PBS Foundation

Autumn/Winter 2024 | Volume 14.2

CONTRIBUTOR

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PBS FOUNDATION

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A Message From the President

Our mission at PBS is to educate, engage, and inspire our audiences. On televisions, tablets, and phones, we reach millions of Americans in every community. Some of our most important work serves our youngest viewers.

We believe every child is full of possibilities. Through PBS KIDS content, children learn lessons that last a lifetime. We work hard to ensure that every child can see themselves represented in that content, feels they belong as part of our audience, and is empowered and excited to explore the world around them.

For many years, we've heard from parents of kids on the autism spectrum who have told us how their children connect to PBS KIDS characters. These children are part of larger communities who would benefit from understanding that not all of us experience the world in the same way. In this issue, we're pleased to introduce our newest PBS KIDS show, **CARL THE COLLECTOR**, which premiered November 14th. **CARL** is our first show to feature lead characters on the autism spectrum, and is created and voiced by people who are autistic as well. This program represents a real opportunity for us to deepen our service to many families in the communities we serve.

CARL is just one of many standout programs for all ages to enjoy this fall, including a brand new film from Ken Burns about the great artist and polymath Leonardo da Vinci, and new climate-focused programming. In this issue, we also spotlight the generous gift of Peter and Phyllis Dalia. I hope that as you read about our recent work, you share my pride in all that we're able to accomplish, which is only possible thanks to the support of viewers like you.

Thank you.

All my best,
Paula Kerger
PBS President & CEO
PBS Foundation President

"LEONARDO DA VINCI"

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PBS Debuts LEONARDO DA VINCI, a New Film from Ken Burns, Sarah Burns, and David McMahon

Autumn brought PBS viewers another gift from filmmaker Ken Burns — a new, two-part, four-hour documentary about Leonardo da Vinci. Initially aired on November 18 and 19, the film, marking Burns's first venture into a non-American subject, explored the life and work of the great 15th-century artist-engineer-inventor-dreamer.

Leonardo's paintings and drawings, including the *Mona Lisa*, *The Last Supper*, and the *Vitruvian Man*, are among the most celebrated works of all time. But they were only part of his wide-ranging genius. As the film shows, he explored an astonishing array of subjects in his work and notebooks — not just painting and drawing, but also philosophy, engineering, warfare, anatomy, and geography.

In Part One of **LEONARDO DA VINCI** — "The Disciple of Experience" — we meet the young Florentine artist in the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio. By the age of 20, Leonardo has joined a painters' guild whose members include the most talented artists in Florence, and by the mid-1480s he has established himself as a "master" in his own right with several masterpieces already under his belt, including the magnificent *Virgin of the Rocks*. Working in Milan from 1482 to 1499 under the patronage of its duke, Ludovico Sforza, Leonardo then paints one of his most famous large tableaux, *The Last Supper* (ca. 1498), commissioned by the duke for the monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie.

In Part Two of Burns's film — "Painter-God" — we follow Leonardo after he has left Milan and traveled to Venice, then back to Florence, where he serves as a military engineer and cartographer, and continues to paint, draw, and invent. He also begins work on what will become his most celebrated portrait, the *Mona Lisa*. Leonardo would take that painting and two others with him to France in 1516 when, at the invitation of the young king, Francois I, he moved to Amboise. And there, having finished the paintings and left a great deal of work for future generations to ponder, he died in 1519 at the age of 67.

LEONARDO DA VINCI is available to stream on all station-branded PBS platforms including PBS.org and the PBS App, available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. The series is also viewable on PBS Passport and the "PBS Documentaries Prime Video Channel."

Meanwhile, stay tuned for Burns's **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** in 2025!

"CARL THE COLLECTOR"

CARL THE COLLECTOR © 2024 Fuzzytown Productions, LLC. All rights reserved.

Meet Carl the Collector:
PBS KIDS' newest character

Thursday, November 14, 2024 became a red-letter day in television history when **CARL THE COLLECTOR**, the first PBS KIDS® show to feature central characters on the autism spectrum, was launched across multiple PBS KIDS platforms.

Created for children ages 4-8 by *New York Times* best-selling illustrator and author Zachariah OHora, the new animated series celebrates the many ways in which kids think and express themselves, and aims to help all kids develop a strong sense of self and community. The series' half-hour episodes — each consisting of two 11-minute stories — and digital games are now available on PBS KIDS.

Carl, a warm-hearted autistic raccoon who enjoys collecting things and loves his friends and family in Fuzzytown, pays extraordinarily close attention to detail and comes up with unique ideas that others might not consider. These traits have helped him amass his extensive collections — from autographs and bottle caps to fake mustaches, pet rocks, sweaters, and virtually everything in between — which can come in handy for solving problems around the neighborhood with his friends. Carl has a lot of energy and is logical and precise, yet he often struggles with anxiety in new situations and has difficulty when things don't go according to plan. Like all of his friends, he is learning that there is no right or wrong way to be himself.

Carl's friends include both neurotypical and neurodivergent characters, each with different traits, behaviors, learning preferences, and challenges. In Fuzzytown, the setting of Carl's adventures, everyone is coming to understand something about themselves and each other.

Carl's best friend, Sheldon, is a beaver who is a flexible thinker with a knack for connecting people and looking out for the underdog. Lotta, a quiet and self-assured fox, is also autistic. She experiences hypersensitivity to loud sounds, powerful smells, and certain food textures, and has exceptional talents in art and music. Nico and Arugula are twin bunny sisters who, despite being identical in appearance, couldn't be more different in personality. And Forrest, a hyperactive and impulsive squirrel with a tree-nut allergy, is always up for an adventure.

Advisors for the series include Dr. Geraldine Oades-Sese, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist, children's book author, and former Adjunct Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; Dr. Stephen Shore, an autistic professor of special education at Adelphi University and adjunct professor at New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development; and Deborah Farmer Kris, M.A., educator, author, parenting columnist, and consultant for PBS KIDS for Parents.

"As an autistic person, I continue to be amazed at the level of detail and effort the team expends to assure that Carl and Lotta are authentic to the autistic experience," said Dr. Shore. "In addition to being an interesting series, **CARL THE COLLECTOR** will become a great tool for both autistic and non-autistic people to gain insight on autism. Although designed for young kids, I plan on using relevant excerpts to supplement my university teaching and presentations around the world."

"CARL THE COLLECTOR values inclusion and empathy, while modeling relationship-building and social skill development, wrapped up in humor, heart, and incredible visual design. We are excited for children to get to know Carl and his group of friends, who believe that the best experiences occur when we honor the things that make each of us unique."

— Sara DeWitt, PBS KIDS Senior Vice President and General Manager

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More Awards for PBS Programs

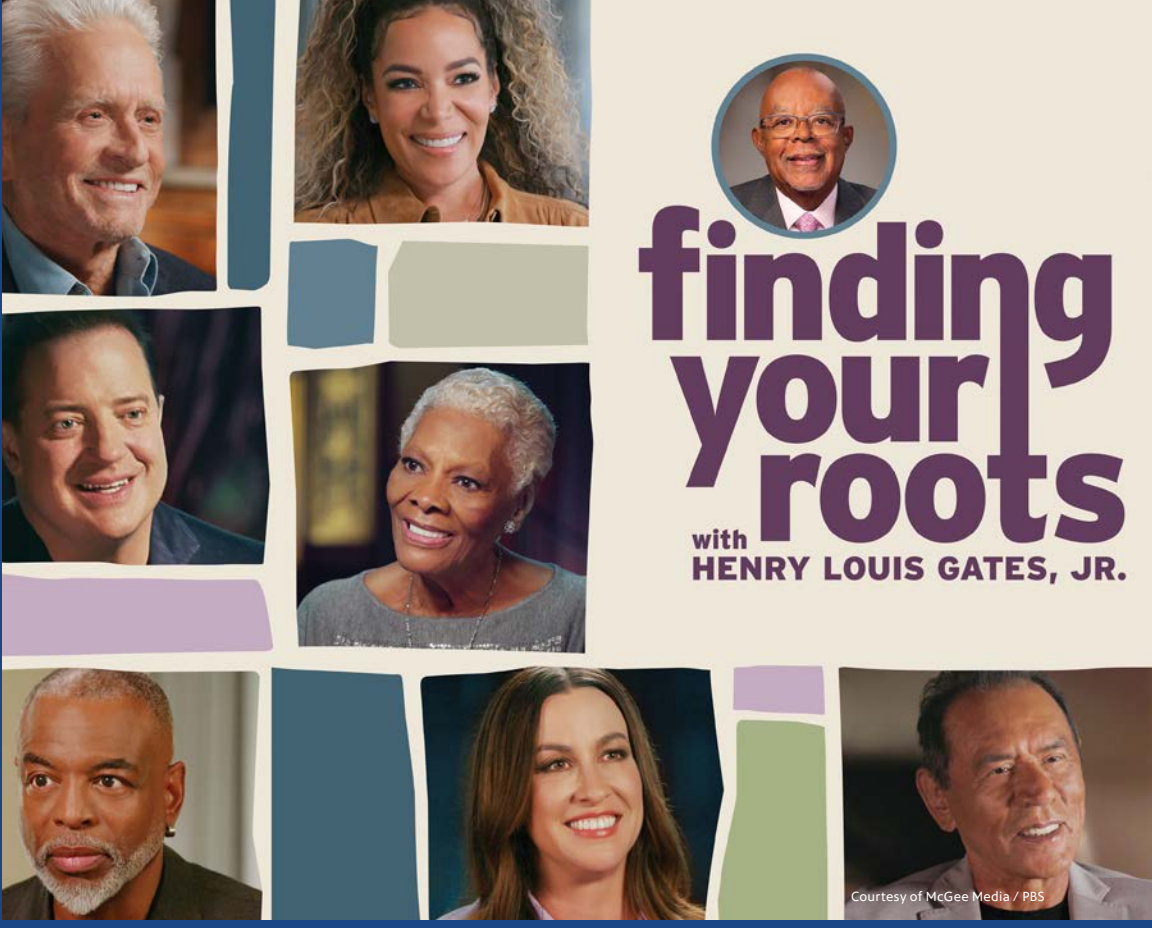
There is big news to share with PBS supporters in this issue of **Contributor**, as awards for PBS's programming keep piling up.

These awards, among the most prestigious in the business, speak not only to the quality and timeliness of our work, nor solely to the abilities of PBS on-camera talent in a variety of fields. They recognize the excellence of the entire organization.

This year, for the first time, **FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.,** now in its tenth season, was nominated for an Emmy in the category of Outstanding Hosted Nonfiction Series or Special. The series, hosted by Harvard professor Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., began in 2012 with a look into the family background of two guests who also happen to be outstanding musicians: Harry Connick Jr. and Branford Marsalis. From there, it has been one amazing discovery after another.

FINDING YOUR ROOTS uses two forms of research — written records and DNA testing — to uncover the family history of well-known Americans such as Danielle Brooks, LeVar Burton (featured as the central figure in the famed television mini-series "Roots"), Michael Douglas, Dionne Warwick, and others. The show's professionals typically spend hundreds of hours researching each guest. Guests leave with a keepsake book that contains detailed information about their history and genealogy — and for many it is a poignant and humbling experience.

Dr. Gates, known as "Skip" to his friends, is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard. Gates, who graduated from Yale in 1973, was a member of the first class of "genius grants" awarded by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998 became the first African American scholar to receive the National Humanities Medal.



Upon learning of his show's Emmy nomination, Gates remarked: "The stories that we tell each week remind us of two things: first, that — despite our apparent differences — at the level of the genome, we are all fundamentally related, and second, that the greatness of America is a result of the fact that we are a nation of immigrants, both willing and unwilling! I am thrilled that **FINDING YOUR ROOTS** was nominated for an Emmy Award. It is incredible to find such success in our 10th season. Our team works incredibly hard to bring these stories to life, and this recognition means the world to us all."

The 76th Primetime Emmy Awards show aired on September 15. **FINDING YOUR ROOTS** airs Tuesdays at 8/7c on PBS. And, of particular note, Dr. Gates's forthcoming film, **GREAT MIGRATIONS: A PEOPLE ON THE MOVE** will air on January 28, 2025. Of course it will air on PBS.

In other news of awards, the **FRONTLINE** documentary **"20 Days in Mariupol,"** written and directed by Mstyslav Chernov — having already won an Oscar, a Peabody (considered the Nobel Prize of media), a Pulitzer, a duPont-Columbia Award, and the Audience Award in the World Cinema

FRONTLINE
"20 Days in Mariupol"
Courtesy of AP Photo / Mstyslav Chernov

Documentary Competition at the Sundance Film Festival — continued its sweep of nearly every major award in television with wins at the 2024 Edward R. Murrow Awards, in the Feature Documentary category, and at the Overseas Press Club Awards.

"20 Days in Mariupol" is a first-hand account of fighting in Ukraine from an AP team of Ukrainian journalists who were trapped in the besieged city of Mariupol. Writer-director Chernov has said that he and his colleagues, the only international journalists left on the ground in Mariupol, were eventually hunted by Russian forces and had to be extricated from the city by a special Ukrainian task force. The film crew managed to smuggle 30 hours of footage past Russian checkpoints to leave the country. In an interview with a Hollywood reporter, Chernov confided that people kept coming up to his group saying, "You have to keep filming. You have to show this to the world. You have to make sure that this is all recorded." To Chernov, "It was such a big responsibility — not only a journalistic or documentary [responsibility], it was also just a civic responsibility to do this." The documentary is available on PBS.org.

The Peabody Award won by **"20 Days in Mariupol"** was one of five won this year by PBS and affiliated organizations, and among three that were won specifically by **FRONTLINE** productions. The Edward R. Murrow Award bestowed on **"20 Days in Mariupol"** was one of two handed out to PBS's **FRONTLINE**. The other Murrow award for a **FRONTLINE** documentary went to **"Inside the Uvalde Response,"** which was written and directed by Juanita Ceballos, and won in the News Documentary category.

Staying On Top of the Weather

If, like most of us, you wonder about the weather, have we got a show for you!

WEATHERED highlights the real stories of people affected by natural disasters across the country, and explains how families and communities can be better prepared for them. Over the past five years the show has enjoyed a huge success on PBS Digital Studios' Terra channel on YouTube, as well as on Facebook, PBS.org, and other platforms.

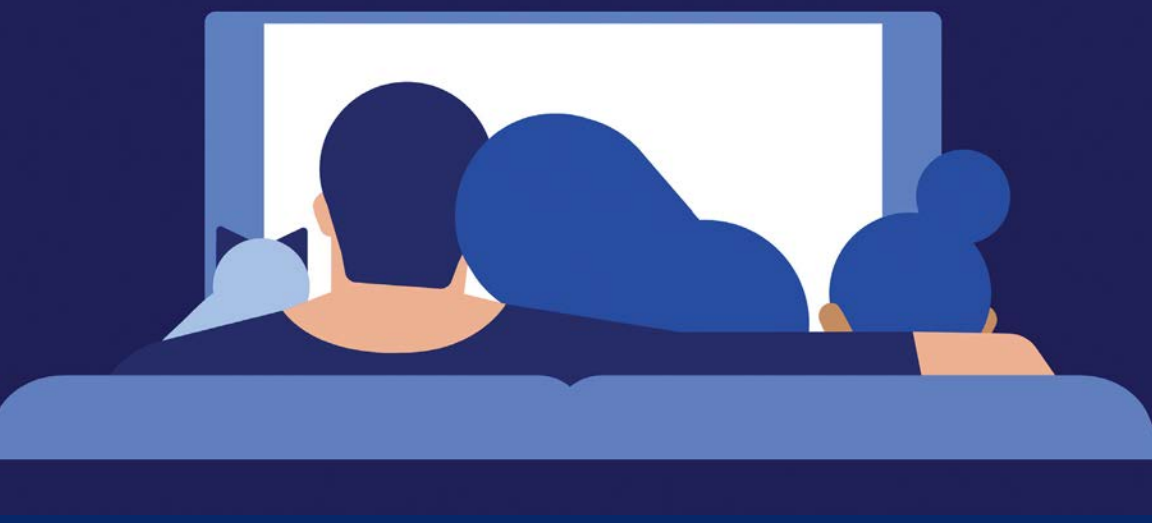
The host of **WEATHERED** is Maiya May, currently a weather producer for WSB-TV in Atlanta. During the years the show has been offered, it has received 33 million views, which equates to more than 2.4 million hours of viewing time from the public.

As a result of this success, PBS recently created a longer form of **WEATHERED**, consisting of 30-minute episodes that allow the storytelling to dig into its subject in greater depth. These longer episodes, ideal for viewing on the PBS app, began airing on October 2. By becoming the first PBS Digital Studios production to make the transition to the PBS app, **WEATHERED** is helping to establish a new business model for PBS. And this, in turn, says PBS's Adam Dylewski, creator of **WEATHERED**, is helping to make PBS "relevant for a new generation."

Feedback from viewers of both the short- and the long-form versions of **WEATHERED** continues to be wildly enthusiastic. One YouTube viewer wrote, "This is by far one of the best videos to introduce the climate problem to people who have no prior understanding of it, thank you so much!"

Another put that thought even more succinctly: "This is the best PBS show out there."

Courtesy of PBS Digital Studios



Beacon Society Spotlight: Peter J. and Phyllis E. Dalia

Finding Companionship, Comfort, and the Arts on South Florida PBS

Peter Dalia loved PBS. He relied on South Florida PBS — the member-station consortium that served Aventura, the community in South Florida where he and his wife Phyllis lived — for PBS's integrity and the breadth of programming that was available on a single channel. He was particularly fond of PBS's arts programming. **GREAT PERFORMANCES**, **AMERICAN MASTERS**, **LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER**, and **IN PERFORMANCE AT THE WHITE HOUSE** were his favorites.

When Peter passed away in 2013, Phyllis found herself turning to PBS as a source of comfort, finding joy in programs she knew Peter would love, and discovering a few more that grew to be her personal favorites. She and her pup, Pumpkin, spent many hours immersed in films by Ken Burns, watching **FRONTLINE**, and, of course, making sure they tuned in to the kind of live performances that Peter would have enjoyed. When Phyllis became terminally ill in 2023, her advisor contacted the PBS Foundation to find out how Phyllis could bequeath a legacy to the organization that had kept her connected to Peter through all those years, while honoring his lifelong appreciation of PBS. What she wanted most of all was to recognize her husband's loyalty to the arts on PBS.

PBS
BEACON SOCIETY

And because of that the PBS Foundation was named a 75 percent beneficiary of her estate, resulting in a sizeable gift. An additional gift went to South Florida PBS. Finally, another significant part of Phyllis's estate went to the Dumb Friends League in Denver, Colorado, because that's where she got her rescue dog, Pumpkin (by the way, Pumpkin has a lifetime trust set up for her care).

The bottom line is that when it came time to discern where a significant planned gift would be stewarded well, Phyllis E. Dahlia and her advisor quickly landed on PBS Foundation. She knew her gift would help secure the future of PBS. We are grateful for Phyllis's generosity, and touched by how much we impacted her and her husband's lives. Legacy gifts like this one safeguard PBS for future generations.

About the Beacon Society

By naming the PBS Foundation in your will, trust, or other gift plans, you become part of the PBS Beacon Society — a select circle of donors united by their love of PBS and desire for meaningful impact. The Beacon Society provides an exceptional opportunity to be part of a community of donors who value PBS as much as you do. By joining, you'll receive a special welcome gift, invitations to members-only events, and, of course, the satisfaction of knowing your membership may also inspire others to give. To learn more about the Beacon Society and other ways to strengthen PBS, visit **foundation.pbs.org**.

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