, school closings and emergency information, and it is an Amber Alert station. On its towers and in its buildings, VPT makes space available at below-market rates to a variety of public service and safety organizations, including the FBI, NOAA, Vermont Dept. of Public Safety, ham radio groups, county sheriffs, Civil Air Patrol and local first responders (police and fire).

VPT has assisted **broadband and wireless service** providers at its transmitter sites to expand the deployment of their services statewide.

## VPT Staff Serve Nationally

VPT's peers in public media turn to VPT staff to serve the industry nationally while they serve Vermont. President **John King** is serving a second three-year term on the national PBS board of directors. He is also chair of the Organization of State Broadcasting Executives. Chief content office **Kathryn A. Scott** is on the Production Council Executive Committee for The National Educational Telecommunications Association (NETA). Program director **Kelly Luoma** is president ex officio of the Public Television Programmers Assn. Staff regularly lend their expertise to public television at professional meetings.

## VPT Senior Producer Inducted Into NATAS Hall of Fame

In November 2012, VPT senior producer **Joe Merone**, who is responsible for *Vermont This Week* and other public affairs programs, became a Silver Circle inductee in the National Academy of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame. (This is the organization that awards the Emmys.) The award is one of the highest honors bestowed on TV professionals who have contributed throughout an extraordinary career spanning at least 25 years in the business.

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