WHRO Public Media is dedicated to expanding minds, enriching lives, and enhancing education through the power of public media.

WHRO is a valuable part of eastern Virginia’s advancement.

21 local public school divisions own WHRO.

WHRO provides digital education courses and video streaming services to local students.

WHRO engages the community through its media services and fosters community conversations on important issues.

In 2020, WHRO provided vital local services:

Created and produced two seasons of state-wide televised teacher lead instruction to students in grades K-12 who were unable to access distance learning options.

Produced award-winning content for television, radio and digital platforms that focused on the pandemic, education, race, arts, sea level rise, and other topics of interest in our community.

WHRO’s local services had deep impact in eastern Virginia.

WHRO broadcast services cover just over two million households in eastern Virginia.

184,266 educators and students across Virginia accessed tens of thousands of searchable, SOL-correlated, rich-media learning objects through eMediaVA, the on-demand digital content delivery service owned by WHRO.

“The wonderful Christmas music presented on 90.3 this year was just remarkable. Just what I needed to ‘calm the soul’. Also, I really enjoy the forays into local journalism being made on 89.5, I think that is a good move when good local coverage is hard to come by.”

- Leslie Bowens, Williamsburg
WHRO Public Media

Long known for its public service mission, WHRO Public Media is the only public broadcasting station in the United States that is owned by 21 public school divisions. Since its founding in 1961, as Home Room One, the ownership has established educational programming and services as WHRO’s core mission. As WHRO continues its efforts to meet critical challenges faced within the community such as early childhood education, local journalism, civility and sea level rise, inequity and justice, and veterans and the military. Our goal is clear: to be an important partner in improving the future for generations to come.

Through its ownership and its outreach, WHRO is a distinctive institution that links diverse constituents throughout eastern Virginia. Whether on radio, television, in the classroom or on the digital platform, most residents are touched in some way by the services that WHRO Public Media offers.

- eMediaVA, a service of WHRO Education is an on-demand digital content delivery system that currently offers over tens of thousands of searchable, digital learning objects, including regionally produced and acquired content from Virginia educational, scientific, and cultural organizations, content from across the nation through PBS Learning Media and content produced by WHRO’s digital learning and production departments. eMediaVA is available free of charge to every public, private, and homeschool educator in Virginia through a contract with the Virginia Department of Education and local philanthropic funding and is an integral component of the VDOE’s long-term virtual learning strategy.

- In August 2019, Governor Ralph Northam directed the Virginia Department of Education to collaborate with WHRO Public Media, and committees of history teachers, historians, and history professors to develop a new African American history course for high school students. The full-credit course introduces students to key concepts in African American history, from early beginnings in Africa through the transatlantic slave trade, the Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights era to the present. These are being piloted in 16 Virginia school divisions.

- WHRO’s Literacy Van made several visits across the region in 2020. Inside the van, children find age appropriate books and games. In addition, the WHRO STEM Van, equipped with 20 iPads, twelve Chromebooks, and two touch screen monitors purchased with CPB funds, and featuring a “pop-up makerspace” made numerous visits to local festivals and events and to Title I kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms in 2020. While van visits have been suspended due to the pandemic, we are preparing for future visits when we can safely visit our schools.

- In its first full year of operation, the WHRO newsroom has impacted our community; Key reporting focused on housing and eviction laws, inequity and justice, the pandemic, and military and veterans. The team created a diversity tracker to use across the newsroom for sources, talk show guests, and experts. As an organization, we made a conscious decision to focus on longer more contextual reporting on a few focus areas.
• WHRO celebrated the fifth anniversary of the WHRO Emerging Leaders Board. The board’s mission is to seek opportunities to engage new and diverse audiences in public media. With authenticity and engagement at its core, the ELB’s most striking success has been their Emerging Talks Series, where they host public conversations about local issues, developments, and other topics of interest. In partnership with Independent Lens/POV, the ELB has hosted five Indie Lens Pop-Ups in 2020. We are proud to share that one ELB member has joined our governing board and one has joined the WHRO team as our grants manager.

• WHRV’s local radio program HearSay with Cathy Lewis, in its 24th year of production, continues to address concerns important to our community. Topics range from local and national politics, civility, and sea level rise to the latest healthcare information centered on the pandemic. HearSay broadcasts live Monday through Wednesday at noon.

• WHRO released a new podcast series on iTunes and on WHRO.org. Arts Undercurrent celebrates local artists, performers, directors, and the stories behind their creations. Continuing podcasts include What We Do, WHRO Reports, Birdnotes, and Out of the Box Album of the Week.

• Watching America, celebrating its second year, is a weekly program hosted by British born professor Dr. Alan Campbell. The program combines interviews, and deep dive talks into our local and national culture through the eloquent and ever curious lens of a “Brit” who has spent over two decades ‘figuring it out’; Watching America. The program airs Friday at noon and rounds out the week of locally produced programs in the noon hour.

• WHRO in partnership with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and The Virginia Aquarium, produced a video series titled Project Earth. The series takes a deep dive into the environmental science issues that impact our daily lives. Host Hales Parcells gives viewers an in depth look at the issues that affect our world, how our activities are changing the planet, and the people who are working to protect the environment.

• In an effort to facilitate difficult conversations, WHRO is in its sixth year of the Race: Let’s Talk About It initiative. The goal is to offer a safe space for civil and thoughtful discussion about race and its impact on society from a historical, academic and sociological perspective. In 2020, WHRO went virtual and hosted “When SilenceSpeaks Volumes: Race Let’s Talk About It Town Hall”, the theme was “Don’t let fear keep you silent during conversations about race and racism. Let’s talk about it.” The panel discussion was led by Barbara Hamm Lee, host of Another View and included Jonathan Zur, President, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities; Eric Claville, Director, Center for African American Public Policy, NSU; Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Dean, School of Liberal Arts, NSU; and Veronica Gallardo, Casemate Museum Manager, Fort Monroe Authority. The conversation was rich, informative and inclusive. We look forward to more events in 2021.
Regional Edward R. Murrow Award

In partnership with Virginia Public Media, WHRO developed a four-part investigative series on the use of seclusion and restraint of students and Virginia’s policies and standards for data collection and staff training. VPM’s Megan Pauly and WHRO’s Gina Gambony visited schools to get a better understanding of the high numbers. Reporting involved interviews with more than 30 people, including school staff, administrators, parents, advocates and state education experts. The team was awarded the Edward R. Murrow Award in the Best News Series category.

Curate 757 & Curate

WHRO launched the fifth season of the Emmy-award winning Curate 757. The successful digital-first series explores the thriving art scene in Hampton Roads. Each week, the program features a local artist. Each episode is included in the parent broadcast series Curate, which highlights artists from various cities through the MMG arts initiative. Curate and Curate 757 receives support from five city production grants, and is underwritten by local museums. Produced in partnership with the Old Dominion University Cinema Department, the 13-part broadcast series premieres each fall/winter. WHRO.org/Curate.

Another View

On Thursdays, WHRV broadcasts Another View with Barbara Hamm Lee. The live, call-in program, celebrating its 10th year on the air, focuses on conversations from the African American perspective, while welcoming audiences of all ethnicities. This year the program facilitated community-led conversations on racism, unconscious bias, white privilege, and history. The conversations were painful, healing, timely and welcoming to all listeners and simulcast on VPM in Richmond.
Martha Reads

When Virginia leaders announced in March that schools across the Commonwealth would close for the remainder of the academic year due to the pandemic, our Early Childhood Learning team sprang into action. Since her team couldn’t read to children in person, Martha Razor, manager of early childhood learning, decided to bring the stories to students virtually! Each week Martha reads stories that were submitted in previous years to our annual Young Storytellers Contest. These stories are written by local children, for children with accompanying illustrations. The digital series has been a tremendous success and consistently leads our social stats.

Wall of Faces

There are 1,307 names of Virginian Vietnam Veterans listed on The Wall. WHRO proudly spearheaded a statewide initiative to ensure every Virginian listed has a photo. The images will become part of the Wall of Faces, a lasting tribute for The Education Center at The Wall. Since the launch in November 2015, the meaningful project has been the source of joy, sadness, and deep gratitude for the WHRO staff. The project was completed on May 22, 2020 when the photo was found for the last remaining Virginia soldier without a photo, Sergeant Walter Williams Jr.

Continuing the Conversation on Race

WHRO Public Media continues to explore opportunities to contribute to the national dialogue around race and racism in America. In addition to community conversations on our air as well as moderated virtual conversations with the community, WHRO TV and WHRV teamed up to select and provide a line-up of several relevant programs that share Black history and celebrate Black culture. This will continue through 2021 and beyond, as we look for ways to heal our nation and address racism head on.
American Graduate: Work Like A Girl

Through multimedia content and promotion, WHRO is creating awareness of the great opportunities for young women in skilled careers. These are careers that are traditionally male oriented, such as electricians, welders, and truckers. However they are rewarding, well-paying jobs for women that can be obtained without a college education. Through community engagement, events and promotional campaigns, WHRO has successfully engaged the target audience and connected viable resources through partnerships.

Supporting Local Arts Groups During the Pandemic

WHRO FM and WHRO TV partnered with local arts organizations to broadcast concerts recorded prior to the pandemic. It was not only important to keep these organizations top of mind, but gave the community access to the arts during the stay-at-home order. We heard from audiences in our community and across the U.S., thanking us for continuing to showcase the arts at a time when so many were feeling isolated and disconnected.

Virginia Media Spelling Bee

WHRO and Tribune Publishing collaborated to produce and televise the 13th Annual Virginia Media Spelling Bee. Hosted by Raymond Jones, 53 of Hampton Roads’ finest young spellers, and local spelling bee champions, competed in the competition. The event was streamed live on Facebook and the winner was scheduled to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., however the event was cancelled due to the pandemic.
VA TV Classroom

Reach in the Community:
In March 2020, Blue Ridge PBS, VPM, WETA and WHRO Public Media worked closely with the Virginia Department of Education to create VA TV Classroom to provide teacher-led broadcast instruction to students in grades K-12 who were unable to access other distance learning options due to a lack of high-speed internet. VA TV Classroom was broadcast statewide on public media channels from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, during the beginning of the pandemic and through the fall. In addition WHRO provided world-wide access to 25 of our online courses and 5 workplace Readiness modules for free.

Partnerships:
Blue Ridge PBS
Virginia Department of Education
VPM
WETA
WHRO Public Media

Impact and Community Feedback:
VA TV Classroom made a tremendous difference in the spring of 2020 as schools were shut down due to the pandemic. The teacher-led classes were aligned to the SOL and were especially important in communities where online learning is a challenge. “This programming builds on the long-standing partnership between VDOE and public television to support teaching and learning across the state.” - James Lane, superintendent of public instruction for the state of Virginia.

Teaching Programs Created and Distributed by WHRO:

Learn & Grow with WHRO
Kindergarten – 3rd Grade

Continue to Know with WHRO
4th – 7th Grade

Algebra & Earth Science
9th – 12th Grade

AP® Prep, 9th-12th Grade

“This crisis has really proven how important public media is to educators, students and to our communities.” – R. Cromwell, Smithfield, VA
“I love knowing that I have access to smart, unbiased reporting on what’s happening in my community & our country. Thanks for all you do. Cheers to 30 more years!” – Jennifer Walls, Suffolk

In 2020, WHRO earned five Regional Emmy Awards, two NETA awards, sixteen Telly awards, four Virginia Association of Broadcasters Awards, one Regional Murrow Award, one Associated Press Broadcasters Award, four NABJ Excel Awards, and three Addy Awards.

WHRO’s website has over 6,053 unique page visits a day and 2,209,573 unique visits annually and 2,672,240 podcast downloads in 2020.

Nearly 100 teams of three to five students participated in the Senior Division of the 35th annual Great Computer Challenge competition which was held virtually due to the pandemic.

WHRO reaches an audience of just over 874,420 through social media platforms. Our social media accounts are comprised of 54,000 unique users.

We are WHRO Public Media. We embrace education as our foundation and our future. We listen first, then listen more. We treat others with respect. We are non-partisan. We rely on facts and science. We embrace diversity and inclusion. We stand against social injustice and bigotry.