

**Rocky Mountain PBS
Local Content and Services Report
Fiscal Year 2015**

Narrative:

Rocky Mountain PBS enjoyed a very successful 2015, marked by many achievements and highlights. We continued advancing our public media partnerships and community outreach, while still remaining devoted to our “bread and butter” – renowned programming for Coloradans of all ages. From the youngest to our most senior citizens, entertaining and educational programming could be found every day of the week, and our online community has never been more robust. We also featured more original content – on air, on line and on film – than ever before.

Much of this work was recognized locally, nationally and internationally. For the third consecutive year, readers of *Colorado Parent* magazine voted Rocky Mountain PBS their “family favorite” television station. On a national level, PBS and its member stations were named number one in public trust for the 12th consecutive year. We received 16 Emmy nominations and garnered three wins. We were particularly excited when our Emmy award-winning filmmaker Lisa D. Olken was selected by the American Film Showcase and the U.S. Department of State to visit several cities in Kazakstan to debut her documentary *Urban Rez* and to teach film students in the country. This film tells the stories of Native Americanas relocated between 1950 and 1970 from reservations to cities; *Urban Rez* was the only public media film to be selected for this international tour.

Our partner radio station, KUVU, has been successful this year, as well. Recently, a London newspaper – *The Telegraph* - recognized KUVU as one of the top three jazz stations in the world! KUVU commemorated its 30th anniversary throughout 2015 and celebrated in style – including a sold-out “Live at the Vineyards” summer extravaganza and an online video initiative called *30 Under 30* showcasing Colorado’s young, up-and-coming jazz musicians. This was a very special campaign that was a win-win for these musicians, KUVU and the entire community.

We hosted several successful and memorable community events in 2015, including a sold-out screening of *The Roosevelts* with famed documentarian Ken Burns. Many of our other community outreach events were also filled or at near capacity. Our annual Kids Fun Fest celebrations in Grand Junction, Colorado Springs and Denver drew more than 15,000 Coloradans. Additional family-friendly events included discounted tickets for family game nights with the Colorado Avalanche and the Denver Nuggets; Family Science Nights in Grand Junction; and Thomas the Tank Engine rides at the Colorado Railroad Museum. We also facilitated numerous screenings, including a panel discussion and screening of *Coming Home with Wes Moore* for returning soldiers, *Downtown Abbey* balls and preview screenings, candidate forums with the Colorado Nonprofit Association and other area non-profits, and free Community Cinema screenings throughout the state. Our *MAKERS: Women in Space* screening at Denver Museum of Nature & Science was a huge hit! Speakers included Andrea Casias of United Launch Alliance, Marleen Martinez of NASA, Sara Wolitzky, a *MAKERS* producer, and Amelia Rose Earhart, an aviatrix and the youngest woman to fly around the world in a single-engine aircraft.

Season 5 of *Downton Abbey* continued to draw record ratings but, sadly, show creators announced season 6, starting in January 2016, would be its last. *Downton Abbey* has been PBS’ most successful drama series ever, pulling in nearly 10 million viewers per episode. While we wish we didn’t have to say

goodbye, there are several wonderful dramas, such as *Mercy Street* and *Call the Midwife*, waiting to take its place in the hearts of viewers.

Our laser-like focus on early childhood education remained at the forefront of our station's agenda and our work with a number of early learning organizations continued to make a difference in the community. One example is our commitment to the initiative Bright by Three, which sends text-message tips to parents and other caregivers of children ages zero to three to help them develop their children and get them ready for school. After running promotional spots on Rocky Mountain PBS in support of this project, signups were seven to eight times higher than before, with numbers consistently spiking in direct correlation to when these spots aired. Our longest-running initiative, *Super School News*, continued with its 35th year on Rocky Mountain PBS! The award-winning mini-television series is written and produced by fifth and sixth grade students across Colorado and presented on Rocky Mountain PBS. It teaches skills such as teamwork, discipline, quick thinking and the importance of the written word. Over the years, many of these students have gone on to have successful careers in journalism. Other locally produced educational programs included *Matchwits*, a statewide Jeopardy-like contest for high schoolers; *StoryMakers*, a writing contest for middle schoolers; and, in southern Colorado, *Homework Hotline*, a live call-in show about math and science.

Our commitment to education also extended to teachers. Rocky Mountain PBS Learning Media, a free online digital library service for teachers and students, recently topped a whopping 100,000 catalogued entries and more than 15,000 Colorado teachers have signed up to utilize this resource.

We enjoyed continued success and impact with our multi-year initiative, *Women and Girls Lead*, both locally and nationally. Did you know the *NewsHour* has the only national female co-anchor team on the air and is the only network that can claim a woman in the anchor chair 97 percent of the time? Our own weekly news program, *Colorado State of Mind*, continued to be ably moderated by Cynthia Hessin and featured content predominantly from our public journalism arm, Rocky Mountain PBS News. The news team tackled in-depth investigative stories about tough topics – everything from the lack of rape kits on college campuses in Colorado to how our public education system is more segregated now than it was during mandated school bussing. We are proud to say that several of these series, such as one on Denver's hit-and-run epidemic, have resulted in legislative and social change.

Of course, all this important content was distributed across all our platforms: television, radio, online and in newspapers across the country, including the front page of *USA Today*. Our website is growing by leaps and bounds, able to disseminate news, information and programming around the world. YouTube subscribers broke the 1,000 mark! Full episodes of our locally produced programs *Colorado Experience*, *Arts District* and *Colorado State of Mind*, as well as documentaries like *Urban Rez* are now available on our YouTube channel. And, in this past year, our Facebook audience grew to over 30,000 friends!

We continue to accomplish more with less, thanks to technology, careful spending and ever-creative employees. But we are well aware that we could not make the impact we do without the invaluable contributions of our volunteers. As they have for the past 59 years, volunteers continued to play a critical role throughout our public media network. During the last fiscal year, over 700 volunteers donated more than 12,000 hours, at an economic value of \$240,000, to Rocky Mountain PBS statewide. To us, however, the real number is "priceless," as our volunteers bring us the benefit of their wisdom and involvement.

Our multi-partner public media initiative continued to flourish throughout the year, with exciting plans and collaborations taking shape for the near future. In the interest of consistency, I-News changed its name to Rocky Mountain News, but the newsroom continued to be the same energetic and dynamic focal point in our building. The merger with KUVU also continued seamlessly as many KUVU employees moved into the Rocky Mountain PBS building.

Rocky Mountain PBS turns 60 in 2016 and much time and energy has already been invested in planning and celebrating this historic birthday. At the center of the celebration is a multi-month exhibition at the central branch of the Denver Public Library, tracing the station's evolution from its earliest days. This is a fantastic exhibit of artifacts, photographs and memorabilia tracing six decades. Like *The Little Engine That Could*, we see the station grow from its humble beginnings as a voice for Denver Public Schools to a proud national public media network. The exhibit also traces the evolution of technology, as well as much of Denver's history. It remains on display through April 2016 and we hope you'll get a chance to see it. Next year's report will tell you all about the other exciting ways we celebrated this auspicious anniversary, including the announcement of a capital project aimed at building a new state-of-the-art building in downtown Denver. More to come!

Among all the successes of 2015, there was one day in particular that stood out to us. On Colorado Gives Day, a 24-hour online giving period in which all Colorado non-profits may participate, more than 1,600 people gave a record-breaking \$197,000 to Rocky Mountain PBS. We consider that an astounding affirmation by our community of the work we dedicate ourselves to every day. Of course, the money raised is essential to our operating budget but, even more importantly, more than 1,600 individuals took this occasion to let us know they believe in us. Our membership climbed to over 73,000 this year – another milestone – and as a non-profit, we depend on financial support from our community every day. But on Colorado Gives Day, we got contributions big and small from the people we directly serve. No other honor meant more to us this year.

4.1 In what local community outreach or educational activities has your station been involved this year that supports unserved or underserved audiences? Please describe in detail: outcomes, audience served, community response.

Rocky Mountain PBS never loses sight of its obligation to our community. It is at the core of our mission statement and in virtually everything we do. In 2015 we fulfilled that promise by continuing to offer the programs and services that we know Coloradans love, including our nationally renowned, commercial-free programming for children and adults. One of our most beloved initiatives that we continued in 2015 was our annual Kids Fun Fest celebrations, held across the state. These are free parties for kids and their families that focus on health, education and fun. PBS celebrities like Curious George and Clifford the Big Red Dog are always on hand for hugs, photos and autographs. In 2015, more than 15,000 Coloradans attended these events – a clear community affirmation – and many sponsors come on board to take advantage of our wide reach.

As described in the above narrative, Rocky Mountain PBS spends a huge portion of every day working on behalf of the underserved in our community. Whether it is a website full of local resources, a documentary aimed at spotlighting social injustice, a forum for young musicians to gain exposure for their work, or an invitation to public school children of all ages to join our programs and projects, it is safe to say that virtually everything we do has at its heart our desire to be a good neighbor and to help our fellow Coloradans, from the youngest to the most senior – and especially those who need it most.

We fulfilled our promise to the community by doing more and stretching further than ever: more local programming, more community outreach and screenings, more online growth, more investigative news pieces, more political discourse, more video content, more services for children and their families – and we even introduced our RMPBS smartphone app. In our minds, we work for the community. We feel more connected than ever and we expect to carry that tradition into the next 60 years!

4.5 CPB is interested in learning more about stations' significant activities planned for the upcoming year - both broadcast and beyond broadcast. What types of on-air programs and off-air activities are you planning in the upcoming year that will connect your station more closely with your community? What goals are you setting in conjunction with these initiatives, and how will you measure your success?

Rocky Mountain PBS has a busy year ahead, with ambitious projects and programs already underway. Of course, we are very excited about celebrating our 60th birthday in many ways throughout the year, including special screenings and events. We recently announced a capital project for a brand new, state-of-the-art broadcast facility in downtown Denver and expect to reveal further details in the months ahead. The building, located in downtown Denver's Arapahoe Square, will feature cutting edge broadcasting facilities, as well as a proposed theatre and mixed residential and commercial use. We believe it will revitalize that area of the city, as well as serve as an innovative hub for public media broadcasting throughout the country. We are excited to have the support of Denver Mayor Michael Hancock along with many other civic organizations. We think this project has the capacity to change the city's landscape.

Beyond the big birthday, our local programming and film work will continue, with a heightened emphasis on investigative news and documentaries. We are thrilled that a well-known, local investigative reporter will be joining Rocky Mountain PBS News in March and we expect his work to further elevate our local content. As part of our ongoing *Race in Colorado* initiative, documentaries are already underway that will focus on judicial and economic injustice in our state. Each of these, when premiered on television and through screenings, will include public conversations with state legislators, those who have the power to change the law. We believe these films will be catalytic. They tackle tough topics in a manner no other media can and are being created with the express intent of leading to substantive and lasting change.

Our three local flagship programs will be returning for another season, but we do expect to update the format of *Colorado State of Mind*. We will promote our new Rocky Mountain PBS app and continue to finesse and grow our online presence. And we know that PBS will continue to bring us its renowned programming – a literal front-row seat to the incredible world around us.

Beloved events, such as StoryMakers, Kids Fun Fest, and Super School News, are already on the books for 2016. While we try new things every year, we never lose sight of what the community has told us they love. We consider these our cornerstone outreach events. We go out into the community all the time but we also love being able to bring people to our studio and show them first-hand what makes Rocky Mountain PBS special. School tours are an important part of this and our dance card is rapidly filling up for the year ahead.

Rocky Mountain PBS is enjoying a robust time in its distinguished history and we fully expect that to carry over into 2016 and beyond. We expect that in a few years we will be in a beautiful new building that will be a proud focal point in our city's skyline.

And how will we measure the success of all this? Through ratings, membership growth, corporate and personal donations, Facebook 'likes,' YouTube hits and shares, attendance at outreach events and screenings and, most importantly, through the heartfelt messages we get each year about the difference Rocky Mountain PBS is making in individual lives.

If you were to assign each year a personality, recent life at Rocky Mountain PBS can be summed up in this fashion: 2015 was busy, optimistic and fulfilling and 2016 will be super-busy, driven by anticipation and promise for both the station and the people we serve. Happy 60th birthday, Rocky Mountain PBS!