

CONTRIBUTOR



PBS Celebrates Earth Month

Programs, specials, and educational offerings highlight the environment

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A Message From the President

Dear Friends,

Every one of our programs ends with this phrase: “Thanks to viewers like you.” It’s a phrase we’ve used for so long that it can start to sound like background noise. But this past year has given those words entirely new meaning for me.

When federal funding was eliminated, something remarkable happened. Viewers like you came to the rescue. Not just in the first weeks, when the news was fresh and the outrage was high. They kept giving. Viewers, foundations, and donors large and small have continued to step up in ways I have never seen in my career. I’ve spoken with station leaders across the country, and they all say the same thing: people are still showing up, still giving generously, and still asking how they can help.

That kind of sustained support is extraordinary. It has allowed us not only to stabilize our system, but to lift our eyes and ask a bigger question: How do we emerge from this moment stronger, and better able to serve the communities counting on us?

That is the work we are focused on now. And this issue of Contributor offers a glimpse of what it looks like in action, from Earth Month programming to new PBS KIDS series to the storytelling of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

We cannot do this without you. And we are so grateful for your continued support.

Thank you for your support of our essential work.

Warmly,
Paula Kerger

PBS President & CEO
PBS Foundation President

New Shows From PBS, New Honors For Gates



HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

Image courtesy of McGee Media

BLACK AND JEWISH AMERICA: AN INTERWOVEN HISTORY, hosted by noted Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., aired in February as part of PBS's programming to mark Black History Month. The four-part series traced the complex relationship between Black and Jewish Americans, highlighting mutual fights against racism and antisemitism, pivotal moments like the "Grand Alliance" of the 1960s, and the evolving connections developed since the 1970s — exploring both the challenges and the enduring promise of the relationship between the Black and Jewish communities in America.

Thanks to programming like **BLACK AND JEWISH AMERICA**, PBS and Dr. Gates have recently received several NAACP Image Award nominations, which celebrate Black creativity and excellence across film, television, music, and literature. In fact, three of PBS's five nominations for 2025 were for programs created by Gates, including **FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.**, which was nominated as the

Outstanding News/Information Series on television (having been previously nominated for the award in 2015 and 2023). Gates also earned his first-ever nomination as host of **FINDING YOUR ROOTS**. In addition, an earlier four-part series hosted by Gates, **GREAT MIGRATIONS: A PEOPLE ON THE MOVE**, earned him, and PBS, a nomination for Outstanding Documentary.

Meanwhile, Season 12 of **FINDING YOUR ROOTS** got underway in January. For more than a decade now, Gates has helped to expand America's sense of itself through this series, stimulating a national conversation about identity with humor, wisdom, and compassion. He has explored the ancestry of hundreds of influential people from diverse backgrounds, taking viewers deep into the past to reveal the connections that bind us all.

PBS is proud of its ongoing relationship with Professor Gates, and particularly proud of the way **FINDING YOUR ROOTS** aligns with our values and our mission as a public service broadcaster.



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PBS KIDS: Programming That Resonates Throughout Children's Lives

For nearly 60 years, PBS KIDS has been at the forefront of children's media — pioneering educational content that is trusted by families, grounded in research, and always free. From **SESAME STREET** to **WILD KRATTS**, to the newest series **WEATHER HUNTERS** and **PHOEBE & JAY**, PBS KIDS continues to help generations learn and grow.

WEATHER HUNTERS made its debut in September 2025. This series, from the mind of “America’s weatherman,” Al Roker, is already a record-setting hit and has seen an exceptionally strong showing across broadcast, streaming, and on YouTube — the fastest growing platform for PBS KIDS. The series had over 41 million video streams and 4.5 million YouTube views in the first four weeks following its premiere.

WEATHER HUNTERS follows the adventures of the Hunter Family, which includes Lily Hunter, voiced by Tandi Fomukong; dad Al Hunter, voiced by Roker; mom Dot Hunter, voiced by Holly Robinson Peete; sister Corky, voiced by Kapri Ladd; brother Benny, voiced by Lorenzo Ross; Great-Grandpa Wallace, voiced by LeVar Burton; and neighbor Ms. Joyce, voiced by Sheryl Lee Ralph. Yvette Nicole Brown sings the catchy theme song. The story, in a nutshell, is that by way of an imaginative flying van, 8-year-old Lily and her family travel to and explore different weather events.

Born out of Al Roker’s desire to help kids understand how weather impacts people, communities, and our global society, **WEATHER HUNTERS** encourages an understanding of

Earth science based on a constant in everyday life — the weather. The show offers a wide range of learning opportunities, from understanding what a cumulus cloud is, to learning about disaster preparedness in an age-appropriate way.

Viewers have been writing in to share their appreciation for the new series, with one parent commenting, “Not only have my children gained a clearer understanding of weather — how it forms and the many components that shape it — but they also feel seen, heard, and valued as budding scientists.”

The exploration and adventure in **WEATHER HUNTERS** lends itself naturally to games, the number one way kids spend time on screen, and a core component of PBS KIDS’ multiplatform strategy. The new PBS KIDS game, “Weather Reporter,” debuted with the series in September and has seen 3.7 million game plays in its first four weeks.

Like **WEATHER HUNTERS**, the recently premiered series **PHOEBE & JAY** was designed to prepare and empower kids to navigate the world around them, this time through a foundational literacy curriculum.

“Every year, 40 percent of children enter kindergarten with literacy skills one to three years behind their grade level, creating a difficult gap for them to overcome,” says Sara DeWitt, Senior Vice President and General Manager, PBS KIDS and Education, “**PHOEBE & JAY’s** relatable characters, fun, family-centered stories, and foundational curriculum are there

to help equip young viewers nationwide with the everyday literacy skills they need to find success in school and in life.”

Created by Genie Deez and Thy Than, the fresh and engaging show introduces curiously charismatic 6-year-old fraternal twins Phoebe and Jay Yarber, part of a multigenerational household that includes their eternal optimist father, Pete, and loving, no-nonsense Grandma Annie in the closeknit community of Topsy Towers. The fantastical location was inspired by old grand hotels that have been repurposed into affordable apartments. Topsy Towers serves as a perfect setting for the tight-knit Yarber family, capturing experiences and learning opportunities for Phoebe and Jay.

PHOEBE & JAY’s timely literacy curriculum is designed to support preschoolers as they learn how to create and use the many types of functional texts that they encounter each day, from labels to signs and posters.

When asked what she hopes families will take away from the series, Thy Than, co-creator and executive producer, said, “I hope the show encourages kids to be more curious about their neighborhood and helpful in their families and communities. We designed **PHOEBE & JAY** with co-viewing in mind, so I hope it encourages big kids (adults) to remember the wonders of being a kid and allow their kids some space to safely explore on their own.” Co-creator Genie Deez adds, “Thy and I are PBS kids. We’ve always been fans and disciples of this institution.”



SHARED PLANET

“Waters”

Image courtesy of Maxwel Hohn



WILDING

Image courtesy of Simon De Glanville



OUR NEW WORLD

Image courtesy of Justin Purefoy / Boréales

Notes From A Warming Planet

A full-court press on science and the environment marks PBS’s programming for Earth Month, 2026

Earth Day was a good idea when it was first advocated as a national environmental teach-in, more than 55 years ago, by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson. It’s an even better one now — and a more important one than ever for our planet.

At PBS, it’s not a day any more, but a month in which programming focuses on a number of long-standing Earth Day

issues like conservation, as well as on more specific concerns that weren’t even on the drawing board in 1970, such as climate change, our dramatic and often devastating weather, clean energy, potable water, and the rapid extinction (and occasional resilience) of species.

The stories of then and now are worth telling in more detail, and so is the

story of the special programming PBS plans to feature this Earth Month across multiple platforms.

Prior to that first Earth Day — which took place on April 22, 1970, overpopulation and environmental issues were the main concern. Concerns about overpopulation were challenged from the start, but have largely been rejected in recent years. The environmental problems recognized at that time included air and water pollution; industrial, mainly chemical, contamination; toxic waste (including oil spills, etc.); pesticide use; and threats to the wilderness and wildlife.

These were not new realizations, but they came into focus in a new way on that first Earth Day, along with the realization that America lacked robust environmental laws and the governmental apparatus needed to enforce them. This resulted in the passage of myriad Federal, state, and local laws and regulations to deal with environmental issues, as well as the creation of new government entities like the Environmental Protection Agency to collect data and enforce the laws.

By any measure, the situation today is scientifically more nuanced and politically more complex than it was in 1970. Climate change (i.e., the profound effect on weather patterns spurred by rising global temperatures) is now seen as the most serious threat to our world. Thoughts about whether the trend is temporary and reversible, or permanent and irreversible, are still being debated, but there is broad consensus that the root of the problem

is carbon of all kinds getting into the atmosphere — from human-driven consumption of coal and oil, from wildfires and intentional deforestation, from the thawing of permafrost, from myriad sources. It is now scientifically clear that CO₂ and other “greenhouse” gasses are more prevalent in our atmosphere than at any time in human history, leading to a planet-wide greenhouse effect that has been marked by rising temperatures and increasingly severe weather.

With this realization have come numerous specific concerns, some downright frightening, about the continued consumption of natural resources, especially fossil fuels; the lasting effects of extreme weather events; the global impact of melting ice caps and sea-level rise; the long-term effects of deforestation and loss of biodiversity; mass extinction events; pollution caused by plastics and other non-biodegradable materials; widespread drought; and the scarcity of potable water.

In other words, today’s emphasis has shifted noticeably from concerns about population growth and human suffering *per se* — and the call-to-action those issues produced — to a much deeper realization that climate change, the ongoing extraction and consumption of non-renewable resources like coal and oil, and the weight of urban and suburban development are, in concert, likely to have a catastrophic impact on the entire planet and all the forms of life it sustains. This new understanding of climate danger has produced a new call-to-action that demands global cooperation and an enormous

expenditure of human and economic capital if large parts of our world are to remain habitable.

Throughout the month of April, and beyond, PBS will feature programming that touches on our concern for the planet and its species. Here are some of the highlights:

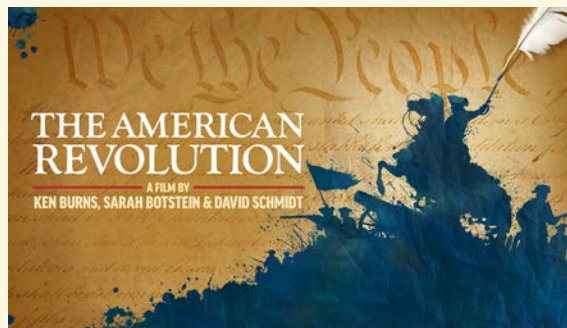
On April 1 and April 8, at 10 p.m. ET, the two-part **OUR NEW WORLD** will look at how entire ecosystems are being reshaped and how animals and plants are adapting to the change. Programming for Earth Day proper, April 22, kicks off at 9 p.m. with a new episode of **NOVA** titled “Rain Bombs,” in which scientists investigate how these catastrophic weather events form, with the hope of someday learning how to predict them. That will be followed at 10 p.m. by **WILDING**, a 90-minute special based on Isabella Tree’s best-selling book by the same title — in which a young English couple bets on nature

for the future of their four-hundred-year-old estate by setting the land back to its natural condition and entrusting its recovery to a motley mix of animals both tame and wild. The unique four-part series **SHARED PLANET** makes its debut at 10 p.m. on April 29, with successive episodes following on May 6, May 13, and May 20. The series will delve into the untold stories of people and wildlife thriving together, using stunning cinematography to celebrate the benefits of making room for nature.

Additionally, both PBS KIDS and PBS LearningMedia will highlight environmental issues in their offerings this spring, and Digital Studios plans to connect its blockbuster series **WEATHERED** to Earth Month as well. PBS continues to make content available to the public on a wide variety of easily accessible platforms, including broadcast, OTT (over-the-top streaming), and the free PBS app. All as part of PBS’s commitment to exploring the world in which we live.

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION Reminds Us That Patriotism Matters More Than Ever

Right from the start, **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** — the 12-hour documentary directed by Ken Burns, Sarah Botstein and David Schmidt that originally aired in November of 2025 — established viewing and streaming benchmarks for PBS content. And the series is still going strong. In the week of its initial release, it achieved the



second highest reach ever for a Ken Burns/Florentine Films series on linear TV. That same week, it posted the six highest daily streaming totals for PBS, and the highest one-week streaming total ever.

As a result, **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** became the first PBS series to earn a spot on Nielsen's weekly streaming rankings, landing in the No. 10 spot among acquired series. Viewers watched 565 million minutes of it during that first week. Within the initial 28-day streaming window, **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** racked up a record total of 11 million streams, another benchmark for a Ken Burns/Florentine Film series, on PBS digital platforms.

On television, the household rating for episode one of **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** (titled "In Order to Be Free") quadrupled the PBS primetime average. Additionally, that opening salvo of the series posted the highest household rating for a history show on PBS since the first episode of **THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST** premiered three years ago. In fact, each episode of **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** exceeded PBS's TV and streaming expectations, and the series continues to add more than 100,000 streams, per day, to its total.

As of the latest tally, **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** has been seen by 15.4 million unique viewers on broadcast TV. Its content has generated 14 million streams to-date, including 11 million full episode streams, resulting in a combined total of 43 million hours of viewing on PBS streaming platforms and over broadcast TV

since its November 2025 launch. Repeat airings of the entire series remain a major feature of member-station programming.

Additional engagement activities for **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION** have been abundant and equally successful. PBS's social media campaign has garnered 16 million social video views and reached the largest social-media audience ever for a documentary produced by Florentine Films. Already, in conjunction with PBS member stations and local partners, the filmmakers have undertaken a major tour of the United States, starting well before the first airing of the documentary. There have been screenings and guided discussions throughout the nation on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis — these will continue up to, and through, the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026.

Finally, PBS LearningMedia, in conjunction with station partners and national and local organizations, has been developing digital resources and professional learning opportunities for educators and students in grades 3-12. These classroom resources and events delve into the themes of **THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**, providing teaching tips, discussion questions, activity suggestions and digital content to enrich student learning and elevate teacher effectiveness and student achievement — all with the goal of making history resonate with today's youth. Support for these activities has been provided in part by grants from the Kern Family Foundation and from Burns's long-time underwriter, Bank of America.



Praise From Viewers Like You

At PBS, and at member stations around the country, we get lots of thanks, and praise, from viewers for whom PBS programming is an essential part of their lives. Occasionally, these viewers reach out to us to tell us something special about the work we do and the impact it has had on the lives of people they know — whether it's on members of their families, children in their communities, or friends. Receiving notes like these means a great deal to us, because sentiments such as these remind us that while “broadcasting” is what we do, “public” and “service” are our first and last names, and the reason we do what we do.

Here's an example from Irene Joseph, a major donor to **BIG CATS 24/7**:

*I just wanted to let you know that the **BIG CATS 24/7** series has had a huge impact on some of my younger friends with children! I am so beyond happy with the series, that I just had to let you know the impressions that have been made on future generations in this world.*

One child is now pronouncing the animal's name “zebra,” not “zeebra”....and correcting her parents! She also wants to know what has happened with the leopard cubs that she was following. Thank goodness the parents are there to reflect upon nature and the circle of life with her.

Another child (8 years old) has made a presentation to her class depicting the African savannah made of natural grasses, “trees,” and water holes with buffalo and lions and elephants!



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.

And another child can't wait to go on safari in Africa. Then there's a five-year-old who already knows the location of Africa!! (I didn't know where it was until after grade school!).

This is just in my local area!

Another person wrote to us about something that recently happened at PBS member station WUCF in Florida:

We met a young lady named Eliza who heard about Federal funding being cut for PBS, and had asked her father what that meant. He explained to her that it meant that PBS, PBS KIDS, and member stations didn't have the money they once did and that it probably meant that some things might go away and stations might have to change how they do things.

*Eliza is a huge PBS KIDS fan and her favorite show is **WILD KRATTS**. So, using what she learned from her dad and PBS KIDS, Eliza made a plan. She started creating her own shell bracelets and necklaces and began selling them to raise money. She came to Be My Neighbor Day and donated \$120 she had earned through selling her bracelets and necklaces to WUCF.*

It was an amazing gesture and bold statement. We were blown away.

Finally, here's a note to us in the form of a letter to all PBS viewers, from the Morriss Family in Colorado:

*Our family grew up with PBS — even the oldest of us! We enjoyed the educational and nature programming as children before turning to programs such as **PBS NEWS HOUR, GREAT PERFORMANCES, FRONTLINE,***

***WASHINGTON WEEK WITH THE ATLANTIC**, and the many wonderful dramas on **MASTERPIECE**. PBS has helped us grow as informed citizens, and we cannot imagine life without it. That is why we all support PBS at both the local and national levels through our regular donations. We hope you will join us in supporting public television!*

We at the PBS Foundation couldn't agree more whole-heartedly with the sentiments expressed in these notes from our friends around the country. Hearing news like this brightens our day. We hope it does the same for yours.

And if you have stories to tell, we'd love to hear them...

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