Dear Austin PBS Member,

Austin PBS’s commitment to serving the communities of Central Texas was never more evident than during the transitional year that was 2021. From vaccines to variants to boosters, Austin PBS has remained on course providing high quality public media services for all of our neighbors.

As a member and donor, you have played a vital role in this achievement, and this 2021 Impact Report is for you. It is part of our promise to share with you the details of some key areas in which your investment directly benefited your neighbors in Central Texas.

I hope you take a moment to explore these pages and learn more about the good work that you made possible. Each story you read will show you how Austin PBS serves as a bridge for those seeking trustworthy information, fulfilling entertainment, educational tools for children, and other essential resources.

We will very soon find ourselves gathering in our new home at Austin Community College Highland, where state-of-the-art equipment and inviting spaces will create a vibrant public square for us all. Until then, thank you for supporting Austin PBS. We look forward to sharing an impactful and exciting 2022 with you.

Sincerely,

Ryan Nixon
Chair, Austin PBS Board of Directors

Since 1962, Austin PBS has been a part of Central Texas, delivering public media content and services that educate, entertain and inspire. As our region continues to grow in population and popularity, Austin PBS strives everyday to connect people to places, resources, experiences and one another.

Through long-running music show Austin City Limits and other local favorites, such as Central Texas Gardener and Overheard with Evan Smith, Austin PBS brings the people of Central Texas together through the connective power of captivating programming. Local documentaries, like Juneteenth Jamboree and Anderson Yellow Jackets, unite audiences and connect generations by telling our community’s unique history, cultures and perspectives.

With digital-first initiatives like Decibel and ATX Together, Austin PBS is committed to addressing community issues through first-person storytelling and meaningful dialogue.

In addition to broadcast programming, Austin PBS uses media for good in the areas of arts, education and news and public affairs to inspire thoughtful discussion and affect positive community change through digital resources, outreach projects, hands-on workshops and events.

Our long-standing commitment to education, with a focus on school readiness and skills development, is helping address gaps in early education and advance learning across the region. With over 10,000 hours of curriculum-based programming and hundreds of educational workshops and outreach events, Austin PBS is preparing Central Texas kids for success in school and life.

Serving as a trusted source for news and information, Austin PBS seeks to tell real stories that engage the community and drive meaningful conversations. Through screenings, panel discussions, town halls and other special events, the station is creating a more informed citizenry and inspiring action for change.

Community is at the center of everything we do and the impact we seek to achieve. As a distinguished, award winning, community-owned PBS station with over 30,000 supporters, Austin PBS serves as a bridge to the community, providing essential services to 3 million potential viewers in more than 20 counties across the region.

Collectively, Austin PBS programming engages approximately 500,000 Central Texans a week that is nearly evenly distributed among households with varying income and education levels and racial and ethnic identities. With more than 35,000 hours of on-air programming each year and wide-ranging content available over multiple platforms, Austin PBS is one of the only nonprofits in Central Texas with the potential to touch nearly every household every day.
Moving Forward

Austin PBS continues to move toward a bold new future in the form of a brand new home — the Austin Media Center — and partnership with Austin Community College (ACC) at their Highland Campus. From here, Austin PBS strives to have greater community impact in the following ways:

**Amplify Community Solutions:** As a trusted storyteller, Austin PBS can be counted on for the right balance of insight, information and enrichment that helps foster civic engagement as a tool for lasting change.

**Connect People with Resources:** As a connector, Austin PBS proudly serves and brings together our diverse and changing community, through digital resources, outreach projects, hands-on workshops and events.

**Bring Communities Together:** As a convener, Austin PBS brings Central Texans together in a variety of ways to engage in meaningful conversations and bridge understanding among neighbors.

**Celebrate Austin and Central Texas:** As an innovator, Austin PBS spotlights this vibrant city and region we call home and shares what makes it special from our entertainment scene and arts and cultural communities to our rich and diverse history.

The new Highland location, a 45,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility provides the opportunity to more broadly engage with the community. The move allows Austin PBS to be more accessible and flexible, granting the ability to help strengthen the community’s educational, social, democratic and cultural health.

The Austin Media Center will serve as a base from which Central Texans can gather, learn, share and create, and a platform for expanded and innovative public media initiatives, like the ones below:

- **Austin PBS’s Educational Media Center (EMC):** The first-of-its-kind virtual and physical site for the distribution of trusted and proven educational media and guidance on its effective uses. Blending an array of new and pioneering Austin PBS educational programming and services aimed at improving school readiness and learning outcomes across all ages, the EMC will connect educators, parents, caregivers and children and provide a fun and welcoming space to gather for family workshops, professional learning, creative play and more.

- **Austin PBS’s Media Resource Center (MRC):** A physical and digital hub dedicated to the creation and implementation of public media content and services that meet community needs and spur civic engagement. As a center of excellence, the MRC will bring together opportunities for next-generation experimentation, innovation and training to ensure public media’s health and future.
Decibel Joins America Amplified

Austin PBS was one of 20 public media stations (and the only public television station) awarded $20,000 and selected as part of the America Amplified initiative for our community-led journalism project, Decibel. The initiative prioritizes meaningful in-person and online conversations in order to build trust, expand audiences and deepen the impact of public media journalism.

Because of ongoing concerns around the pandemic, Decibel will be using tools such as crowd-sourcing, virtual town halls, polls and social media to listen first to the concerns and aspirations of Central Texans. Whenever possible, Decibel will also host live events and meetings with community members to fulfill the America Amplified goals.

Austin PBS Receives Grant Toward Interns And News

The Bernard & Audre Rapoport Foundation awarded Austin PBS a $25,000 grant to support the station's award-winning news and civic engagement programming and growing internship program. The purpose of the grant is to leverage the power of public media for good by sustaining current Austin PBS news and civic engagement programs, such as Decibel and ATX Together, while also providing internships that will help shape the next generation of public media journalists.

This grant makes it possible for the station to continue delivering the highest quality content throughout Central Texas to meet the rising demand for reliable, informative and solutions-based dialogue and action.

Trustworthy Information

The maxim, as local news goes, so goes citizen engagement, has been a guiding principle for Austin PBS, earning the station the role of a trusted and reliable news source and partner in the civic life of Central Texans. Today, the station's enduring belief is reflected in our local news and civic/public affairs initiatives, ATX Together and Decibel, through which Austin PBS delivers quality local news that informs, shares diverse voices and stories, encourages collaboration, and empowers viewers to hold civic institutions accountable.

ATX Together is a livestream discussion of complex regional issues with community leaders and key stakeholders. Participants share viewpoints in thought-provoking, balanced conversations to encourage further civic dialogue. ATX Together provides a safe space to bring diverse, vital voices together to look for solutions to community concerns and issues.

Topics covered this past year ranged from homelessness to the future of the infrastructural highway, I-35, running through our city, the roots of racism to mental health, vaccinations and more. What sets ATX Together apart is our ability to adapt and respond to foster discussion around issues as they arise. In partnership with Leadership Austin's Engage Series, we were able to convene a conversation in December after a number of anti-semitic incidents that took place across the Central Texas community.

Decibel is a community-led journalism project, amplifying diverse voices in Central Texas through in-depth listening and storytelling. Decibel's storytelling seeks to highlight the complex conversations happening in local communities. Austin PBS has deliberately designed our Decibel newsroom to operate unlike a traditional one with daily deadlines and journalist-driven. Instead, Decibel follows a five-step editorial strategy: Step 1: Choose a community; Step 2: Visit & Listen; Step 3: Research & Development; Step 4: Create Content; and Step 5: Keep the conversation going. Decibel is also a digital-first model and therefore not tied to broadcast schedules despite being housed in a public media station and its stories can be published at any time. This model supports what we know about our station viewers: they pursue news and information on their own time and on their own terms, connecting with others they trust and who share and help satisfy their curiosity about things around them.

In March of 2021, the Decibel team announced they were shifting their reporting focus to Del Valle for an entire year. Decibel hosted 5 community listening events to discuss story ideas and community issues, and solicited feedback on a range of stories from traffic and transportation to tamales.
Fulfilling Entertainment

While masks and vaccines have allowed us to physically come closer to one another, Austin PBS believes access to culturally enriching content has enabled us to be closer as a community.

One of the longest-running Austin PBS productions, Central Texas Gardener has been a weekly program featuring studio segments and an array of content shot in the field. The program takes brand-new and seasoned gardeners down a sustainable garden path with hands-on how-to-organic techniques, water-wise plants, homegrown food and behind-the-scenes tours of Texas gardeners at home.

While the ongoing pandemic and continued lack of studio space this year presented a challenge, it didn’t hold the producer of Central Texas Gardener back from creating new content and engaging with green thumb enthusiasts. Linda Lehmusvirta forged on creating digital-first content from her home and when conditions allowed, resumed outdoor filming of local area gardens and how-to segments for the popular Central Texas Gardener newsletter, blog and website. Flexing her creativity to adapt to new circumstances, Linda was also able to build new relationships across the state and the country, effectively growing and expanding the mission of the show to include experts and novices from all walks and areas of life.

Stories from featured guests about developing and pursuing their mission through botany and horticulture, art, science, environment, business, and economic and social justice — like Jennifer Jewel, host of the public radio program and podcast Cultivating Place: Conversations on Natural History and the Human Impulse to Garden — inspired new content ideas for Central Texas Gardener. “Black Lives Veggies: A Growing Movement” is about a landscaper and gardener who recognized a need for access to healthy food in underserved communities. With his nonprofit team and volunteers, he builds garden beds in community spaces, delivers plants, and teaches families how to grow their own food.

With gardening becoming a popular hobby among those looking for peace during these challenging times, it’s no surprise that this year, Central Texas Gardener digital properties surpassed one million views!

Showcasing the Work of Local Arts Organizations, Producers & Filmmakers

As both creators and distributors of original content, Austin PBS served as a presenting station for local content creators and producers. These are some of the documentaries and programs that reflected the uniqueness, creativity and culture of Central Texas with audiences near and far. Austin Opera All-Star Concert is a dazzling concert by Austin Opera filmed live at the Long Center in Austin, Texas. Viewers heard the most passionate arias and duets in all of opera, plus selections from Broadway and the American Songbook from Isabel Leonard, Ryan Spedo Green, Sara Gartland, Chad Shelton and the Austin Opera Orchestra conducted by Timothy Myers.

Lift Me Up chronicles the journey of six Austin musicians to international music festivals around the world. Everything was going great until the pandemic changed their plans. Featuring music from Jonathan Horstmann of Urban Heat, Leslie Sisson of Moving Panoramas, Alesia Lani, Mike St.Claire of Pocket Sounds, Kathryn Legendre, and Evan Charles of Altarneas.

Nothing Stays The Same: The Story of the Saxon Pub celebrates the last 30 years of live music in Austin, Texas while also examining the challenges faced by musicians and music venues. The story tells how owners Joe and Judy Ables were able to build a popular and lasting music venue.

Preludes/Beginnings is an Emmy-nominated dance film featuring Ballet Austin. Whispers of the past and present come together in the darkness of the theater. Honoring a tradition as old as theaters themselves, the “ghost light” looms at the edge of the stage to ward off spirits of the night.

The Path to Racial Equity is a series of six programs from the LBJ Foundation that examine the issues surrounding racial equity and offer simple, practical steps each of us can take to create change and be part of the solution in our communities. Despite the historic civil rights advancements of the 1960s, recent events remind us that systemic inequity continues to persist in our nation, including in our own communities. Austin PBS also continued to host interactive experiences with online audiences, including special screenings using the OVEE platform.

When I Rise in partnership with The Paramount Theatre

This film follows Barbara Smith Conrad, a gifted Black music student at The University of Texas at Austin who is thrust into a civil rights storm that changes her life forever. The event featured a live Q&A moderated by Dr. Dwonna Goldstone, Director of the African American Studies Program at Texas State University. Producer Dr. Don Carleton and Director Mat Hames were joined by Eva Goins Simmons, one of the first Black undergraduate students to attend UT. A live performance by Icy Simpson, a recent UT opera graduate, was also part of the program.

Over 400 teachers registered for the asynchronous version of When I Rise, accompanied by a learning guide for lesson planning. Chorus Austin performances of Keeping the Light & Southwest Voices She Sings These musical events welcomed over 200 virtual guests combined, with an active chat audience. And despite being free to attend, Chorus Austin received nearly $1,000 in donations!
Early Learning

Austin PBS was one of ten PBS stations awarded a $7,500 grant from Sesame Workshop and WNET to conduct critical outreach to caregivers, families and children in the rural areas surrounding our station who, because of barriers to transportation, internet connectivity and other needs, are unable to regularly engage with the station.

Texas Mutual Insurance awarded $87,500 in grant funding to support childcare centers, providers and families served in eastern Travis County, Williamson County, and Bastrop County. Serving as frontline partners in early learning, these childcare centers will receive equipment, educational media resources, and monthly guidance on their effective uses.

American Graduate

In 2021, Austin PBS wrapped up our American Graduate work, hosting two virtual focus groups and a virtual celebration event with all of our community partners and participants. While the grant period has ended, we know there are many opportunities that allow us to continue to highlight and share our work around workforce development. Austin PBS’s American Graduate resources remain in use for our partners and we intend to host informational sessions on an as-requested basis, especially for the most vulnerable. And our move to ACC Highland will prompt discussions on how the media can help build awareness and engagement in their workforce programs.

Educational Tools

As a community-licensed public television station, our long-standing commitment and level of investment in educational services truly distinguishes us from other PBS stations. While our focus on education, specifically school readiness and skills development, has remained the same, our approach and platforms by which we deliver educational programming and services to the community continue to evolve.

With the ongoing pandemic, our Educational Services team continuously became more innovative and creative about ways to keep families engaged on phone calls or Zoom meetings, remaining flexible to accommodate different situations as they come up. Fostering a culture where educational media is seen as an entertainment choice, our team helped participating families understand both the benefits and limits of screen-based media. And it’s not just families that found Austin PBS’s educational resources invaluable during this time. Many educators found support through the integration of Austin PBS programming and PBS LearningMedia into their weekly lesson planning.

Austin City Limits In The Classroom

The talent and passion showcased on Austin City Limits (ACL) is bringing learning opportunities, along with much-needed arts education, to students around the country through PBS LearningMedia.

Introducing “Season 1” of Austin PBS’s newest education collection, Austin City Limits: Lessons From The Show takes video clips from recent ACL episodes and connects them to classroom learning, with lessons that ask students to critically analyze aspects of on-stage performances. The educational activities include prompts around literary readings, vocabulary, musical composition, geography and more. There are currently 10 different artist-specific sections, covering a wide range of genres and musical eras: Rosalía, The Raconteurs, Willie Nelson, John Legend and The Roots, August Greene, Alessia Cara, Brandi Carlile, Billie Eilish, H.E.R. and The Pretenders.

National use of local Austin PBS LearningMedia resources tripled after unveiling Austin City Limits: Lessons From The Show!

Bringing Connected Devices to the Community

Austin PBS’s Education Services coordinated with The Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) to lend out Chromebooks to our neighbors who lacked computing devices at home. We heard back from Barbara Jackson, HACA’s project director, about some of the success that Chromebook recipients achieved.

“One resident has completed technology training and paraprofessional certification with Austin Community College. She is now working with youth to support their remote learning and helps parents access the AISD parent cloud. Last night she joined us in a Zoom training and told us the kids she works with think she’s cool because she has the same computers that they use for school. Another resident was able to complete and pass her paraprofessional certification exam with a loaned Chromebook when her own computer suddenly stopped working. This resident is now able to move on to the internship part of the para-ed program. The rest of the loaned Chromebooks will go out to a new group of resident para-ed recruits that will start training soon.”

Austi PBS also partners with HACA to host family learning workshops with residents. HACA’s Ross Health and Wellness Specialist, Dominique Sam, shared why she finds these workshops beneficial to the families she helps recruit: “I see families grow. I see kids being able to socialize with their friends. And it’s great having a program where kids [receive] tablets... It’s a great reward for the kids because some of the parents say they wish they could do more for their kids. Having that opportunity to connect with their kids is a wonderful feeling.”
Essential Resources

This year a number of community organizations featured Austin PBS content to help share knowledge, foster understanding and build connections among their members.

The YMCA utilized our locally-produced Austin Revealed: Civil Rights Stories series to foster discussion on racial equity with their employees. They said it “educated staff on the history of racism in Austin and sparked good discussion on how racism still exists today.”

Another program making a difference is ATX Together: Roots of Racism in Austin. The Austin Bar Association screened it during their inaugural virtual Equity Summit.

Thinkery shared clips from our Austin Revealed: Pioneers from the East series at their Community Night during Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Their monthly event series presents performances and educational activities, facilitated by Thinkery staff and community presenters, that celebrate a different aspect of the rich diversity that makes Austin such a fantastic place to live, play and learn.

Bringing Together a Community of Caregivers

On November 2, in partnership with St. David’s Foundation and AARP Texas, Austin PBS invited the community to Healthy Perspectives: Caring For Caregivers, a free virtual film screening and panel discussion surrounding the training, support and financial assistance needed for those providing end-of-life care to a loved one.

Austin PBS received almost 400 RSVPs and welcomed 183 guests to the online event!

Together we watched the award-winning short film Caregiver: A Love Story. In this story one man struggles as he cares for his dying wife. When 59-year-old Bambi decides to forgo further treatment for her cancer and die at home, her husband Rick leaves his job to become her primary caregiver.

Afterward the director, Dr. Jessica Zitter, and a group of local policy experts engaged with the virtual audience about the demands that family members take on when acting as a caregiver. This led to great back and forth conversation with the panelists and among our attendees who furthered the discussion in the chat. Throughout the event, attendees connected with each other in the chat, asking and answering questions, offering advice and perspective and sharing their own personal experiences with others who understand and could offer words of support.
Austin PBS’s Farewell to Studio 6A

An intimate crowd of donors helped Austin PBS say our final goodbye to legendary Studio 6A over two nights on July 20 and 21. And gracing the original stage for his third and fourth time was Garth Brooks playing a one-of-a-kind acoustic set.

Garth Brooks was originally scheduled to perform our goodbye to Studio 6A in 2020, but when the pandemic made that untenable, he worked with us to reschedule for a safer moment in 2021. No one else could have brought quite the gravitas or emotional connection to such a significant event series. Each night Brooks engaged with the attendees, talking about songwriting, the music business and family life. He also took requests and shared candid moments with a thrilled audience.

This was also the last chance for both ticket holders and staff to get photos in front of the historic Austin skyline backdrop that set the stage for every Austin City Limits episode from Seasons 7 to 36.

Adding to the celebratory nature of the two nights was signage around the walls and tables detailing fun facts about Austin City Limits, including the history of our old piano and rugs. Those same rugs, on which famous artists walked, danced and sang for decades, were brought out one last time and arranged on the floor in the studio. And the original in-house (and out of tune) piano, donated by The University of Texas’ school of music in the 1970s, was also standing in as a reminder of all the brilliant musicians who had once played its keys, such as Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, Fats Domino, Dr. John, Allen Toussaint, Marcia Ball, Floyd Cramer and Willie Nelson’s sister Bobbie Nelson.

This amazing set of shows not only allowed us to give Studio 6A the farewell it deserved, but also helped Austin PBS raise funds to support our Moving Forward Campaign.

Your Support Makes Our Work Possible

Austin PBS’s annual support overwhelmingly comes from the Central Texas community, with only 8% received from federal funding. Diversified revenue streams, including corporations, foundations and individual donors just like you, continue to help us fulfill our essential public service mission.

Our community remains our greatest priority and source for inspiration. Despite this time of challenge and disruption to the station and its operations due to the pandemic, the community has steadfastly been there for us — allowing Austin PBS to be there for Central Texans as an important voice and trusted source of information. 2022 will be no different. With the support of our community, we are looking ahead with hope, excitement, and a whole lot of gratitude.

Thank you for coming along with us.